

Migrant Workers from India

A FACTSHEET

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INTRODUCTION

India is one of the South-Asian countries with the highest number of people migrating abroad for work. Labour migration has remained an intrinsic aspect of the society in India, where a large section of its population migrate abroad in search of better opportunities and income. While migration is believed to benefit both the countries of origin and destination, a large number of migrants face various problems during the recruitment process, as well as during their work tenure abroad. In the absence of social security and access to justice mechanisms, several factors are preventing migrant workers and their families from reaping the benefits of migration.

This paper provides an overview of labour migration from India, including information related to popular destination countries, working conditions, income, benefits and access to justice mechanisms. The sections below also provide a brief overview of working conditions within India and the wages and benefits received by the workers.

Migration and migrants

Total out-migration

There are approximately 30 million Indians overseas, with nine million in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.¹ In 2017, 391,024 Indians got clearance to work abroad.² In 2015, the highest number of international migrants originated from Asia, and India was the country with the highest number of emigrants.³ According to the World Bank data of 2017, there were 8,904,781 Indian migrants within the GCC region, with a majority of them in Qatar (658,488), followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (3,310,419), Saudi Arabia (2,266,216), Oman (1,201,995), Kuwait (1,157,072), and Bahrain (310,591).⁴ The number of Indian migrants has almost doubled since 2010 when the total number

1 International Labour Organization. 2018a. *India Labour Migration Update 2018*. International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/

2 International Labour Organization 2018a.

3 International Organization for Migration. 2017. *World Migration Report 2018*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/china/r5_world_migration_report_2018_en.pdf

4 World Bank. n.d.a. 'Migration and Remittances Data: Bilateral Migration 2017.' Accessed 15 December 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaisues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

of Indians in the GCC was 4,867,931.⁵ In 2019,⁶ 143,000 Indian workers migrated to Saudi Arabia, followed by 72,000 to Kuwait, 42,000 to the UAE, 28,000 to Qatar, 26,000 to Oman, and 10,000 to Malaysia.⁷ More than 90 per cent of the Indian workers going to the GCC and Southeast Asian countries fall under the category of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.⁸

The records of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, show that the number of women migrating from India for work is increasing consistently, with 553,226 Indian stock migrants in the GCC countries in 1990 to 1,957,278 in 2015.⁹ Women migrants accounted for nearly 24 per cent of the total emigrants from India in 2015, and a majority of women migrated to the UAE (789,005), followed by Saudi Arabia (585,822) and Kuwait (313,209).¹⁰

Process and cost of recruitment

Like other South Asian labour-sending countries, labour migration in India is facilitated by a 'largely informal' and 'unregulated' recruitment agencies.¹¹ The recruitment agencies are required to obtain a registration certificate from the Protectorate General of Emigrants before operating their business.¹² The unregistered agents, who function at the ground level on behalf of the recruitment agencies, are the primary contact-persons for the workers seeking to migrate.¹³

The report of the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery shows that migrants vying for foreign employment pay somewhere between USD 870 and 2200, and such amount is usually managed through loans provided by non-institutional sources at high interest rates.¹⁴ Another study shows that Indian workers pay about USD 1000-3000 as recruitment cost to work in the GCC countries.¹⁵

Wages of Indian workers in GCC and Malaysia

The minimum wage set by the Indian government for its migrant workers in the GCC and Malaysia is 100-300 Bahraini Dinar (USD 380-1140) for Bahrain; 100-350 Kuwaiti Dinar (USD 300-1050) for Kuwait; 75-500 Omani Riyal (USD 197-1316) for Oman; 1400-3900 Qatari Riyal (USD 385-1071) for Qatar; 1500-2100 Saudi Riyal (USD 400-560) for Saudi Arabia; 800-3000 United Arab Emirates Dirham (USD 218-817) for UAE; and 900-1400 Malaysian Ringgit (USD 231-358) for Malaysia.¹⁶

5 World Bank. n.d.b. 'Migration and Remittances Data: Bilateral Migration 2010.' Accessed 15 December 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

6 Figures till 30 November 2019 included.

7 Calabrese, John. 2020. 'India-Gulf migration: A testing time.' 14 April 2020, Middle East Institute. https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-gulf-migration-testing-time#_edn9

8 International Labour Organization 2018a.

9 International Labour Organization 2018a.

10 International Labour Organization 2018a.

11 Global Fund to End Modern Slavery. n.d. *Understanding Exploitation: Indian and Bangladeshi Labor Migration to GCC Countries*. Summary Briefing: Overseas Labour Recruitment. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a60c34a0abd04e55389efa6/t/5dc1b396495dee58a7e9ad6f/1572975511382/2186-Migration+Experience+of+Indian+and+Bangladeshi+Workers+to%20GCC+Countries+v6TC-DIGITAL.pdf>

12 Sasikumar, S.K, and Rakhee Thimothy. 2015. *From India to the Gulf region: Exploring links between labour markets, skills and the migration cycle*. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_397363.pdf

13 Global Fund to End Modern Slavery n.d.

14 Global Fund to End Modern Slavery n.d.

15 Migrant Forum in Asia. n.d. *Recruitment Fees & Migrants' Rights Violations*. Open Working Group on Labour Migration & Recruitment, Policy Brief #1. <http://mfasia.org/migrantforumasia/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1-Policy-Brief-Recruitment-Fees-Migrants-Rights-Violations.pdf>

16 Sasikumar, S.K, and Seeta Sharma. 2016. *Minimum referral wages for international migrant workers from India: An assessment*. International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_538168.pdf

Remittance to India

The total remittance received in India from the GCC countries in 2018 was USD 78,609 million, which accounted for 2.9 per cent as a share of the country's total GDP.¹⁷ The total remittance up to October 2019 was USD 82,203 million, which accounted for 2.8 per cent as a share of the total GDP.¹⁸ The table below shows the amount of remittance received in India from various GCC countries:¹⁹

Table 1: Remittance received in India

Destination country	Total remittance outflow by destination countries (USD million) in 2017	Remittance received by India (USD million) in 2017	Percentage of outflow
Bahrain	2466	1336	54.2
Kuwait	13,760	4587	33.3
Oman	9815	3250	33.1
Qatar	12,759	4143	32.5
Saudi Arabia	36,119	11,239	31.1
UAE	44,367	13,823	31.2
Malaysia	9363	287	3.1

Injuries and deaths of migrant workers

In 2017, 282 Indian workers died in Qatar alone, where 31 deaths were from accidents, 237 were natural deaths and 14 were deaths from suicide.²⁰ The data of 2018 (till 8 August) shows that there were 160 deaths in Qatar, of which 16 were from accidents, 136 were natural deaths, and 8 from suicide.²¹ Likewise, there were 659 deaths registered in Kuwait in 2018 and 707 in 2019.²² Likewise, 330 deaths were registered in Bahrain in 2017 and 100 deaths in 2018.²³ There were 1525 deaths recorded in Saudi Arabia in 2017, and 1034 deaths in 2018 (till September).²⁴

Compensation received by migrant workers

The Indians migrating overseas for work have to get ensured under the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY).²⁵ The scheme, launched in 2003, is targeted at the protection of workers under the category of Emigration Check Required (ECR) and is mandatory.²⁶ There are 18 countries under the ECR category, including the GCC countries and Malaysia.²⁷ According to PBBY, the migrant workers have to pay a premium of Rs 275 for two years and Rs 375 for three years, to avail of insurance coverage

17 World Bank. n.d.c. 'Migration and Remittances Data: Annual Remittances Data (updated as of Oct. 2019).' Accessed 15 December 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>; World Bank. n.d.d. 'Migration and Remittances Data: Annual Remittances Data (updated as of Dec. 2018).' Accessed 15 December 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

18 World Bank n.d.c.

19 World Bank. n.d.e. 'Migration and Remittances Data: Bilateral Remittance Matrix 2017.' Accessed 15 December 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

20 Nayak, Venkatesh. n.d. 'RTI Reveal: More than 10 Indian Workers Died Every Day in Gulf Countries in the Last Six Years; 117 Deaths for Every US\$ 117 Remitted.' Accessed 15 December 2019, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. <https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/blog/rti-reveal-more-than-10-indian-workers-died-every-day-in-gulf-countries-in-the-last-six-years-117-deaths-for-every-us-117-remitted-> (5th attachment)

21 Nayak n.d (5th attachment).

22 Embassy of India, Kuwait. n.d. 'Latest position on Disposal of Mortal Remains of Indian Nationals.' Accessed 15 April 2020. <http://www.indembkwt.gov.in/latest-position-on-disposal.php>

23 Embassy of India, Bahrain. 2017. 'Labour and Welfare Wing: Latest position on Disposal of Mortal Remains of Indian Nationals 2017.' <https://eoi.gov.in/bahrain/?5782>

24 Nayak n.d (6th attachment).

25 Ministry of External Affairs. n.d. 'Overseas Indian Affairs: Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2017.' Accessed 15 December 2019, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/pbby.htm>

26 Ministry of External Affairs n.d.

27 Ministry of External Affairs n.d.

of one million rupees for accidental death or permanent disability.²⁸ Some of the services provided by the 2017 amendment of PBBY includes medical insurance of up to Rs 100,000 for injuries, sickness, ailment and diseases and of up to Rs 50,000 per hospitalisation; repatriation cover for the medically unfit or for early termination of employment; medical benefits for the left behind families with hospitalization cost of up to Rs 50,000 for spouse and two children below 22 years of age; maternity expenses of up to Rs 50,000 for women migrant workers; and legal expenses of up to Rs 45,000 on litigation related to overseas employment.²⁹

Status of bilateral agreements with destination countries

India has signed a Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with Saudi Arabia in 2014,³⁰ Bahrain in 2009,³¹ Malaysia in January 2009,³² Oman in 2008,³³ Kuwait in 2007,³⁴ the UAE in 2006,³⁵ and Qatar in 1985.³⁶ The additional protocol to the agreement between India and Qatar on the regulation of the employment of Indian human resource was signed in 2007.³⁷

Employment and workers

Economic growth rate in the country

The economic growth rate in India was 6.1 per cent in 2018 and 5 per cent in 2019.³⁸ It is forecasted to be 4 per cent in 2020.³⁹

Employment and unemployment

The total Labour Force Participation rate in India in 2018 was 47.98 per cent, the rate for men and women being 74.6 per cent and 20.8 respectively.⁴⁰ The total unemployment rate in the fiscal year 2018

28 Ministry of External Affairs n.d.

29 Ministry of External Affairs n.d.

30 Government of India. 2014. *Agreement on Labor Co-operation for Domestic Service Workers Recruited between the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Labour of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-saudi-arabia.pdf>

31 Government of India. 2009a. *Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of India and the Kingdom of Bahrain on Labor and Manpower Development*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-bahrain.pdf>

32 Government of India. 2009b. *Memorandum of Understanding on the Employment of Workers between the Government of India and the Government of Malaysia*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-malaysia.pdf>

33 Government of India. 2008. *Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in the Republic of India and the Ministry of Manpower in the Sultanate of Oman in the Field of Manpower*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-oman.pdf>

34 Government of India. 2007a. *Memorandum of Understanding on Labor, Employment and Manpower Development Between the Government of the State of Kuwait and the Government of the Republic of India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-kuwait.pdf>

35 Government of India. 2006. *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the Government of India in the Field of Manpower*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-uae.pdf>

36 Government of India. 1985. *Agreement concerning the organization of Manpower Employment between the State of Qatar represented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Republic of India represented by the Ministry of Labor*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-qatar.pdf>

37 Government of India. 2007b. *Additional Protocol to the Agreement between the Republic of India and the State of Qatar on the Regulation of the Employment of Indian Manpower Signed on 11 April 1985*. New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/additional-protocol-qatar.pdf>

38 Asian Development Bank. n.d. 'Economic indicators for India.' Accessed 1 May 2020. <https://www.adb.org/countries/india/economy>

39 Asian Development Bank n.d.

40 World Bank. n.d.f. 'Labor force participation rate, total (% of total population ages 15+) (national estimate) – India.' Accessed 15 December 2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.ZS?locations=IN>

was 6.1 per cent, of which 5.3 per cent was in rural India and 7.8 per cent in urban India.⁴¹ There was a higher unemployment rate among women in urban areas (10.8 per cent) compared to men (7.1 per cent).⁴² In addition, the unemployment rate in rural areas was 5.5 per cent for men and 3.8 per cent for women.⁴³

Status of informal and formal employment and the future of work

Around 81 per cent of the Indian workers are involved in the informal sectors and only 6.5 per cent in the formal sector.⁴⁴ Another study shows that, in 2017-18, approximately 85 per cent of the total workforce in India were employed in the unorganised sector, and there were 90.7 per cent of informal workers (85.5 per cent in the unorganised and 5.2 in the organised sector) who were employed without a formal contract or weren't granted leave or benefits.⁴⁵

Working conditions in India

The national minimum wage was set at Rs 176 per day in 2017.⁴⁶ It is not mandatory in India to provide an employment contract in writing, however, many states have made it compulsory to issue a contract paper which includes the description and title of the job, its location, date of commencement and duration, and salary and benefits, among others.⁴⁷ The minimum working hours is 48 hours per week and six days a week.⁴⁸ The workers should be paid twice the ordinary rate of pay in case of overtime.⁴⁹ The various state-specific shops and Commercial Establishments Acts (S&E Acts) have mandated that women working during night shift should be provided with security and transport facilities.⁵⁰ The workers in India are entitled to 20 to 30 days of paid leave per year and the female workers are entitled to a paid maternity leave of 26 weeks during the birth of the first two children and 12 weeks if the workers already have two surviving children.⁵¹ Additionally, both male and female employees also get 10-15 holidays, including national holidays and festivals.⁵² There is also a provision of provident fund for the workers, where both the employers and employees are required to contribute 12 per cent of the basic salary.⁵³

Ratification of ILO Conventions

India is a founding member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and has been in the ILO Governing Body since 1922 as a permanent member.⁵⁴ It has ratified 47 ILO Conventions, including six Fundamental Conventions, three Governance Conventions and 38 Technical Conventions.⁵⁵

41 The Economic Times. 2019. 'Is the job scene in India bad? Depends on how you see it, says govt.' *The Economic Times*, 1 June 2019. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/indias-unemployment-rate-hit-6-1-in-2017-18/articleshow/69598640.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

42 The Economic Times 2019.

43 The Economic Times 2019.

44 The Wire. 2018. 'Nearly 81% of the Employed in India Are in the Informal Sector: ILO.' *The Wire*, 4 May 2018. <https://thewire.in/labour/nearly-81-of-the-employed-in-india-are-in-the-informal-sector-ilo>

45 Murthy, S V Ramana. 2019. *Measuring Informal Economy in India*. <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Conferences/2019/7th-statistics-forum/session-ii-murthy.ashx>

46 International Labour Organization. 2018b. *India wage report: Wage policies for decent work and inclusive growth*. International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_638305.pdf

47 IndusLaw. n.d. *Employment law overview India 2019-2020*. L&E Global India. https://knowledge.leglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/LEGlobal-Employment-Law-Overview_India_2019-2020.pdf

48 Rödl & Partner. n.d. *Labour and Employment Law India*. <https://www.roedl.com/en-gb/de/media/publications/brochures/documents/labour-employment-law-india.pdf>

49 Rödl & Partner n.d.

50 IndusLaw n.d.

51 Rödl & Partner n.d.

52 Rödl & Partner n.d.

53 IndusLaw n.d.

54 International Labour Organization. n.d.a. 'ILO in India.' Accessed 15 December 2019. https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/aboutus/WCMS_166809/lang--en/index.htm

55 International Labour Organization. n.d.b. 'Ratifications for India.' Accessed 15 December 2019. <https://www.ilo.org/>

The Fundamental Conventions ratified by India include the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (C029); the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (C100); the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (C105); the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (C111); the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (C138); and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (C182).⁵⁶ Similarly, the Governance Conventions ratified include the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (C081); the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (C122); and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (C144).⁵⁷ Some of the Technical Conventions endorsed by India are the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (C001); the Minimum Age (Industry) Convention, 1919 (C005); the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (C014); the Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention, 1925 (C018); the Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925 (C019); and the Employment Service Convention, 1948 (C088), among others.⁵⁸

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dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11200:0::NO::P11200_COUNTRY_ID:102691

56 International Labour Organization n.d.b.

57 International Labour Organization n.d.b.

58 International Labour Organization n.d.b.

- New Delhi: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/mou-oman.pdf>
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South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SATUC)

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