

Launch of Pakistan Migration Report 2024

11 June 2024

At Main Library, Lahore School of Economics, Main Campus, Burki

Current Issues and Migration Management

Mio Sato

Chief of Mission, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Pakistan

Honorable Rector, Dr. Shahid Amjad,

Director CIMRAD Dr. Rashid Amjad,

Dr. G.M. Arif

Dear friend Dr. Nasra Shah,

Distinguished guests,

As-salam Alaikum and Good Morning.

It is my great honor and pleasure to be part of Pakistan Migration Report 2024 Launch event. I would like to congratulate the Center for International Migration, Remittances, and Diaspora (CIMRAD) of Lahore School of Economics for this third biennial report. As Chief of Mission of IOM Pakistan, I extend my gratitude to all for your work and unwavering commitment to addressing one of the most pressing issues of our time: Migration.

Migration is as ancient as humanity itself. Throughout history, people have moved sometimes across continents and seas in search of better lives, to flee conflict, to escape persecution, or to find economic opportunity. Today the story of migration is much more complex than what we see in the news or what we heard in political debates. It's true that migration is an important public policy topic throughout the world, but it's vital that the discussions about migration be grounded in facts and data, research, and analysis where discussions, debates and policy making can be more fully informed.

Last month, in May, IOM also presented our World Migration Report 2024. The current global estimate is that there were around 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, which has increased over the past five decades, equating to 3.6 percent of the global population. 20 percent of all international migrants worldwide primarily originating from six Asian countries including Pakistan. There is an overall increase in remittances in recent decades, from 128 billion USD in 2000 to 831 billion USD in 2022. And Pakistan is the sixth remittance recipient country.

In parallel of this document produced by IOM at the global level, I am very glad to see that today we have the Pakistan country specific biennial analysis. I believe that it's our common hope that the reports inspire new ideas and help share the conversation. I read in this Third Pakistan Migration Report 2024 that four main different aspects have been explored: 1) the trends and patterns of migrant outflows from 2019-2023 -- the outflow numbers increased to 862,000 in 2023 after the impacts of

the pandemic subsided, among which 90 percent of all workers still proceeded to the Gulf region; 2) trends and main issues in remittance receipts — from July 2023 till April 2024, 23.8 billion USD remittance have been received against the government target of 30.5 billion USD; 3) the level of “brain drain” – the percentage of highly qualified/skilled out-migrants have remained less than 10 percent while a relatively larger number of nurse have migrated from 337 in 2019 to 4,800 in 2023; and 4) the trends in irregular migration from Pakistan—Pakistanis are found among the top ten nationalities that enter Europe illegally either through land or sea borders.

Indeed, 2023, the first year after the Covid 19 Pandemics, has seen historic increases in the number of people on the move. Challenges and opportunities exist at the same time. Because of climate change, conflict and pronounced economic disparity, many people have little choice but to find safety and livelihoods elsewhere by moving. Regular migration pathways have remained yet limited in recent years, unfortunately, it means that people are resorting to irregular migration channels, putting their lives at risk, and sometimes overwhelming border communities. This is a critical moment, especially for the people themselves. However, let’s also make the message clear: **migrants drive human development and enhance economic growth in the places they move to and the places they move from.** This is the case for the globe, and this is the case for Pakistan and Pakistani migrants. They’re workers, students, entrepreneurs, and so much more. All of this creates a unique blend of cultures and perspectives.

Allow me to go back to look at the overall background. As we all know, Pakistan is one of the 10 most populous countries of the world, with its population exceeding 241.3 million in 2021 (World Bank). Despite being termed as one of the emerging economies, Pakistan ranks lower than all comparable regional countries of South Asia on the UN's Human Development Index (HDI), standing 161 out of 191 countries (in 2023, UNDP). Pakistan’s geostrategic location plays a significant role in influencing and shaping the internal socio-political dynamics of the country as well as of the region. Pakistan shares borders with four nations, having close ethnic, linguistic, religious, and economic ties with each neighboring country. – All of these provide great potential for migration.

The migration and mobility landscape of Pakistan is dynamic, diverse, and complex, characterized by circular and seasonal migration, regular and irregular migration, large populations of refugees, internally displaced people. As shown by the CIMRAD report, mentioned previously, Pakistan is sending over 800,000 migrants recent years, and 90 percent of the labours are to Gulf countries. Participation of female migrant workers from Pakistan remains very low, especially due to the social norms in the society and legal and policy restrictions on women’s mobility. There are still a great number of irregular migrants in the EU.

In general, Pakistani migrants also opt for irregular channels and in an attempt to flee the country, often become victims of human trafficking. Each year, approximately forty thousand Pakistanis attempt migrating irregularly, especially via land route (crossing at the Pakistan-Iran border), with EU countries such as Germany and Greece being popular destination countries. Consequently, deportation of irregular migrants is also common. In 2022, more than 50,000 Pakistani citizens were deported home from a few countries.

As IOM, cooperating with all of you here today to demystify the complex tapestry of human mobility, **one of our major objectives is to work with the Government of Pakistan to expand regular pathways to make sure migration is orderly and safe, and it benefits both the country of destination, and the country of origin as well as migrants themselves.** We are focused on **unlocking the power of migration, as part of the solution to greater economic prosperity.**

Today, let me focus on how all the relevant stakeholders could promote regular pathways of Pakistani migrants.

Promoting regular pathways of migration

Strengthening and expanding regular migration pathways will not only enhance public confidence in migration that is safe, regular, and dignified but will also result in a greater alignment of migrant skills with the needs in destination countries. Improved access to migration pathways will also help curb the menace of smuggling and human trafficking and together with our partners in the migration cycle, we will be able to reap the positive results of migration in the form of sustainable development and growth for countries of origin and countries of destination. To strengthen and expand the regular migration pathways, attention should be paid at different levels through the cycle of migration including pre-departure, transit, arrival and stay, return, and reintegration. The overall goal of expanding migration pathways and facilitating regular migration can be achieved if IOM and its partners work alongside the following core objectives:

1. Improved technical capacity of GoP in the realm of migration management (including the development of policy guidance for the field; the formulation of comprehensive strategies; standard-setting and quality control; and knowledge management relating to “mainstream” migration sectors, such as migration and development, counter-trafficking, migration health, assistance for vulnerable migrants, immigration and border management and overall capacity-building in migration management).
2. Improved awareness among aspiring migrants about the regular migration opportunities and the risks of irregular migration, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.
3. Facilitating labour mobility and decent employment opportunities in the light of skills demand in the international labour market.
4. Facilitating academic mobility, and facilitating dignified return and adequate socio-economic reintegration of returning migrants.

Technical support to the GoP in migration management

Over last years, despite the pending approval of certain draft policy documents, the Govt. of Pakistan continued active participation in international and regional level cooperation dialogues and consultative processes aimed at strengthening migration governance in South Asia such as The Colombo Process¹, Abu Dhabi Dialogue², Almaty Process³, Bali Process⁴, Asia-Gulf Cooperation Council Dialogues⁵, and Inter-state consultation mechanisms on Migration (GRCP)⁶. Through these dialogues and forums, Govt. of Pakistan plays an active role in advocating for robust migration policies, improved cooperation among countries of origin and destination, and strengthened mechanisms of protection of rights of migrant workers. These dialogues and forums act as enablers for strengthening bilateral ties with countries of destination and facilitate the process of mutual agreements on labour mobility.

¹ [Regional Consultative Process on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labor for Countries of Origin in Asia \(Colombo Process\) | International Organization for Migration \(iom.int\)](#)

² [Abu Dhabi Dialogue](#)

³ [Almaty Process on Refugee Protection and International Migration | International Organization for Migration \(iom.int\)](#)

⁴ [The Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime](#)

⁵ [Asia-GCC Officials Address Progress and Challenges in Safe | IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific](#)

⁶ [Inter-State Consultation Mechanisms on Migration | IOM](#)

Awareness raising

We will continue working with partners to make existing and new regular pathways accessible and inclusive to enable more individuals to benefit from opportunities for development and protection. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders such as Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development, Overseas Employment Corporation, Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, and other local government and non-government organizations, we need and will continue initiating, planning, and implementing information and awareness raising activities and campaigns for potential Pakistani migrants on the process and procedures involved in going abroad legally; destination country specific information including foreign culture, rules and regulations, protection mechanisms available to migrants, and migrants' rights and duties; potential risks of irregular migration including human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, etc.

Preventing and countering TIP and SOM

With other international partners, we will also be ready to provide protection and assistance to migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, and will develop institutional capacity to ensure the sustainability of its comprehensive programming to prevent and address migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Relevant work will be closely coordinated with the relevant stakeholders such as Ministry of Interior and Federal Investigation Agency, and In line with the National Action Plan⁷ to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrants Smuggling, on topics such as the Development and establishment of effective mechanisms to combat human trafficking and migrants smuggling in Pakistan through improved systematic procedures; establishment of national referral mechanism; strengthened engagement of various key stakeholders for the implementation of the measures to prevent and counter TIP and SOM, and capacity-building for frontline workers, etc. All these require a strengthened cooperation among the relevant bodies to avoid duplication of work and leverage resources.

Labour mobility

Global prosperity is being hampered by a lack of employment in some areas and labour shortages in others. It is necessary to continue enhancing the technical assistance to the private sector and government-led skills mobility initiatives that connect migrants to decent work opportunities. The international players will also contribute to successful labour migration by equipping migrants with skills and knowledge for the twenty-first century workplace through entrepreneurship and skills training and improving access to social protection and finance. To promote safe, orderly, and regular labor migration of potential migrants and ensure protection and welfare of overseas Pakistanis, following areas are to be considered: adapting key global and regional migration instruments to promote human-right based and gender-responsive labour migration; ensuring transparent, cost-efficient, ethical recruitments and enhancing the oversea labour migrants protection and management; promoting improved access to skills development opportunities and opportunities of decent work among potential migrants; producing and disseminating labour migration knowledge products to enhance broad understanding of labour migration's role in development, including aspects of social cohesion and integration/reintegration.

⁷ [1815351109.pdf \(fia.gov.pk\)](#)

Given the large scale of Pakistani diaspora, it is vital to include and further engage the diaspora group into the development of Pakistan, and strengthen the collaboration with the group in destination especially at the pre-departure and post-arrival stages.

Academic mobility

Every year, thousands of Pakistani students pursue educational opportunities in countries across the world including the UK, USA, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Italy and multiple other destinations. There is a continuing need to expand the academic mobility of Pakistani nationals, including through supporting the government of Pakistan to establish bilateral and multilateral agreements that facilitate academic exchanges, such as scholarships for students and academic professionals, visiting professorships, joint training programmes, and international research opportunities, in cooperation with academic institutions and other relevant stakeholders, to increase the “brain gain” and benefit from the migration.

Return and reintegration

In order to facilitate returning migrants with safe and dignified return and reintegration, IOM assists migrants in vulnerable situations who do not have the legal right to stay on another state’s territory to return back to their home country. IOM will also continue to facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants into community life by providing them equal access to social protection and services, justice, psycho-social assistance, vocational training, employment opportunities and decent work, recognition of skills acquired abroad, and financial services, to fully build upon their entrepreneurship, skills and human capital as active members of society and contributors to sustainable development in the country of origin upon return.

In an era where the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the pledge to leave no one are falling behind, IOM, together with all actors, seeks to maximize the potential of migration by supporting States in creating, growing, and improving regular migration pathways while decreasing irregular migration.

We do, because we believe that if managed well, migration is a cornerstone of sustainable development, prosperity and progress. Let’s make migration an opportunity to be seized, and let’s leverage it for human development, peace and prosperity across the globe, and especially in Pakistan. For the people on the move now, for those who will be on the move in the future, and for those who want to stay, let’s come together with people-centered and evidence-based solutions.

Thank you very much.