



**REPORT OF
PARLIAMENTARY ROUNDTABLE ON MIGRATION
FROM PAKISTAN:
FACTS, CHALLENGES AND AVENUES
MARCH, 19, 2021**



Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS)

**Ataturk Avenue (Services Road), Sector F-5/2,
Islamabad.**

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Partners:



LIST OF ACRONYMS	
BEOE	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MoC	Memorandum of Co-operation
MOFEPT	Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training
MOPHRD	Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NUML	National University of Modern Languages
OEC	Overseas Employment Corporation
OEP	Overseas Employment Providers
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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Executive Summary

Pakistan is one of the world's leading exporters of manpower and labor. Overseas employment not only lessens the pressure of poverty and unemployment in the country, remittances sent by Pakistanis living and working abroad are essential drivers in economy. Providing safe and stable employment abroad, ensuring safety and protection from exploitation and safe and hassle free repatriation back to Pakistan is the responsibility of the government and basic and constitutional right of the citizens.

Pakistani labor migrants largely fall in the category of unskilled and low-skilled workforce and hence are employed in intense, hard occupations. Illiteracy and lack of awareness makes them highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. They are often treated poorly as cheap sourced commodities whose rights can be bought and easily denied. Pressing need for systemic changes in policies and adherence to international commitments on human rights is undeniable. It is imperative to provide labor migrants safe channels of migration and prosperous opportunities so they can contribute to economic growth of their host as well as country of origin.

Overseas Labor Migration became part of Federal legislative list under 18th amendment and now the Federal government is responsible for placing the citizens in overseas employment. The Emigration Ordinance 1979 and its accompanying rules make up the framework governing the code of conduct for overseas labor recruitment and emigration in Pakistan.

Parliaments are custodians of rights of people and their voices can never be ignored. They are in the unique position to reform nations, both national and international legislation. They hold the power to bring issues of labor migration to the forefront and catalyze positive changes. The role of Parliament in policy making is of inherent important, however, there are areas that need to be addressed. The pandemic has intensified the nature of issues. In order to remain competitive in the international market, aggressive policies regarding skills, trainings and rights are imperative.

INAUGURAL SESSION

The session began with introductory remarks by Director Research Ms. Tehseen Khalid. She welcomed the Honorable members of the Parliament, panelists and other participants on behalf of Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services and Migrant Resource Centre. This was followed by recitation of verses from the Holy Quran and round of introductions by the panelists and participants.

**Mr. Muhammad Anwar,
Executive Director,
Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services**

The roundtable formally commenced with welcome remarks by Executive Director, PIPS. Mr. Muhammad Anwar stated that MPs are drivers of change in the Parliament whose voices impact policies and governments. It is therefore imperative that they are well informed on all aspects of policies and issues. The Institute strives to present platforms where MPs can interact with experts and stakeholders, from various fields and issues to stimulate insightful discussions that can culminate to not only better understanding of the subject but practical recommendations.



Mr. Muhammad Anwar expressed that although successive governments have taken largely effective initiatives in facilitating labor migration; the nature of international system is complex and ever evolving which keeps governments and policy makers vigilant and on their toes. Ensuring safe migration and protection of migrants from all forms of abuse and exploitation is not only the state's responsibility but also an international commitment and basic human right. It is also fundamental and closely linked with achievement of SDGs, particularly goal 10.7 which emphasizes the importance and need of up to the minute policies. Globally development and prosperity are unequal; there are states where people are thriving while there are lands where life is hard and miserable. Pakistan is a developing country grappling the challenges of unemployment, youth bulge and poverty which are more intense in rural areas. Overseas employment is a significant solution to the aforementioned issues, however, the trend of labor export has significantly stalled since 2017.

He pointed out that majority of Pakistani labor migrates to Middle East particularly UAE and Saudi Arabia and fall in unskilled and low skilled category of labor. The low skill level is a competitive disadvantage compared with other states. Compounded with lack of awareness and education, it is the main reason of exploitation of labor at the hands of employers and Kafils. The global dynamics are continuously changing, nationalism is on the rise and states are shifting from labor import to engaging their own citizens with the best opportunities. In tough times like today, it is pertinent that the government policies on labor migration do not base on current trends but anticipate future as well. He stressed the need to up skill the current and potential labor migrants through targeted intervention and cohesion at federal and provincial policies in regards to skill development. He emphasized scouting and diversifying labor export destinations to boost overseas employment especially if large number of migrants lose job in one state.

SESSION ONE: OVERSEAS LABOUR MIGRATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Ms. Hina Maqsood,

Project Officer, Migrant Resource Centre

She began her presentation by highlighting that Pakistan is the 6th largest and 2nd labor exporting state globally and in South Asia respectively. According to BEOE, the trend of overseas labor migration witnessed 5 times increase in the past decade and according to the statistics of State Bank of Pakistan, Pakistan received US\$ 23.1 Billion in the form of remittances in 2020 which were an essential support to the economy during the pandemic. Demographically, Punjab and KP are leading province with 51% and 30% of labor migrating overseas respectively.



She stated that a need assessment study conducted by ICMPD revealed that the majority of the target/sample population lacked knowledge about legal and regular labour migration channels. The general public has little or no understanding of government policies, ministries, and agencies such as the OEC and BEOE. Lack of awareness about government policies and regulations, such as those concerning Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs), is a leading cause of irregular migration and enables recruiters to overcharge unsuspecting citizens.

She discussed the most compelling reasons for migration by stating that poverty and high unemployment in the country encourage people to look for work elsewhere. The allure of labour migration, which is often regarded as the ultimate fate-changing solution to poverty and other issues, is heightened by social pressures to raise living standards.

She emphasized the importance of internationally accredited skill development, noting that the majority of Pakistani labor is unskilled or semi-skilled. Despite the fact that MOPHRD is working to promote skill development, a lack of knowledge remains a major barrier. Furthermore, another area where Pakistani labor migrants fall behind in the international labor market is language proficiency.

She also stressed the importance of diversifying host states by exploring new job markets and linking future migrants with government departments so that they can take advantage of better services and opportunities. At the federal and provincial levels, Migrant Resource Centres are developed under the MOPHRD and the Department of Labor to provide walk-in counseling and information on all aspects of migration. MRCs, she believes, are critical in raising awareness among public.

Mr. Muhammad Ismail,
Deputy Secretary, MOPHRD



He pointed out that many states have aging populations and rely on importing labor to meet the needs of their labor intensive industries and maintain economic growth. In this regard, the government is negotiating bilateral agreements, MoUs and MoCs with European and Far East Asian states including Japan, Germany and Denmark. Referring to Japan in particular, 14 sectors for labor export have been mutually identified. However, proficiency in Japanese language is a pre-requisite for grant of labor visas. He did, however, state that the government is already working to integrate them.

Many states, he noted, have ageing populations and depend on importing labour to meet the demands of labor-intensive industries and sustain economic development. In this regard, the government is negotiating bilateral agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, and Memorandums of Cooperation with European and Far East Asian countries such as Japan, Germany, and Denmark. In particular, 14 labour export sectors have been listed in Japan. However, proficiency in the Japanese language is a requirement for obtaining a work visa.

According to national policy, all concerned ministries and departments, including the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, collaborate together to address shortcomings and develop policies for the future. To address the problem of language proficiency, NUML and TVETs are providing language proficiency courses to the general public and, in particular, aspiring migrants. Meanwhile, MOPHRD is hosting webinars with the Japanese government, the Pakistani embassy in Japan, the Japanese business community, and other stakeholders to address potential areas of collaboration and explore new opportunities.

He mentioned the Honorable Prime Minister's formation of a taskforce to suggest policy for overseas employment and the welfare of overseas Pakistanis as an example of government initiatives. The taskforce's policy recommendations have been forwarded to the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) for further consideration.

Honorable Prime Minister has also tasked MOPHRD to explore employment opportunities in five states, including China and South Korea, as part of a focused initiative. In terms of labour migrants' social security, he said that negotiations are underway with a number of countries, including Canada and Malaysia, to provide better protection for them.

Honorable Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam

Member National Assembly of Pakistan



Honorable MNA Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam appreciated the initiatives taken by MOPHRD. She pointed out that Pakistani migrants are underpaid and are less skilled and hence employed in low paying precarious jobs as compared to other regional states. Foreign labor markets are dominated by Philippines and Bangladesh's labor in all trades because their governments provide professional trainings. While inculcating internationally accredited, market competitive skill development programs for potential migrants is crucial for better jobs, linguistic proficiency is another area that requires immediate attention.

She emphasized the importance of maintaining a robust database of migrants and returnees, as well as the assimilation of returning migrants based on their education, skills, and professional experience. She stated that assessing the education and skills of returning migrants is critical in providing them with opportunities that benefit them as well as the state.

Honorable MNA shared her personal experience, emphasizing the importance of embassies proactively facilitating and safeguarding the rights of migrants and diaspora. She said that in most cases, ambassadors and embassy staff are unreachable and disconnected from the diaspora, which isolates them from the real issues and, as a result, affects their efficiency and performance. Embassies serve as the diaspora's connection to their home country and government. They look to the embassy for assistance and advice, so it's important that they're both well-versed in each other's work and have a good working relationship.

Raising awareness of the plight of Pakistanis imprisoned abroad, the state has a duty to provide them with legal and other support as required. Many of these people are unaware of their fundamental rights when stuck in foreign lands, and many of them lose their passports and other valuable documents as soon as they reach their employers. She insisted that the embassy and the MOPHRD keep track of all outgoing migrants, inspect their accommodation and workplaces, and ensure that they are treated equally and work in safe conditions. To avoid human trafficking and other problems, the embassy should keep track of the migrants' whereabouts.

Finally, she emphasized the importance of researching job markets in emerging economies. Currently, such states' job markets are not overburdened with foreign labour, which provides Pakistan with an ideal opportunity.

Honorable Senator Mr. Shaheen Khalid Butt

Former Member, Senate Standing Committee of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development



Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt said that remittances sent by diaspora and labour migrants are an important source of revenue for the state. Migrants are seen as ambassadors by the government. Labor migrants, on the other hand, lack the technological and linguistic skills that would enable them to obtain better jobs and opportunities, unlike professional ambassadors. The majority of migrants come from impoverished, low-income countries, lack schooling, and are untrained in the host country's rules, rights, culture, and customs.

He brought up the plight of labor migrants, saying that they cross borders in search of better jobs and a better life for themselves and their families. They spend their days away from home, working and suffering in foreign countries, and living in deplorable conditions. The majority of migrants face overcrowding in their accommodations and a lack of or inadequate social security. He emphasized that the state must not only value remittances, but also regard migrants as assets and take effective steps to improve living standards and social security for labor migrants, and drew attention to Pakistanis imprisoned abroad.

SESSION TWO: LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNANCE OF MIGRATION IN PAKISTAN AND ROLE OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Zia Awan,

President, LHRA

Mr. Zia Awan emphasized the urgent need for social security, urging the government to negotiate a minimum social protection cover for labour migrants. Labor migrants, in particular, come from low-income families, and when you factor in the cost of living in a foreign country, it's difficult to afford even basic necessities, let alone a comfortable accommodation or adequate medical care. Major labour exporting states should join together to lobby labour importing states to include a standard social security net, a minimum wage for each trade, and basic health insurance in their policies.



He reiterated the fact that Philippines and India have negotiated higher minimum salaries for unskilled labor while Pakistanis do not get paid even half in comparison. This trend continues from low-skilled to high-skilled employment, and Pakistani workers continue to be underpaid in comparison to migrants from other countries due to successive governments' negligence. He stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary forums in this regard.

Migration policy is a federal responsibility, while training is a provincial matter. He also noted that, despite the lack of a legal ban, there is no department for overseas migration at the provincial level, which can lead to grey areas and discrepancies in policy development and implementation.

Labor migrants find it difficult to contact the embassy during working hours, which prolongs their problems. He emphasized the importance of reviewing TORs to make them more open and effective, as well as establishing a 24/7 helpline to assist migrants in times of crisis.

Conventions and international conferences, likewise, provide tremendous opportunities for networking and negotiating with potential employers and governments. Pakistani delegations often regard these activities as leisure trips or show up unprepared. To get the most out of such opportunities, it should be obligatory to submit detailed reports on official trips to foreign countries and conferences. The delegations and participants must be held accountable to ensure that the delegations avail these opportunities with sincerity and conviction.

He also brought up the potential issues that could occur as a result of tourism in Pakistan. The tourism industry in the country had been stagnant for many years. While increased tourism is a positive development, the state has failed to anticipate the challenges that come with it. Pakistan is sending, receiving and transit state for migrants and has porous borders. He expressed concern that as tourism grows, crime rates will rise, with human trafficking being one of those crimes. The concerned departments should devise policies on this matter now to avoid being overwhelming in the future.

CONCLUDING REMARKS



Mr. Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka, Director General Research, extended a vote of thanks to the seminar participants and endorsed the panellists' and participants' contributions. He stressed the importance of reviewing the TORs of embassies on a priority basis.

He emphasized the significance of improving Members of Parliament's understanding of the legal framework governing migration. Although national laws and policies are well-intended, they must be evaluated and changed on a regular basis. Therefore, scrutiny of the national legal framework in respect of their effectiveness is much needed.


Migration is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. He highlighted the importance of strengthening ties between government ministries and departments in order to facilitate deliberations and effective policy formulation.

He concluded by appreciating Parliament's admirable role and expressing hope that well-intentioned cooperation and collaboration among ministries, government bodies, and institutions such as ICMPD and PIPS will result in well-informed and well-guided policies for the prosperity of migrants and the state.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

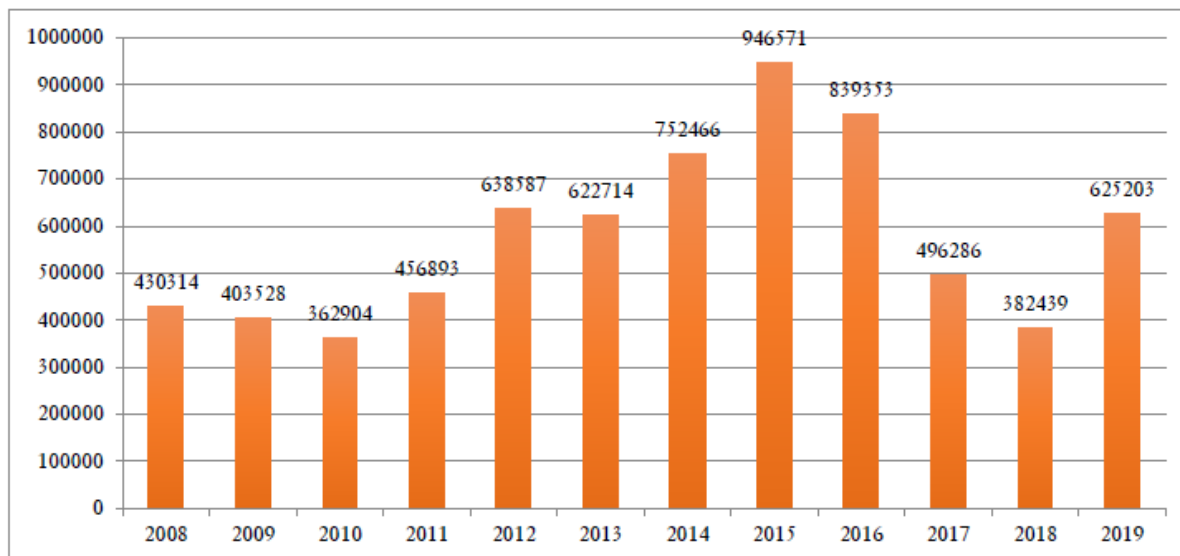
The session was followed by candid and insightful recommendations by the participants.

	<p>Human trafficking, according to Honorable Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, MNA, is a heinous crime that can be easily perpetrated due to porous borders, exacerbating the difficulty. As a result, raising awareness about national policies and initiatives, as well as regular migration channels, is critical for reducing illegal migration and preventing trafficking. She also emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between diaspora, migrants, and embassies so that they are aware of the issues and challenges they face.</p>
	<p>According to DG Research, PIPS Mr. Muhammad Rashid Mafzool zaka, improving migrants' living standards and social security nets is a pressing issue that requires the government's immediate attention. Introducing crash courses on laws and customs to avoid cultural shock, as well as knowledge of laws and language proficiency, is a pressing need. He emphasized the importance of putting the National Emigration Policy into action in order to harmonies efforts and initiatives for the welfare of migrants. He also offered PIPS facilities and services for data collection and research.</p>
	<p>Mr. Zia Awan highlighted the importance of promoting a thorough understanding of national and international legal frameworks and policies governing migration among legislators and other stakeholders. He suggested maintaining a comprehensive database of migrants and civil society, as well as training of staff on the laws, including all stages of the phenomenon in order to assist migrants. He recommended performance appraisals, financial accountability, and the establishment of a 24-hour helpline to improve the efficiency of embassies.</p>
	<p>Ms. Hina Maqsood stressed the importance of information sharing and educating migrants on laws and rights, cultural values, customs, and language. Furthermore, she emphasised the importance of targeted policy interventions to provide youth and potential migrants with internationally accredited, market competitive skills training and language courses in TVET institutes.</p>
	<p>Mr. Hanif Khan Nasar, Deputy Director Research, PIPS emphasized the importance of well-integrated legal reforms as well as effective and smooth information sharing among the country's relevant ministries and security agencies. He also proposed simplifying the process and launching a mobile application for the less educated segments of society. This will encourage regular migration and prevent problems such as overcharging and unsafe travel. He drew the participants' attention to rising xenophobia, racial and ethnic violence, and hate speech, citing it as one of the most serious</p>

	<p>challenges confronting migrants worldwide. Although sharing economic opportunities is frequently perceived as unfair, it is a fundamental feature of globalization. People in host countries frequently target and profile migrants, oblivious to the physical, mental, and economic hardships they face. People migrate in search of a better life and a brighter future. Every human being has the right to feel safe and accepted, and governments must work together to combat this issue.</p>
	<p>Mr. Jimshaid Asghar proposed the establishment of a desk dedicated to collecting data on migrants and any requirements imposed by the host state that provide better opportunities. Embassies should act as data collection centers for migrants in order to support effective data-driven policy formation.</p>

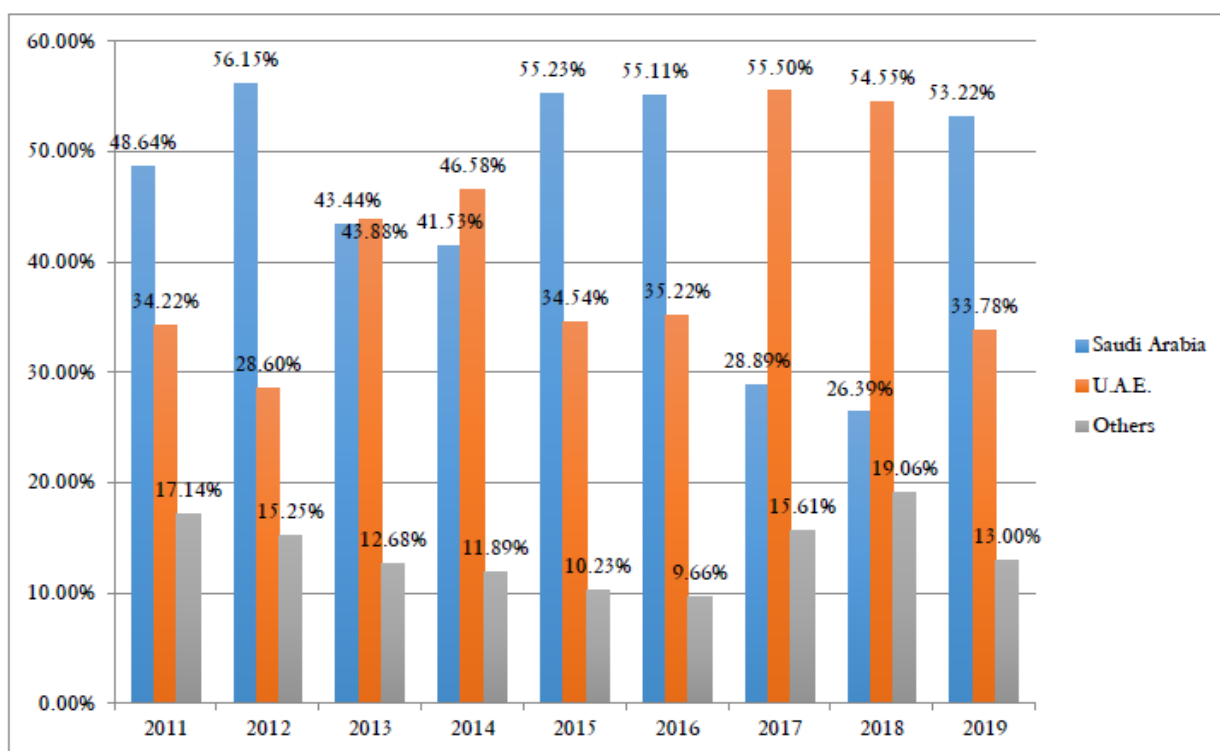
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CURRENT STATUS OF MIGRATION FROM PAKISTAN



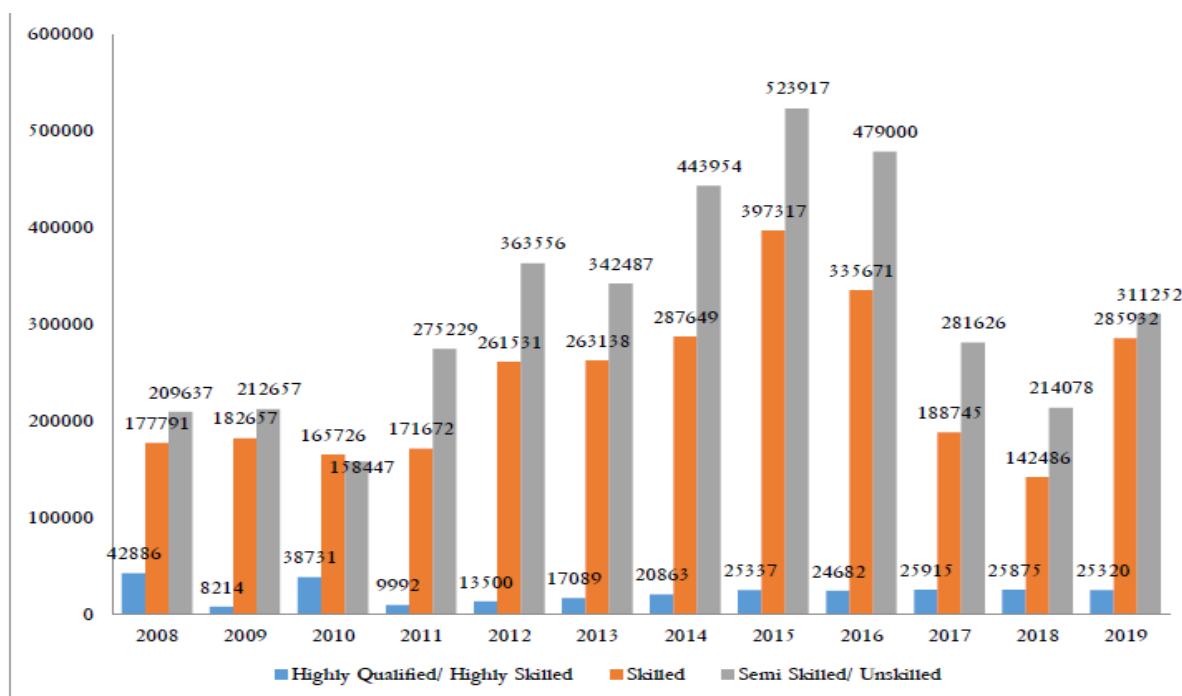
Source: BEOE database, various years

Figure 1 Annual Outflow of Pakistani Labour Migrants, 2008-2019



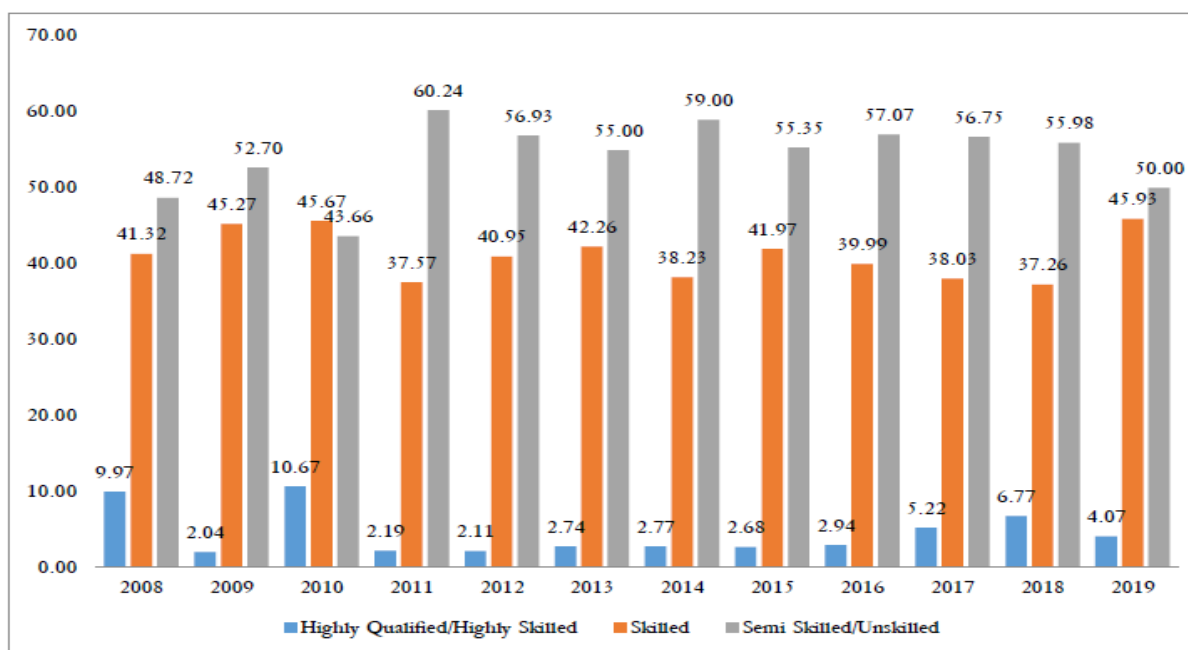
Source: BEOE database, various years.

Figure 2 Centrality of Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. as a destination for Pakistani Labour Migrants, 2011-2019



Source: BEOE database, various years.

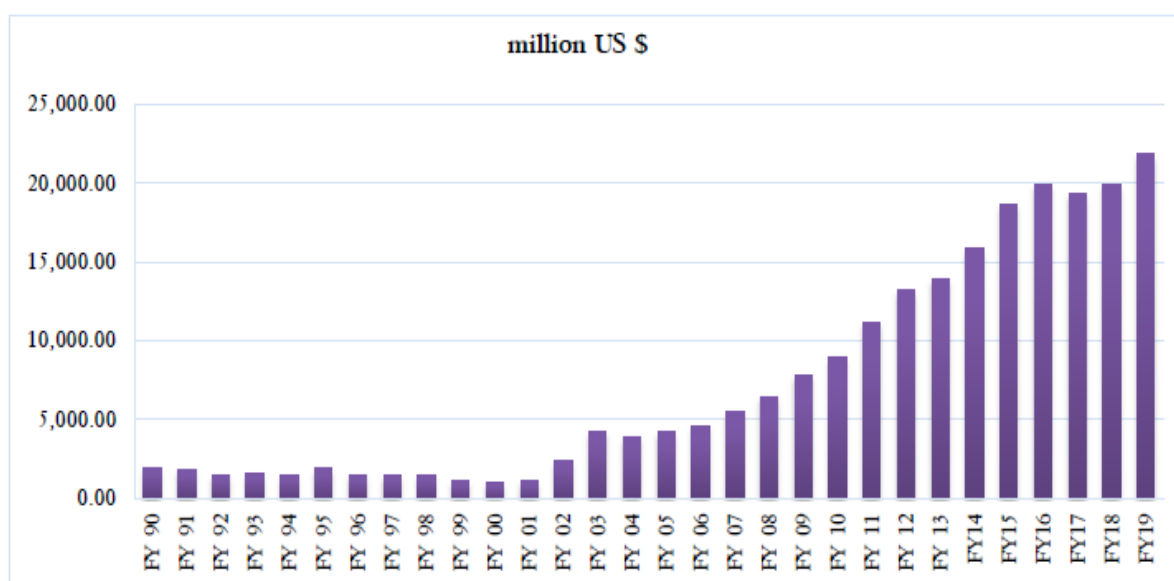
Figure 3 Pakistani out-migrant workers according to skill levels, 2008-2019



Source: BEOE database, various years.

Figure 4 Pakistani out-migrant workers according to skill levels, 2008-19 (Percentages)

Source: Pakistan Migration Report, 2020, CIMARD



Source: State Bank of Pakistan, 2015 & 2019

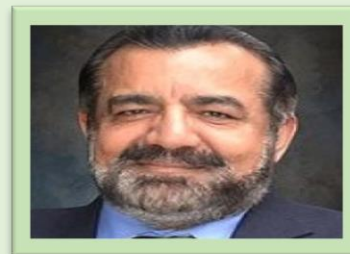
Figure 5 Total workers' Remittances FY 1990-2019

Source: Pakistan Migration Report, 2020, CIMARD

PROFILE OF PANELISTS

▪ **Hon. Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt**

Honorable Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt has been Senator since 2018. He is an American businessman and has also served as the Vice-Chairman of Punjab Overseas Pakistani Commission. Currently, he is Member of several Standing Committees of Senate of Pakistan.



• **Hon. MNA Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam**

Honorable Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam has been member of National Assembly since 2013 and was re-elected in 2018. She has served as member of several standing committees. She has been Member of Young Parliamentarians Forum and currently member of National Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs and Women's Parliamentary Caucus.



▪ **Mr. Muhammad Ismail**

Mr. Muhammad Ismail is currently serving as Deputy Secretary Emigration, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development.



▪ **Mr. Zia Awan**

Mr. Zia Awan is an advocate of Supreme Court of Pakistan, President and founding member of Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA). He is renowned women and child rights' activist and General Secretary Madadgaar Helpline (Pakistan's first women and children Helpline established in 2001).



▪ **Ms. Hina Maqsood**

Ms. Hina Maqsood is currently serving as Project Officer- Migrant Resource Centres. She has over 12 years of experience in the development sector in various capacities. As Liaison Officer ICMPD, she organized and participated in various inter-governmental dialogues capacity building initiatives in areas of illegal migration, data management and human trafficking and worked closely with MOPHRD for establishment of two Migration Resource Centres.





Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS)

cordially invites you to the

Parliamentary Roundtable on Migration from Pakistan: Facts, Challenges and Avenues

on Friday, March 19, 2021

at Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services,
Sector F-5/2, Ataturk Avenue, Islamabad

RSVP

051-9091317; 9091623; 0340-5551585

(Programme agenda overleaf)

Programme Agenda

Recitation of Verses from Holy Quran 11:00 am

Welcome Remarks by Mr. Muhammad Anwar, Executive Director PIPS

Overseas Labour Migration: Challenges and Prospects

1. Presentation by Ms. Hina Maqsood, Project Officer, ICMFD, Pakistan

2. Ms. Sheena Ali Mansoor, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis

3. Remarks by Honorable Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt,

Former Member Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development

Legal Framework for Governance of Migration in Pakistan and Role of Parliament

4. Presentation by Mr. Zia Awan, President LHRLA

5. Remarks by Honorable Ms. Nafeesa Inayatullah Khattak, MNA &

Member Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development

6. Remarks by Honorable Dr. Mahreen Razzaq Bhutto, MNA &

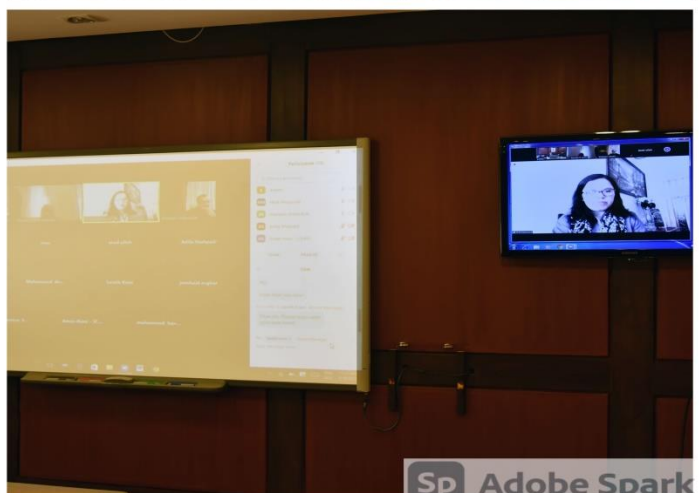
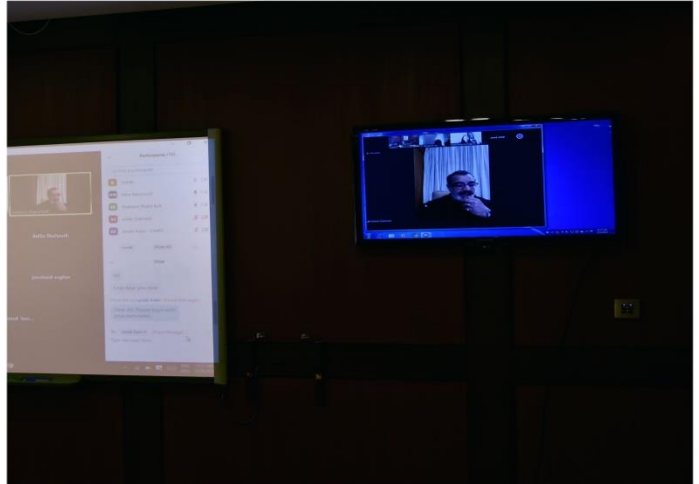
Member Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development

Q/A Session 12:00 pm

Vote of Thanks 12:25 pm

GLIMPSES OF PARLIAMENTARY ROUNDTABLE ON MIGRATION

MARCH 19, 2021



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