

Abstracts and Bios

PANEL I - Conceptualising the Sending State

Migration governance and labour export bureaucracies in the global South | S. Irudaya Rajan, International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how labour-exporting countries in the Global South structure and manage the migrant labour mobility through state-led and state-authorised institutions and practices, spanning ministries, emigration clearances, government-licensed recruitment agents, skill-based selection regimes, language training and certification processes, wage benchmarks, mobility agreements and migration policy. A shift in focus from the dominant scholarship centred on receiving states and the remittance economies, this study intends to conceptualise the Global South sending states as active facilitators of labour mobility rather than merely being the welfare-providers and explore how they mediate the migration of “employable” labourers often aligned with destination-country demand. Drawing on policy analysis, regulatory frameworks, legal mechanisms, and institutional practices, the study examines how these bureaucracies operate at the intersection of migration facilitation and institutionalisation of labour governance/regulation, thereby not only participate in the co-governance of transnational labour markets but also often reproducing a segmented and protectionist architecture along lines of skill, gender, and (in)formality.

Taking India as a case study, as it is one of the major migrant export regimes in the Global South in terms of emigration and remittances, the paper evaluates the efficiency and challenges/failures of the national and states-level labour export bureaucracies in migration governance. An analysis of the union government institutions like the Ministry of External Affairs, its governance architecture under the Emigration Check Required system under the Emigration Act, 1983, and skill certification processes anchored in the National Skill Development Corporation, the National Skill Qualification Framework, and the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana are analysed while the state-run institutions like the Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs and Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants Limited in Kerala are undertaken to have a nuanced understanding of the labour export bureaucracies in India. The paper further situates India’s labour export architecture within comparative South and Southeast Asian experiences and mechanisms such as the Columbo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue to highlight common patterns of bureaucratic rationalisation, political economies of skill formation, and risk management.

S. Irudaya Rajan was a Former Professor at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Kerala (close 40 years of post-graduate experience) Currently, he is the chair of the KNOMAD (The Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development,) World Bank working group on internal migration and urbanization. He is one of the expert committee members to advise the Government of Kerala on Covid-19. He has published in international journals on social, economic, demographic, psychological and political implications of migration on individuals, community, economy and society. He is the editor of the annual series India Migration Report since 2010 and South Asia Migration Report since 2017 published by Routledge. Founder Editor in Chief, Migration and Development (Taylor and Francis).

The governance of emigration control in Asia | Richa Shivakoti, Global Migration Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

ABSTRACT

Academic attention on immigration policies and regimes in the Global North has been much larger compared to emigration policies and regimes in the Global South. This paper aims to decentre this emphasis by showcasing the various emigration control policies seen in Asian labour sending countries.

As the number of people emigrating out of their countries for various purposes has been expanding, labour sending countries in Asia have also come up with a variety of emigration policies, some to promote emigration while some are to control emigration pathways and possibilities. This paper takes an overview of the various emigration control policies in Asian labour sending countries to review the policies and broadly categorize them. Emigration controls are often no longer complete exit restrictions for citizens all but are aimed towards certain segments of the population or certain destination countries. Some examples of emigration control policies from Asian labour sending countries are migration bans on women migrant domestic workers (several countries); restrictions on certain professions during pandemics (healthcare workers from the Philippines), additional requirements for 'vulnerable' emigrants based on their background or country of destination (as seen in India) or in more extreme cases, banning young men from working abroad to replenish armed forces (as seen recently in Myanmar). This comparative analysis will give us a larger perspective on broad categorization and reasoning for Asian labour sending countries adopting various emigration control policies.

Richa Shivakoti is the Research Lead on Migration Governance at the Global Migration Institute and a Researcher with the Bridging Divides program at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her research examines multinational migration, emigration from Canada, gendered migration policies and labour migration in Asia. Her research is interdisciplinary, attracting diverse research collaborators for research conducted in Canada, Nepal, the Philippines, the UAE and Ghana. Richa holds a PhD in Public Policy from the National University of Singapore and a dual master's in public Affairs and Political Science from Indiana University, Bloomington. She is an Associate Editor for Comparative Migration Studies and on the advisory board for the Public Administration and Development journal. At the Global Migration Institute, she co-organizes the Migration Winter School on Qualitative Research Methods and serves as the managing Editor for the Global Migration Institute's working paper series.

Are we still talking liberalisation? Migration governance in West Africa's net emigration economies | Omolola S. Olarinde-Olomola, Elizade University

ABSTRACT

Since the liberalisation reforms of the 1990s, global economic integration has generated expectations that labour mobility would yield efficiency gains through the free movement of persons. In West Africa, persistent net emigration has led to the categorisation of these polities as “sending states”, often implying the existence of labour export regimes. This paper challenges that characterisation. Adapting the Grossman–Helpman endogenous tariff framework Grossman & Helpman (1992) to migration, it argues that West African states are not analytically constituted as “sending states,” but govern migration in pursuit of firm, individual, and state-level objectives. Migration and trade policy are treated analogously: governments set rules on cross-border labour flows; interest groups lobby for favourable policies, and the state, balances these pressures against broader goals, including employment generation, remittances, and skill retention. Outward mobility is variously treated as labour market policy, a foreign exchange strategy, a development planning instrument, and a tool of geopolitical bargaining Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (2020), Federal Government of Nigeria (2021). Drawing on interdisciplinary literature and regional policy frameworks, the paper highlights bilateral labour agreements, skills certification programmes, migration institutions, and ECOWAS mobility governance as mechanisms shaping outward flows without presupposing labour export intent. Reconceptualising the sending state shifts focus to domestic objectives under which migration is beneficial, including circular and return migration.

Omolola Olarinde-Olomola (PhD, Economics, University of Ibadan) is a Senior Lecturer at Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin, Nigeria, with research spanning migration, governance, labour market dynamics, and inclusive growth. She has authored works on migration, governance, gender, and reflexivity across Nigeria and Africa. She recently concluded the European Commission-funded DYNAMIG project, which explored migration decision-making, aspirations, and policy effects, and is part of the ESRC-funded Migration for Inclusive African Growth (MIAG) network. Her work informs migration policy, and she serves as a resource person for international organisations. Dr Olarinde-Olomola is a member of the Network of Migration Research on Africa (NOMRA) and the Nigerian Economic Society. She is Associate Editor of the *African Review of Economics and Finance* and the *International Journal of African Migration* (Ìrìnkèrindò).

Changing migration diplomacy perspectives: The sending state in the new geopolitical environment | Gerasimos Tsourapas, Birmingham University, UK

ABSTRACT

Rethinking sending states through migration power, migration diplomacy scholarship has, to date, been primarily organized around the strategic behavior of destination and transit states. Power is typically located at the point of entry: in border control, asylum governance, and the externalization of migration management. Within this framing, sending states are often cast as structurally constrained actors: sources of labor, objects of conditionality, or peripheral participants in asymmetric migration regimes. This paper argues that such a view reflects not empirical reality, but an analytical limitation in how power has been conceptualized in the study of international migration. Building on the concept of migration power, the paper repositions sending states as actors embedded in multiple and overlapping power relations. It proposes that sending-state behavior can be systematically analyzed across four dimensions: compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive. Structurally, sending states are positioned within global labor markets and migration-development architectures that both constrain their autonomy and enable forms of economic extraction through remittances and labor export. Institutionally, they engage in bilateral labor agreements, consular regimes, and diaspora governance to mediate and shape mobility outcomes. Productively, they construct narratives of emigration as development strategy, national sacrifice, or geopolitical relevance that shape identities and policy agendas across borders. Compulsory power, while more limited, emerges in selective forms of mobility control, recruitment restriction, or strategic non-cooperation, allowing for episodic leverage under conditions of migration interdependence. The paper argues that these dimensions do not operate symmetrically. Sending-state power is most consistently exercised through structural, institutional, and productive means, while compulsory power remains conditional and uneven. Recognizing this differentiated configuration allows us to move beyond the assumption of sending-state weakness and to theories instead as active participants in the politics of migration power. Centering sending states in this way reframes migration diplomacy itself, shifting analysis from the governance of points of entry to the governance of departure. In so doing, it allows us to shift attention to the broader social relations through which migration power is produced, negotiated, and contested across much of the world.

Gerasimos Tsourapas is 125th Anniversary Chair and Professor of International Relations at the University of Birmingham and 2025–26 Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute. He is also Editor-in-Chief of *Migration Studies* (Oxford University Press). His research examines the international politics of migration, with a particular focus on migration diplomacy, refugee governance, and the role of mobility in global power relations. He is the author of *Migration Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa* and has published widely in leading journals including *International Affairs*, *International Migration Review*, and *Journal of Refugee Studies*. His current work develops conceptual approaches to migration power and the performative dimensions of refugee governance.

Panel II: Governing Citizens Beyond Borders

Understanding India's migration-development regime (MDR) under democratic decline | Rina Agarwala, Johns Hopkins University

ABSTRACT

Analysts across the world are announcing the end of the post-1980s world order, which insisted and relied on open national borders for the global flow of goods, capital, and labour. For decades, countries and civil society movements contested the costs and benefits of such open borders. But over time, national states adjusted, new transnational networks formed, and some groups even found avenues for mobility through global movement. But now, the very nations that pushed countries across the world to open their borders are closing their own. Moreover, unlike earlier efforts to close borders (which were made to protect sovereignty in the post-war and post-colonial era of the 1950s to the 1970s), current efforts are being made in the context of rising right-wing authoritarianism and democratic decline. This paper seeks to examine these dynamics within India, which operates as both a sending country (as the world's largest migrant exporter) and a growing receiving country (as a regional power). Specifically, the paper will draw on the analytical framework I introduce in my book, *The Migration-Development Regime*, to show how India is launching a new MDR to not only accommodate changing migration regimes in receiving countries, but to also re-shape the global economic order more widely. Following the MDR Framework, the paper will highlight how sending countries do not operate as passive actors in global migration, but rather as powerful governing agents that shape migrant inequities by class, caste, and gender.

Rina Agarwala is Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University. Agarwala publishes and lectures on international development, labour, migration, gender, social movements, and Indian politics. Agarwala is the author of the award-winning books *The Migration-Development Regime: How Class Shapes Indian Emigration* (Oxford, 2022) and *Informal Labor, Formal Politics and Dignified Discontent in India* (Cambridge, 2013), as well as the co-editor of *Whatever Happened to Class? Reflections from South Asia* (Routledge, 2008, 2016) and *Gendering Struggles against Informal and Precarious Work* (Emerald 2018). Agarwala has worked at the United Nations Development Program in China, the Self-Employed Women's Association in India, and Women's World Banking in New York. She holds a BA in Economics and Government from Cornell University, an MPP in Political and Economic Development from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and a PhD in Sociology and Demography from Princeton University.

Remittances and realities: Governing labor mobility in Nepal | Sagar Sharma, Kathmandu University, Nepal

ABSTRACT

Nepal stands at a crucial juncture in its development trajectory, aspiring to graduate from the Least Developed Country status by 2026 while grappling with entrenched poverty and high youth unemployment. Labor migration has become central to the national economy, with remittances contributing over one quarter of GDP. This dependence, however, underscores a paradox: migration alleviates structural weaknesses yet accelerates youth exodus, making governance of labor mobility a critical challenge. The state has institutionalized labor migration through different dedicated government ministries and departments and managing permits, medical exams, and training programs, presenting these as protective measures while simultaneously exercising control. Policies such as ‘Zero Cost Migration’ exemplify this duality—intended to safeguard workers but undermined by hidden costs sustained by recruitment monopolies and corrupt intermediaries. By situating Nepal within the broader South Asian context, this paper interrogates the contradictory role of the sending state as both facilitator of remittance flows and broker of human capital. It highlights the disconnect between official governance mechanisms and the lived realities of migrants, raising pressing questions about the sustainability of migration as a long-term development strategy. Ultimately, Nepal’s reliance on labor migration reveals the tension between economic sustainability and the challenge of protecting citizens in inequitable global labor markets.

Sagar Raj Sharma is a Professor at the Department of Development Studies at Kathmandu University. He holds a PhD in Development Economics from Fukuoka University, Japan. His research interests and specialization include migration, mobility, and wellbeing; sustainable agricultural practices; the ethics of sustainable development; heritage and sustainable development; land use and land reform; contested development; and foreign aid. He has worked in both the development and academic sectors, and has published widely on post- conflict state building, land reform, land use, and migration issues. He is also the Adjunct Professor at the Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI) of the University of Western Sydney in Australia. He can be contacted at sagar@ku.edu.np.

Sending states as diaspora activism: Insights from Southern Africa | Kudakwashe Vanyoro, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

ABSTRACT

Post-2000 economic and political crises in Zimbabwe have generated sustained emigration to South Africa, where Zimbabwean migrants have been subject to periodic xenophobic violence and scapegoating, including through movements such as Operation Dudula. Despite outward migration being widely interpreted as symptomatic of state failure — particularly as migrants encounter xenophobia and labour market exclusion in receiving countries — Zimbabwe has adopted an increasingly activist diaspora governance strategy, institutionalised through its Diaspora Policy (2016–2020; revised 2023), formal remittance facilitation mechanisms such as HomeLink, and diplomatic and consular interventions during episodes of migrant-targeted violence abroad. At the same time, the state resists external governance and electoral criticism on the grounds of sovereignty while committing to regional mobility regimes, including the SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons. In this context, remittances constitute one of the country's largest sources of foreign exchange—often exceeding foreign direct investment. This paper adopts this case to examine how migrant-sending states in Southern Africa transform mass emigration from a perceived sovereignty failure into an instrument of transnational statecraft. It asks: under what conditions do sending states shift from a territorial conception of sovereignty to a transnational one that legitimises diaspora engagement and protection beyond national borders?

Kudakwashe Vanyoro is Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand. His research examines migration, (im)mobility, temporality, and decolonial knowledge production in Africa. He is the author of *Migration, Crisis and Temporality at the Zimbabwe–South Africa Border: Governing Immobilities and Can Migration Studies Be Decolonised?* A recipient of the International Association for Forced Migration Lisa Gilad Prize and the A.G. Leventis Fellowship at the University of Cambridge, Dr Vanyoro's scholarship interrogates how migration governance, activism, and borders shape everyday life in Southern Africa and beyond, while advancing calls to rethink the epistemic geographies and boundaries of migration and displacement studies globally.

Remittance strategies of labour-exporting sending states: Morocco and the Philippines compared | Stephen Gelb, Scholar of Excellence at the Global Migration Institute

ABSTRACT

The labour export migration story of Morocco and the Philippines is well known to migration scholars, but the differences in their approach to remittances at national level seems much less familiar. Both countries started labour exports as a key part of their labour market strategy from the late 1960s/ early 1970s onwards, and their macroeconomics and balance of payments have both benefited significantly since, from remittance-related inflows. In both cases, remittances have been significantly positive for migrant-linked household income. But they took quite different approaches to how domestic management of remittances. In Morocco, remittances entered through the banking system, leading to significant expansion, both of financial inclusion of poor households and small and micro-enterprises, and also of the banking system's capacity to lend to public infrastructure projects. In contrast, the Philippines has not used their remittance inflows well at all: the degree of financial inclusion of the poor has been minimal until recently, while aggregate bank credit has risen much less than expected. The paper will compare the Morocco and Filipino approaches to remittances, and link these also to the sending government's relations with outward migrants, so linking with the workshop's overall theme.

Stephen Gelb is an independent development economist currently based in London. He worked in South Africa for thirty years, researching and writing on macroeconomics and growth, foreign investment, and political economy and inequality, and advising the democratic government on these issues. He taught graduate economics, political science and development studies in South Africa, Canada, the US and Switzerland. He was Lead, Private Sector Development, at ODI Global in London and has extensive research experience across Africa and Asia. Aside from his work on South Africa, he has written extensively on other development economics issues, including foreign direct investment, value chains and multinational corporations in Asia and Africa, on small enterprises in urban areas, and on remittances and diaspora finance.

The Iranian diaspora: With and without the state | Amin Moghadam, University of Poitiers, France

ABSTRACT

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, Iran has never adopted an explicit policy regulating emigration or systematically steering diaspora networks toward state objectives. Yet emigration has intensified over time, driven by political pressures and worsening economic conditions. These departures have contributed to the formation of large and diverse Iranian diasporas, estimated at between five and eight million people worldwide, marked by social stratification and political fragmentation, partly shaped by internal political dynamics within Iran. Faced with this diversity, the Islamic Republic — itself marked by competing political currents and recurrent crises — has adopted a fluctuating stance toward citizens abroad. The state generally views the diaspora through a security-oriented lens informed by suspicion, while at certain moments attempting to engage, mobilize, or instrumentalize expatriate political and economic resources. For a country affected by decades of international sanctions and political isolation, diasporic and transnational networks have also, at times, served as channels linking Iranian state bodies and society to global cultural and economic flows. This paper examines relations between the Iranian state and Iranians living particularly in Iran's regional environment, as well as patterns of transborder mobility, particularly in the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, where I have conducted fieldwork since the 2010s on cultural and economic networks. It argues that while Iranian diasporic power has been strengthened locally in some contexts of settlement, longstanding relations of dependency between diasporic networks and state actors are being reshaped — and possibly weakened — by recurring crises of political legitimacy inside Iran, intensifying sanctions, foreign military interventions, and deep internal instability. While the Iranian diaspora will clearly remain a durable social reality for Iran, its relationship with the state will depend largely on what the latter comes to represent in the short and medium term.

Amin Moghadam is Junior Professor and holder of the Chair Migration and Inequalities at the University of Poitiers, France, and a research affiliate at the Global Migration Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University. His research examines the intersections between homeownership practices, migration trajectories, and diaspora politics, with a particular focus on immigrants from several countries of the Global South (Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan) in Toronto and Istanbul. He holds a PhD in Human Geography and Urban Studies from the University of Lyon II. His earlier research and publications have addressed migration policies and practices, diaspora studies, and processes of circulation and regional integration in the Middle East, with a specific focus on the Persian Gulf region (Iran and the UAE). From 2021 to 2026, he served as Research Lead at the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration at Toronto Metropolitan University. He was previously Associate Research Scholar at the Centre for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies at Princeton University (2016–2020). Prior to these appointments, he taught Urban and Migration Studies at Sciences Po Paris, Aix-Marseille University, and the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO).