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INDIA CENTRE  
FOR MIGRATION



# Domestic Workers from India

Study on Recruitment Practices and Reasons for their Emigration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana



Data on Domestic Workers



Focus Group Discussions



Socio-Economic Profiles



Recruitment Agents



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# **Domestic Workers from India**

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Emigration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**



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## FOREWORD

Indian diaspora is among the largest in the world. The over 30 million strong Overseas Indian community, consisting both Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), is spread all around the world. The Overseas Indian community is highly diversified ranging from skilled professionals, entrepreneurs to low and semi-skilled workers. India is now recognized as a leading source nation for skilled, disciplined and qualified manpower. Equipped with occupation and trade-specific skills, which are further supported by soft skills and requisite pre-departure orientation (PDO), Indian manpower plays a key role in the global skills ecosystem.

Every year, lakhs of Indian workers migrate abroad to Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries, primarily to the Gulf region and Malaysia. Presently, Indian community in the Gulf region is around 9 million. Women migrant workers, especially the domestic workers, constitute an important category. A labour force of this magnitude requires a robust institutional framework to facilitate safe, orderly, humane and legal migration. Skilling of our workforce is an integral component of our effort. Our motto is 'Surakshit Jaaye, Prashikshit Jaaye'.

Under the able stewardship of Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister, the Ministry has accorded key priority to ensure the welfare and protection of Indian nationals abroad. The institutional framework in this regard has been considerably strengthened during the last four years.

Issues pertaining to migration of women migrant workers, especially, those who work as domestic helps abroad require special attention in view of the associated challenges. While the Government of India provides the institutional regulatory framework, State Governments play a pivotal role in generating due awareness at the grass-root level. India Centre for Migration (ICM), which serves as a research think-tank of the Ministry on all matters related to international labour migration, has done considerable work in this area. Recognizing the imminent need for in-depth research and understanding the reasons for women migration including the assessment of the impact of such migration on families they leave behind, ICM had recently commissioned a field study in two leading States – Andhra Pradesh and Telangana - through Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram.

It gives me immense pleasure to introduce this publication on **Domestic Workers from India: Study on Recruitment Practices and Reasons for their Emigration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**. This comprehensive field-based study brings out in detail issues of concern and challenges faced by women domestic workers throughout the migration cycle. It also documents the view point of various stakeholders involved in the recruitment process. I would like to congratulate ICM for bringing out this publication.

(Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay)

New Delhi  
June 27, 2018

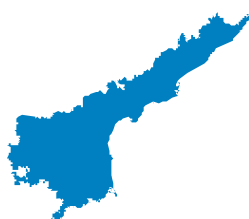
## Domestic Workers from India: Study on Recruitment Practices and Reasons for their Emigration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

### The objectives and deliverables of the study include:

- 🕒 Collect data on women domestic workers to Gulf countries and analyze the patterns, processes, causes and consequences of migration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
- 🕒 Conduct Field Visits, Case Studies, Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews in five districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, particularly in villages known for sending women domestic workers
- 🕒 Analyze migrant domestic worker's socio-economic profiles and reasons for Gulf emigration
- 🕒 Construct the migration cycle of migrant women domestic workers and identify challenges.
- 🕒 Examine the role of key stakeholders, particularly recruitment agents/middlemen
- 🕒 Analysis of specific regulatory measures (30 years) and Bank Guarantee (USD 2,500)
- 🕒 Review National/State level Institutional Support for Women Migrants/ Domestic Workers
- 🕒 Submit specific policy recommendations and actionable items to the Ministry

The targeted sample size for the study was 100 Emigrants (Households), 100 Return Emigrants, 20 case studies, 10 Key Informant Interviews of NGOs and Local Authorities, and 10 Focus Group Discussions. Data was collected from three districts of Andhra Pradesh (East Godavari, West Godavari and YSR Kadapa) and two districts of Telangana (Karim Nagar & Nizamabad and Hyderabad). This includes semi-structured interviews among 131 Emigrants and 120 Return Emigrants surveyed in both states; 31 in-depth case studies among return migrants; and semi-structured Focus Group Discussions led in each district engendering open-ended dialogue. In addition, we collated data from and conducted interviews with Key Informants in-person, over the phone, and over email (13 among local authorities/officials and 12 with social workers and NGOs).

### Andhra Pradesh



Districts	Emigrant	Returnee	Case Study	NGO	Local Authority	FGD
E. Godavari	23	24	23	02	02	02
W. Godavari	32	23	05	02	02	02
YSR Kadapa	24	28	03	02	02	01

### Telangana

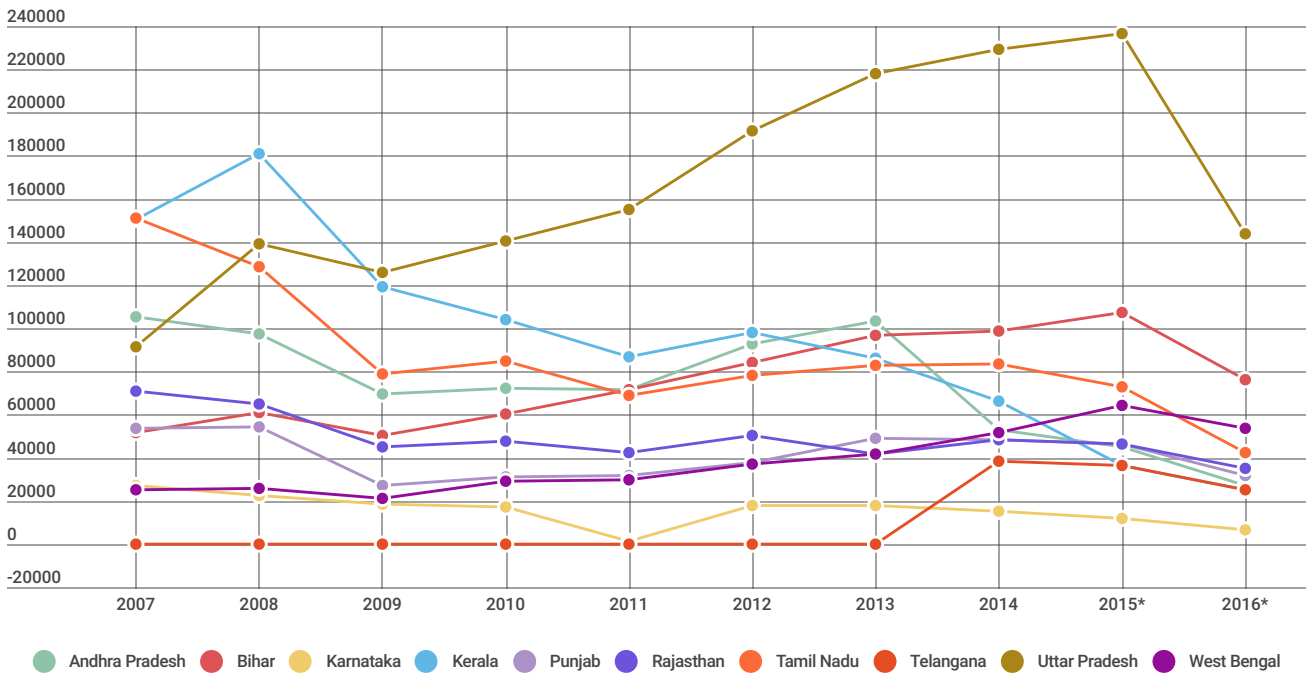


Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	27	22	08	03	03	02
Hyderabad	25	23	08	03	04	03
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>

Based on these parameters, the report provides an overview of domestic work emigration from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, a critical analysis of recruitment practices, the role of migration and recruitment stakeholders, and an analysis of migrant women's' experiences across the migration cycle – pre-departure,

departure, at the destination, return/repatriation, resettlement and remigration. The report concludes with a discussion of current migration legislation and institutional frameworks, the potential for fair and formal domestic work migration and policy recommendations to promote safe, gender-responsive migration.

State-wise Figures of emigration clearance endorsements, 2007-2016



State	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total(All state)</b>	<b>809453</b>	<b>848601</b>	<b>610272</b>	<b>641356</b>	<b>626565</b>	<b>747041</b>	<b>816655</b>	<b>804878</b>	<b>782083</b>	<b>520938</b>
<b>AP &amp; Telangana % of ECR</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>10</b>

This increase in absolute migration numbers, as well as Andhra Pradesh’s consistent share of national emigration clearances (Table above), demonstrates that migration from undivided Andhra Pradesh (and now Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) remains firmly within a period of growth. Despite reorganisation into separate states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the combined share of emigration clearances remains high; for every 10 workers who migrate with ECR clearance from India, at least 1 hails from Andhra Pradesh or Telangana. Across the ten-year period between 2007-2016, the share of ECR migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have remained steadily between 10-15 percent of total ECR endorsements granted from India (Table above). As such, migration from the two states warrants comprehensive policy attention.

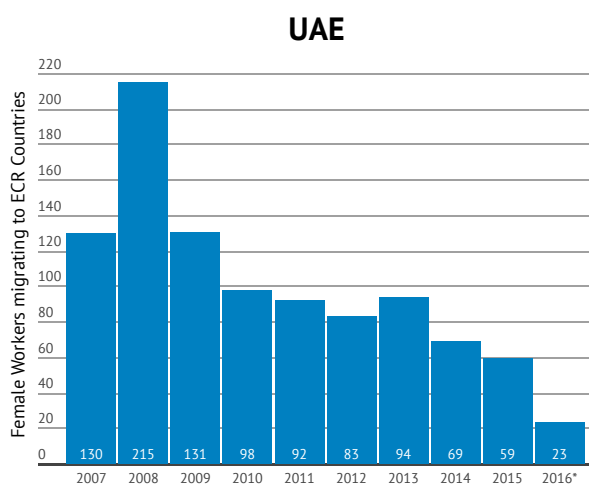


## Emigration of Women Domestic Workers from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

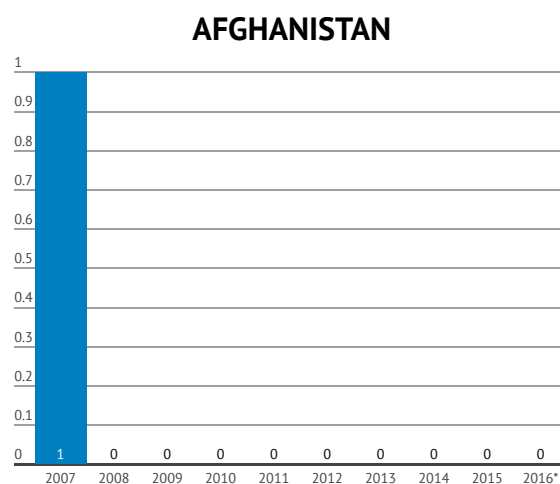
With respect to the gendered composition of these migration flows, 99.9 percent of the total female emigrant workers to ECR countries from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (graph on page 8), as captured by the e-Migrate system between 2007 and 2016, migrated to the six Gulf countries – a total of 93,242 emigrants. For every 10,000 female workers who migrate with ECR clearance from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, only 12 clearances are granted for non-Gulf ECR countries. This underscores the importance of Gulf nations as the principal destination of low-skilled, particularly domestic service, female workers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Among the Gulf destinations, the data

for this period demonstrates that Kuwait has consistently ranked as the top migration destination for women workers, followed by Oman and Saudi Arabia. Nearly 80 percent of women workers migrating to ECR countries between 2007 and 2016 were destined for Kuwait, and since 2012 this share of Kuwait-bound migrants has been over 97 percent. Mid-year figures from 2016, however, suggest that Saudi Arabia was the primary destination of women migrants from the two states, while migration to Kuwait and other GCC countries dramatically reduced in the final two years of the ten-year period.

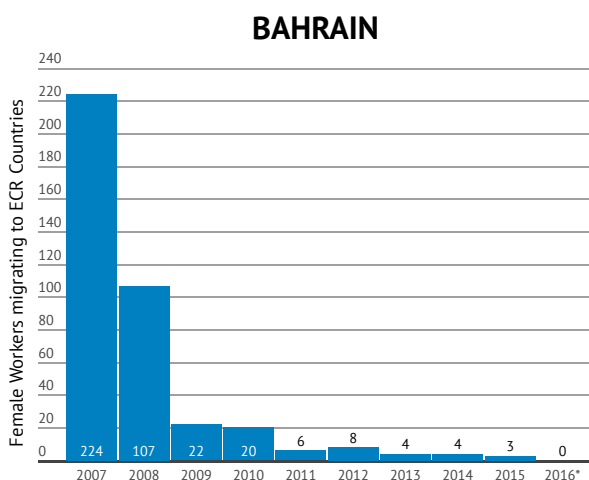
### Emigration Clearances for Female Workers migrating to ECR Countries from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2007-2016



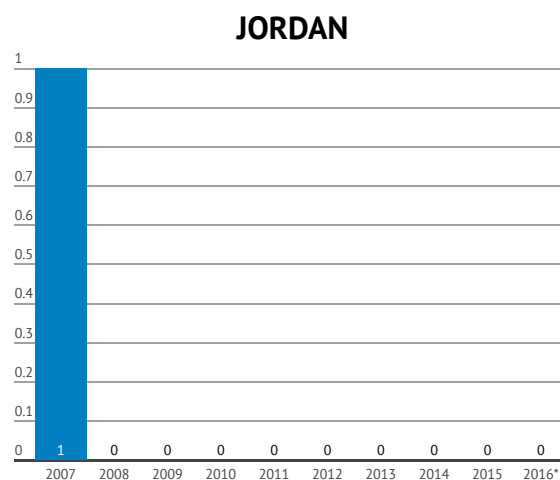
Total Female workers 994



Total Female workers 1



Total Female workers 398

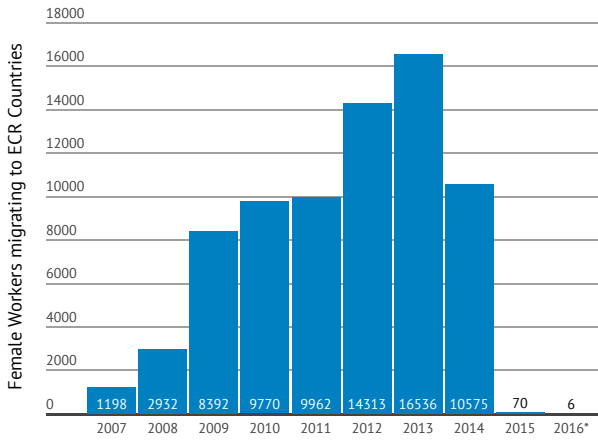


Total Female workers 1

Source: e-Migrate of MEA & tabulated by ICM.

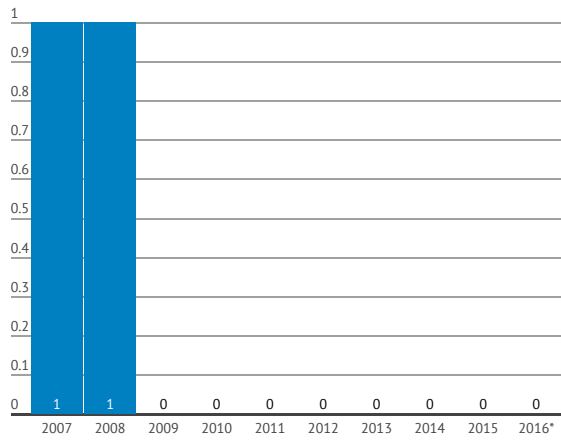
\*2016 figures are from mid-year.

**KUWAIT**



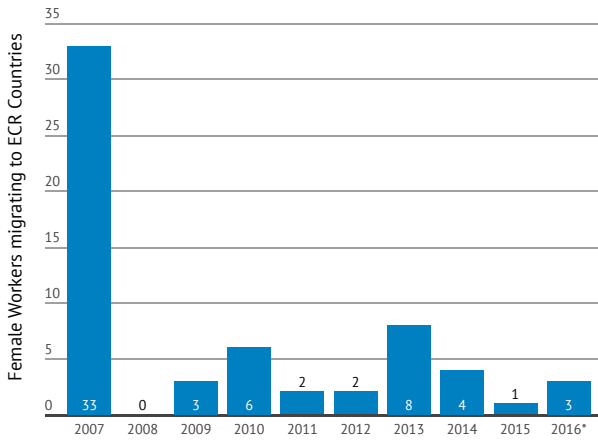
Total Female workers 73754

**LEBANON**



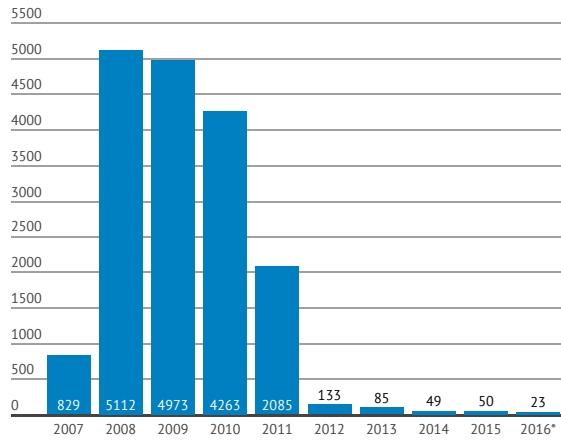
Total Female workers 2

**MALAYSIA**



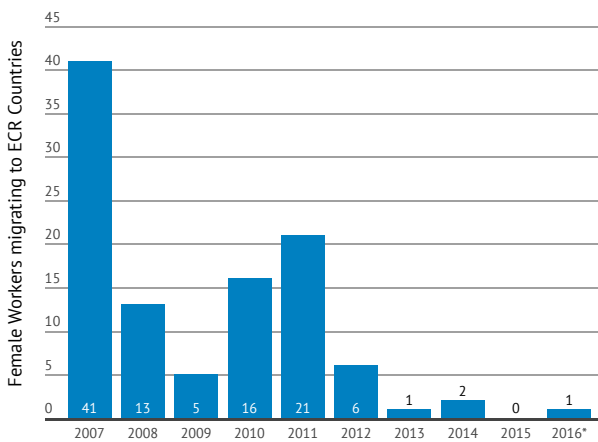
Total Female workers 62

**OMAN**



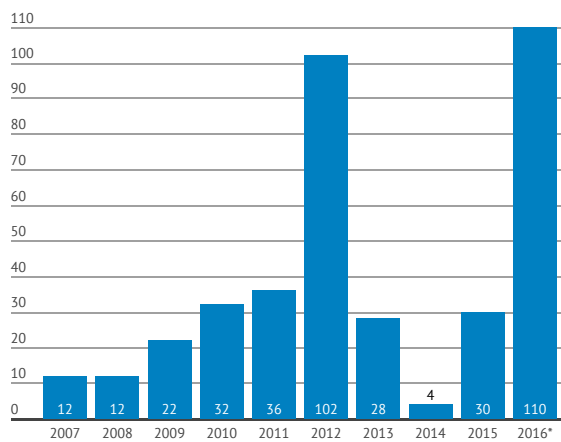
Total Female workers 17602

**QATAR**

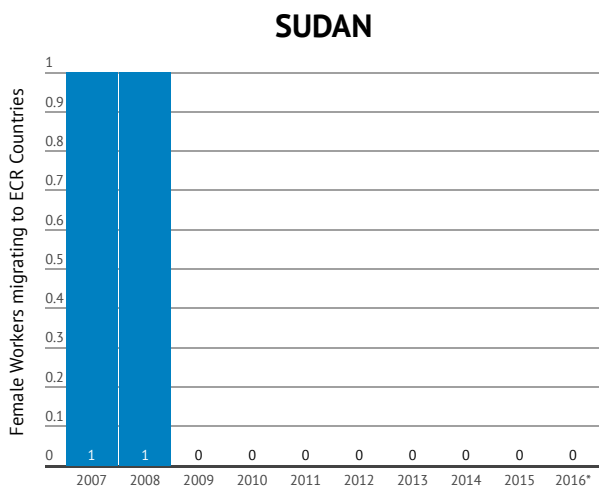


Total Female workers 106

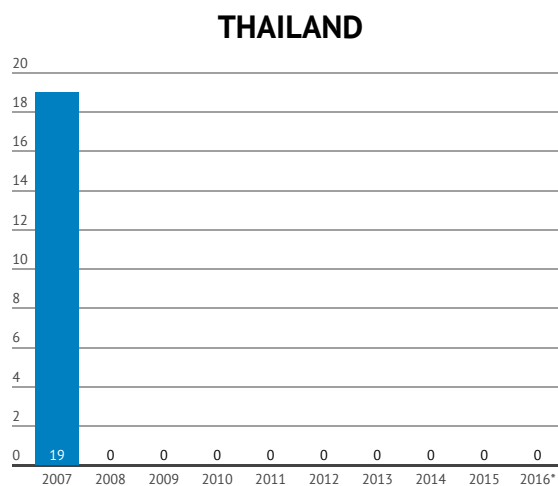
**SAUDI ARABIA**



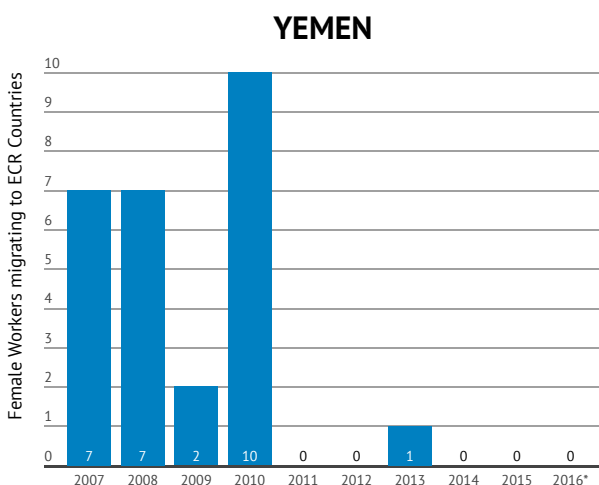
Total Female workers 388



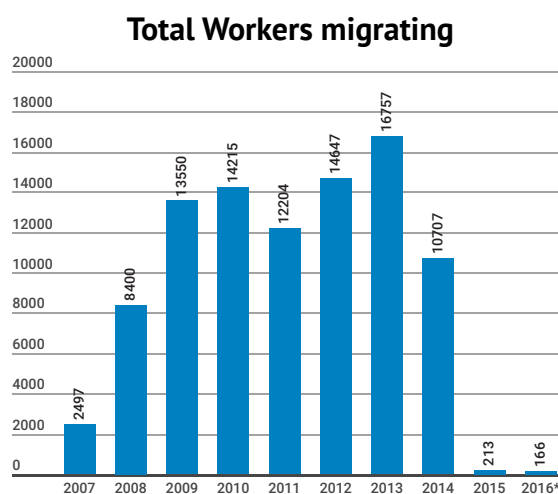
Total Female workers 2



Total Female workers 19



Total Female workers 27



Female Workers migrating to ECR Countries from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2007-2016 - 93356

Source: e-Migrate of MEA & tabulated by ICM.

\*2016 figures are from mid-year.

Data collected over the same ten-year period (2007-2016) shows the POE-wise distribution of female emigrant flows to ECR countries (Table A). From these figures, it is clear that between 2009-2014, 85-95 percent of total female emigrant flows from India to these countries were routed through the POE Office in Hyderabad. Emigration figures from 2015 and 2016, however, stand in sharp contrast to the flows recorded in previous years. There was a staggering 98 percent reduction in total emigration of women recorded to ECR countries in 2015 from the previous year, and this figure reduced by a further 20 percent by mid-year 2016. What is interesting to note is that female migration figures from the Hyderabad POE closely mirrored this downward trend in 2015 with 98 percent decline in flows between 2014-2015, and by mid-year 2016, the downturn in female emigration figures from the Hyderabad POE far outstripped the overall decline in emigration numbers.

**Table A: PoE wise data on emigration of Female Workers to ECR countries from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2007-2016**

PoE Office	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*	Total
Delhi	77	4	4	4	10	5	6	2	2	77	191
Hyderabad	672	5861	13299	13736	10749	13818	16376	10356	158	45	85070
Jaipur	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Mumbai	1748	2532	228	341	435	389	362	342	51	33	6461
Chennai	0	1	18	131	997	432	9	4	0	10	1602
Cochin	0	2	1	3	11	3	0	2	1	1	24
Thiruvananthapuram	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2497</b>	<b>8400</b>	<b>13550</b>	<b>14215</b>	<b>12204</b>	<b>14647</b>	<b>16757</b>	<b>10707</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>93356</b>

Source: Data compiled from e-Migrate of MEA

\*2016 figures are from mid-year.

From tabulations of MEA's e-Migrate data on the highest female emigrant-sending districts across a ten-year period, it is clear that key districts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana State have consistently contributed among the highest shares of women migrants, followed by districts in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Between 2007-2014, women emigrants from three districts in Andhra Pradesh (West Godavari, East Godavari, YSR

Kadapa) and one district in Telangana (Hyderabad) accounted for as much as 75-85 percent of emigration from these top sending districts. From 2015 onwards, the share of female migrants from districts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has weakened considerably and districts in Kerala and other states have been tracking ahead in sending emigrant women.

**Table B: Top Districts sending Female Emigrants (excluding nurses) to ECR countries**

District	State	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*	Total
W. Godavari	AP	459	2724	4204	4418	2609	3084	3930	2548	44	34	24054
E. Godavari	AP	363	1936	3345	3488	2170	2570	3598	2326	55	26	19877
YSR Kadapa	AP	0	0	0	0	0	1	110	355	27	0	493
Hyderabad	TS	236	262	230	227	175	283	342	165	45	27	1992
Kottayam	Kerala	4	137	221	342	267	291	302	322	109	118	2113
Pathanamthitta	Kerala	47	171	239	295	224	266	278	289	91	101	2001
Kollam	Kerala	77	303	337	390	287	266	347	287	75	91	2460
Ernakulam	Kerala	8	129	228	300	275	266	237	246	91	80	1860
Trivandrum	Kerala	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	46	75	72	195
Thrissur	Kerala	0	28	73	87	106	126	123	116	64	67	790
Alappuzha	Kerala	12	125	235	234	220	222	221	208	82	65	1624
<b>Total</b>		<b>1207</b>	<b>5815</b>	<b>9112</b>	<b>9781</b>	<b>6334</b>	<b>7375</b>	<b>9488</b>	<b>6908</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>57459</b>

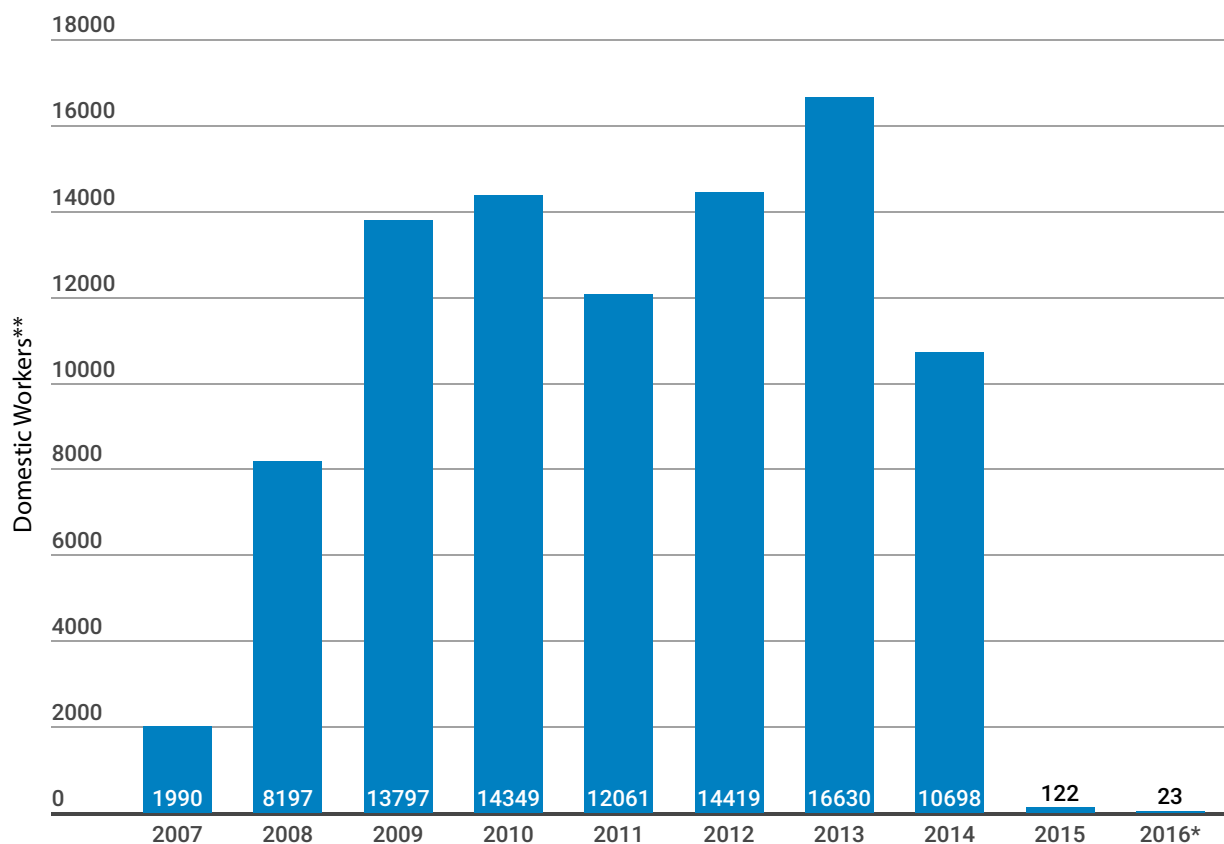
Source: Data compiled from e-Migrate of MEA

\*2016 figures are from mid-year.

The decline in women emigrants from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to ECR Countries since 2015 (Graph 1) runs parallel to the drastic dip in overall female emigration recorded in ECR endorsement figures from the key Indian sending districts. While a portion of this apparent decline may be attributed to partial or incomplete data records, and local factors, the significance of the

slump in women's emigration clearance endorsements (Graph 1) vis-à-vis relatively steady total emigration clearances (Table A) suggests that there may be other, structural factors that resulted in the reduction in numbers of women emigrants granted emigration clearance since 2015.

**Graph 1: Female Domestic Service Worker emigration to ECR countries from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2007- 2016**



Source: e-Migrate of MEA & tabulated by ICM

\*2016 figures are from mid-year.

\*\*Includes all categories of women who emigrated for Domestic Service.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the number of Indian migrant domestic workers given emigration clearance for migration to Gulf countries from September 2014 to November 2016 was 58163. Domestic work is also the leading occupation of low-skilled female emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to ECR designated countries. Of the total migrant women from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana who received emigration clearance endorsements in 2007, about 80 percent migrated for domestic service work (Graph 1). Since 2008, this pattern has considerably escalated. Over 99 percent of female migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, who received ECR clearance between 2009 and 2014, moved into domestic service positions. However, the figures show that since 2015 female emigrants to ECR countries are no longer moving exclusively into domestic work (Graph 1). This points to the need for further analysis of the conditions prompting the changing patterns of female emigration to ECR countries.

The steadily rising pattern of female migrant domestic service workers between 2007-2014 (Table C) would imply that this migration stream is a critical avenue for upward social mobility, with wider implications for remittance-led growth in these states. However, much of these potential gains (for individuals and the

state) are diluted by the lack of comprehensive legislative coverage, ineffective monitoring of recruitment practices and emigration processes, and the operation of a thriving informal economy of sub-agents and networks that inflate the costs and risks of migration. Recent government efforts to protect women migrants and ensure safer, formal migration through recruitment regulations and migratory controls may have, however, led to a reduction in the numbers of women domestic service workers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana migrating through recorded channels since 2015 (Table C). While the long-term effects of these policy changes remain to be seen, it is important to note the inflexion in the numbers of women migrants and domestic service workers seeking emigration clearance from the two states.

This is further evidenced by the significant slip in migration numbers of female domestic workers to ECR countries from the two states in 2015 and 2016 (Table C). While these recent figures may be partly attributed to incomplete data recording, the steep declining trend corroborates field evidence that points to declining numbers of formal women emigrants.

**Table C: Emigration Clearance for Female Domestic Workers migrating to ECR Countries from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 2007-2016**

COUNTRY	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
UAE	66	147	97	71	53	53	56	48	45	31
Afghanistan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saudi Arabia	4	8	17	18	24	35	19	2	22	19
Kuwait	347	1122	3826	4782	3441	5771	7844	5304	56	4
Qatar	29	10	3	13	15	2	1	1	0	1
Oman	467	3565	3817	3224	1418	70	54	35	45	30
Bahrain	127	68	16	17	2	6	2	3	3	2
Malaysia	7	0	2	2	1	1	3	1	0	0
Jordan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thailand	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lebanon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sudan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yemen	5	2	1	6	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	1058	4922	7779	8133	4954	5938	7980	5394	171	87

Against this backdrop, the study seeks to understand the challenges faced by women across different migration stages and to inform a framework of action to facilitate migration by women (particularly domestic workers) as a safe, informed, and empowered choice. Such an approach requires attention to the needs and concerns of women as potential migrants; migrants; return migrants and; as members of emigrant households.

### Motivations to Migrate

Based on focus group discussions, case studies and interviews with emigrant households and return emigrants, this section unpacks some of the factors that influence the wider contexts in which migration decisions are made.

While it has been noted that men migrate primarily in response to widespread unemployment or in search of improved salaries, the social and economic factors precipitating the migration of women from the region are complex and wide-ranging. Besieged by economic strife, including acute poverty, chronic unemployment and insufficiency of guaranteed work days through NREGA, debt-burdens, and precarious work conditions, a majority of the respondents (particularly the rural landless poor) noted better work and salary expectations as a major marker for their migration decision. Others gestured towards deeper social issues such as persistent gender-based and sexual violence, marital discord, abandonment/separation/divorce, death of family members, lack of education and training, education/marriage/dowry-related expenses, and the ongoing marginalization of Dalit communities as the reasons for seeking overseas opportunities. All these issues combine to make women in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, particularly those in remote rural pockets, likely to seek Gulf migration prospects while also rendering them prime targets for predatory labour migration brokers.

Given the structural and social constraints to women's employment in India and the lack of more remunerative and decent work opportunities, the Gulf represents an important avenue for these

rural, women workers (Rajan and Joseph 2015). While international migration is often considered out-of-reach as a livelihood strategy for the poorest and most socio-economically marginalized communities, women from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been migrating for many years due to unfavourable domestic conditions and unwavering Gulf aspirations. Since the recent capping of recruitment costs by the Indian government, Gulf migration for domestic work has become increasingly accessible.

Among Return Migrants interviewed in East and West Godavari who were currently employed, the majority were involved in seasonal agricultural labour for daily wage. With the spread of export-led agriculture and machinery increasingly replacing workers, the average number of working days each year for female workers has steadily dropped. Additionally, it was noted by respondents and relevant stakeholders that the implementation of NREGA and other employment assurance schemes has been largely ineffective and piecemeal— the number of guaranteed work days per year is still insufficient to meet subsistence needs. For this reason, it continues to make economic sense for women in these contexts to migrate internally or internationally.

In their study of wage differentials between Indian states and the Gulf, Rajan et al (2015) report a shrinking economic advantage to low-skilled overseas labour migration from several key sending states from India, most notably Kerala. This may explain the downturn noted in emigration clearance endorsements from Kerala (Table 2). However, owing to lower basic wage rates and unsteady alternate domestic employment opportunities, the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana remain hubs for low-skilled out-migration to the Gulf, with a particular cost advantage for domestic workers. This is due, in part, to non-native domestic workers (internal migrants from other states in India) on average earning more than Andhrates locally. Furthermore, the surveys from their study revealed stark inequalities in daily wage rates of intending migrants in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

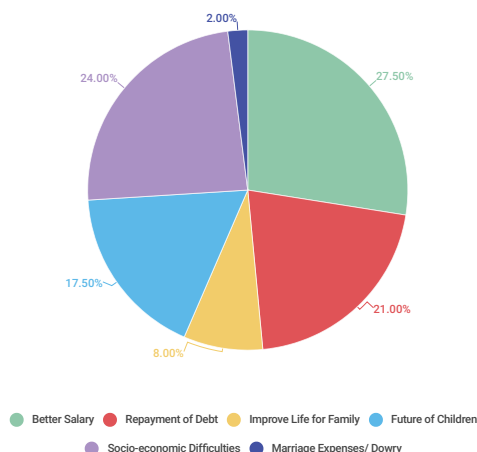
A significant portion (71 percent) of intending migrants in Kerala earned up to Rs. 500 each day, with less than 1 percent earning below Rs. 100 per day. However, in Andhra Pradesh, the mean wages for low skilled workers were found to be between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200 as compared to Rs. 300–Rs. 500 in Kerala, with significantly higher number earning less than Rs. 100 per day. This pattern of low local wages and continued wage differentials with the Gulf is likely similar in Telangana.

Representatives from grassroots organizations operating in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana interviewed for the study report that the average daily wage for women in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has risen to Rs. 250 more recently, but current earnings are still below subsistence level and does not guarantee the availability of regular employment. The lacklustre potential for employment and earning in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana as compared to other states in India has been a strong push factor for low-skill migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to migrate. With the decreasing wage differential between Kerala and Gulf States, the flow of Malayali migration to the Gulf has reduced – paving the way for

workers from other states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, as well as Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) to replace their share in emigration flows. Of the 120 Return Migrants surveyed (infographic below), about 30 percent cited the lack of a living wage and aspirations for improved salaries as the main motivation for migration; approximately 25 percent quoted difficulties arising from their marriage or socio-economic situations (abuse, family pressure, dowry-demands, husband's alcoholism, divorce etc); a combined 25 percent were motivated by family needs and securing the future of their children; another 20 percent reported the need for additional sources of income to repay existing debts and loans; and a fair number of respondents reportedly migrated to meet or raise marriage-and dowry-related expenses either for themselves, their children, or other family members. Over 40 percent of Return Migrants from West Godavari and Kadapa districts of Andhra Pradesh migrated seeking better wages; 40 percent of respondents from East Godavari and another 40 percent from Kadapa district migrated to repay existing loans and debts; almost 50 percent of returnees from Hyderabad and significant numbers from all surveyed districts migrated due to socio-economic difficulties that they were facing at home.

### Reasons for Going Abroad among Return Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

Reason	District				
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad/ Karim Nagar	Hyderabad
Better Salary	3	10	11	5	4
Repayment of Debt	9	0	12	3	1
Improve Life for Family	3	1	0	5	1
Future of Children	4	7	0	5	5
Socio-economic Difficulties	5	4	5	4	11
Marriage Expenses/ Dowry	0	1	0	0	1
Total	24	23	28	22	23



Although the reasons for women's migration from the two states may appear varied, three distinct patterns emerge:

**Domestic Economic Conditions** – The key domestic drivers for women's migration from the two states to emerge from our study are: poverty and the dire need for sustainable minimum daily wages; crop failures, drought conditions, water scarcity, and technological advancements that combine to threaten livelihood options of farming communities; lack of employment opportunities at the village-level; repayment of debt, loans, and cash advances from money lenders, financial institutions, and other sources; and lack of government and institutional support to enhance the resource base for rural communities and families. An NGO representative from Andhra Pradesh noted that persistent drought conditions, receding groundwater levels, reduction in the reservoirs of Krishna and Godavari rivers, and the heatwaves of 2015, 2016 has rendered agricultural labour an untenable livelihood option for many communities, particularly women. Women that are employed locally are typically engaged in precarious work in the unorganized sector without job security, income security, or social and legal protections. Furthermore, domestic work in India is characterized by a high degree of informality and unregulated of working conditions, and for this reason stories of difficult working and living conditions in the Gulf do not deter prospective migrants.

**Social Conditions** – Entrenched gender norms and unequal power relations critically impact women's daily conditions. In the districts surveyed, women were often subjected to gender-based harassment including abuse, rape and domestic violence, heightened by ongoing social stratification. The plight of women from historically marginalized communities (Dalit, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe) in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has much to do with their over-representation in migration for domestic work. Key Informant Interviews with social workers at the People's Action for Rural Awakening (PARA) revealed that the majority of death, distress, domestic violence, and trafficking-related grievances were received from the SC Malay community in East and West Godavari followed by the Madigacomunity.

A majority of women interviewed as part of the study were rural, landless labourers working in the fields of upper-caste landowners. Many reported having no choice but to provide sexual services or put up with harassment, for meagre benefits such as guaranteed work, daily wages, or education fees for children. In this context, domestic work migration to the Gulf from the two states is often undertaken as an escape from gender-based discrimination and continued caste-based discrimination.

**Sub-agents and Social Networks** – The operation of informal intermediaries played a central role in influencing migrants to seek overseas employment. Many respondents were well-connected to migrants in the Gulf who could arrange visas or Return Migrants in their communities who would share their stories and experiences. Recruitment agents in bigger cities and towns frequently enlisted the services of local representatives in villages and rural areas to convince prospective migrants about the prospects, possibilities, and potential benefits of overseas migration as a means to diversify and enhance sources of income and to improve life-chances.

These local operators were the strongest (and most unregulated) link between prospective women migrants and Gulf jobs.

### ***Migration Patterns of Women Domestic Workers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana***

Drawing upon district-level migrant household data, return migrant interviews, and key informant interviews, this section will detail the emigration pattern of women domestic workers from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. A prominent labour activist from the Migrant Rights Council (MRC) opined that there are observable state- and district-wide variations in the cost and character of migration and recruitment. He gave examples of land-locked sections of Telangana such as Karim Nagar/Nizamabad where female emigration is less established versus East and West Godavari along coastal Andhra where it is more pervasive. Correspondingly, our analysis from case studies and field visits presented below revealed distinctive characteristics of the two states and five districts.

**Overall, the feminization of migration flows was most evident in East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh, followed by Hyderabad district in Telangana to a lesser extent** (although this has more to do with established migrant enclaves and access to recruitment agents and migrant services). Women's domestic work migration was less visible in Karim Nagar and Nizamabad districts of Telangana, where gendered migration patterns skewed more heavily towards male migrants. During fieldwork, it was challenging to find women emigrant respondents from these districts where emigration was predominantly geared towards male migrants in construction and allied businesses. Furthermore, unlike East and West Godavari that are home to many return migrants, well-established recruitment circuits, and migrant serving NGOs, women emigrants from Nizamabad and Karim Nagar do not have easy access to migrant networks and passed-down knowledge from returnees. This comparative lack of exposure to migration issues, risks, and resources may impact their migration trajectories and experiences. Access to kinship linkages and village networks appeared to have made access to migration easier, and perhaps relatively safer, for rural women from coastal Andhra as their move was typically mediated by familiar people and access to sources of critical information.

Analyses based on 120 Return Migrants and 131 Emigrant Households that were surveyed from 3 districts in Andhra Pradesh and 2 districts in Telangana demonstrate that Kuwait was the last country of residence for a majority of Return Migrants. Qatar emerged as the most desirable destination for domestic workers among current emigrants. With respect to country of last residence among Return Emigrants (Table D), Kuwait is the clear leader in the mix – accounting for 35 percent of all return migrants – followed by Oman and the United Arab Emirates with approximately 20 percent each. In terms of state-wise dynamics, Kuwait was the main destination for migrants from the three districts of Andhra Pradesh. In fact, Kuwait was a top destination for return migrants from all districts, with the exception of Hyderabad. Return migrants from



state were primarily from Oman; almost half of the return migrants from Hyderabad returned from Oman and another 30 percent from UAE. Over 30 percent of emigrants from Nizamabad and Karim Nagar returned from Oman, and over 25 percent last resided in Kuwait. Along with the pronounced preference for Kuwait across

the board, some preferences emerged in district-wise distributions. Qatar was a mainstay for return emigrants from West Godavari. Saudi Arabia drew more return migrants from Kadapa district than any other; 60 percent of women emigrants returning from Saudi Arabia hailed from Kadapa district.

**Table D: Last Country of Migration of Return Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Country	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Saudi Arabia	0	0	6	3	1	0	8
UAE	5	0	6	3	7	21	18
Kuwait	13	8	12	6	3	42	35
Bahrain	4	3	2	2	0	11	9
Oman	1	5	1	7	11	25	21
Qatar	1	7	1	1	1	11	9
Total	24	23	28	22	23	120	100

**A substantial share of current emigrants from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh reside in Qatar (46 percent)**, while Oman and Kuwait are also among the key destinations of current emigrants (Table E). This is a significant shift away from Return Migrants patterns, where Kuwait emerged as the clear favourite. This indicates a changing temporal pattern in the composition and direction of emigrant flows from the two states, and may have to do with a number of structural factors including labour market demand in the Gulf countries, restrictive labour market and localisation policies in some Gulf countries (Zachariah, Rajan and Joseph 2014), availability of information and awareness about conditions in different countries, and the work of networks, return migrants, and recruiters that may paint different destinations as more attractive at different moments in time.

In terms of state-wise emigration patterns, Qatar was the des-

tinuation for approximately 50 percent of current emigrants from the three districts in Andhra Pradesh; Oman was the frontrunner among current emigrants from Telangana. The source district of origin also had an impact on the destination of emigrants (Table E). While most emigrants from East and West Godavari currently reside in Kuwait or Qatar, emigrants from Kadapa reside primarily in Qatar. Emigrants from Nizamabad, Karim Nagar and Hyderabad are found mostly in Oman, however, Hyderabad also sends a significant number of emigrants to Saudi Arabia and accounts for 75 percent of emigrants to Saudi Arabia. The source district of origin also had an impact on the destination of emigrants (Table E). While most emigrants from East and West Godavari currently reside in Kuwait or Qatar, emigrants from Kadapa reside primarily in Qatar. Emigrants from Nizamabad, Karim Nagar and Hyderabad are found mostly in Oman, however Hyderabad also sends a significant number of emigrants to Saudi Arabia and accounts for 75 percent of emigrants to Saudi Arabia.

**Table E: Current Country of Residence of Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Country	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Saudi Arabia	0	1	0	1	6	8	6
UAE	1	1	1	5	4	12	9
Kuwait	9	10	3	4	3	29	22
Bahrain	3	0	0	2	0	5	4
Oman	4	6	1	11	9	31	24
Qatar	6	14	19	4	3	46	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100</b>

Of the total return emigrants surveyed (Table F), an overwhelming 80 percent were relatively recent returnees, having returned between 2013 and 2016. This was true for returnees interviewed across both states and five districts. This pattern can also be

traced to the purposive sampling and snowball methods employed as part of the field surveys, as well as the relative ease of tracing recent migrants through the help of community members, social workers, and records of local panchayat and village officials.

**Table F: Year of Return among Return Migrants in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

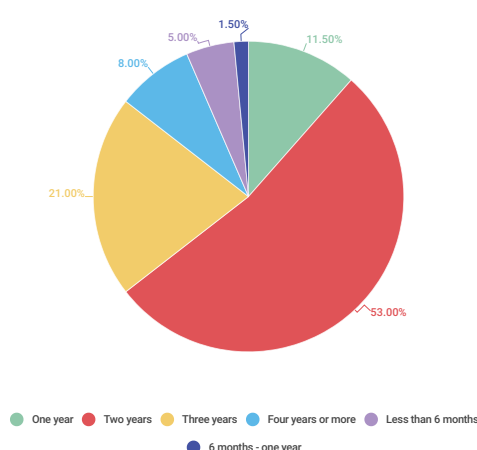
Return	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
1993-2007	1	2	1	2	0	6	5
2008-2012	7	0	5	4	4	20	17
2013-2016	16	21	22	16	9	94	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

With regards to the length of stay in Gulf destinations (Tables G and H), approximately 50 percent of all return emigrants, as well as current migrants, remained in the countries of destination for approximately a two-year period. This prevailing trend has much

to do with the ubiquity of fixed two-year contracts provided by employers and RAs and signed before departure. Between 35 – 40 percent of return emigrants and current emigrants remained in the Gulf for a period of three years or more.

**Table G: Duration of Stay in the Gulf among Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Duration	Frequency
One year	15
Two years	69
Three years	28
Four years or more	10
Less than 6 months	7
6 months - one year	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>



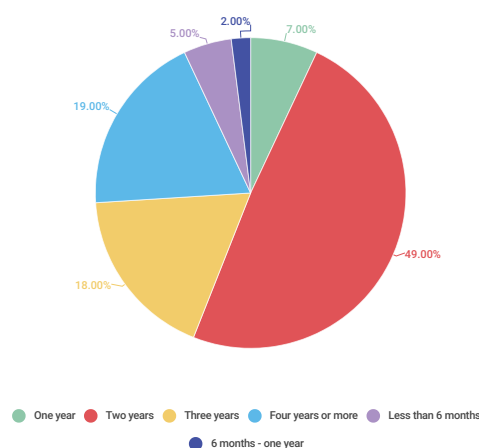
Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

For over half the returnees surveyed, the last migration was not their first time abroad. This was also true for the 31 in-depth case studies conducted among Return Emigrants, among whom 16 had embarked on multiple migrations. The pattern of repeated, recurring migrations is reflective of broader South-South circular migra-

tion of women domestic workers globally. Return Migrants were also observed to have a higher rate of unsuccessful attempts, mainly due to their experiences of being cheated by unscrupulous agents or their inability to procure the documents necessary for migration.

**Table H: Duration of Stay in the Gulf among Return Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Duration	Frequency
One year	8
Two years	59
Three years	22
Four years or more	23
Less than 6 months	6
6 months - one year	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>



Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

Perhaps the lower rate of unsuccessful attempts by current migrants as compared to previous returnees is indicative of a general rise in awareness among migrant-sending communities and pro-

spective migrants about recruitment practices, migration processes, and risks involved, as well as more effective migration and recruitment policies and service providers.

## Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of Emigrants

Analyses based on 131 households that were surveyed from 3 districts in Andhra Pradesh - namely East Godavari, West Godavari, YSR Kadapa –and 2 districts in Telangana – namely Nizamabad/ Karim Nagar and Hyderabad –reveals that migrants are mostly married, and between the ages of 35 and 39. There is a wide disparity in levels of educational attainment among emigrants, with 35 percent having completed high school or secondary education and 40 percent either illiterate or having only attained below primary levels of education.

### Age, Religion and Marital Status

While 89 percent of current migrants are over the age of 30, it is noteworthy that 11 percent of current migrants are below the current government stipulated minimum emigration age of 30 for women to ECR destinations (Table 1). Almost 30 percent of all migrants were between the ages of 31-34, and over 40 percent were over the age of 40.

**Table 1: Current Age of Emigrants in districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Age of EM	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Age <30	2	4	2	4	2	14	11
Age 31-34 Years	3	11	1	4	5	24	18
Age 35-39 Years	6	10	11	4	7	38	29
Age 40-45 Years	2	2	6	4	5	19	14.5
Age >45	10	5	4	11	6	31	27.5
Total	23	32	24	27	25	131	100

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

Notably, emigrants from the district of West Godavari in Andhra Pradesh were found to be younger than emigrants from other districts with 47 percent below the age of 35. The district-wise distribution of migrants across all age ranges indicates that migration to the Gulf, particularly for domestic work, continues to be an important livelihood option for women at all stages of the lifecycle from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

**Table 2: Marital Status of Emigrants in districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Marital Status	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Never Married	0	0	0	1	1	2	1.5
Married	18	30	24	24	16	112	86
Divorced/ Separated	2	0	0	1	4	7	5
Widowed	3	2	0	1	4	10	7.5
Total	23	32	24	27	25	131	100

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

An overwhelming majority of current migrants (86 percent) were reportedly married (Table 2) at the time of the study. This pattern was evident across the two states and all five districts. However, it must be noted that there is some chance of reporting bias among emigrant households with regards to current marital status; family members may withhold news of separation, divorce, abandonment, or marital discord between emigrants and their spouses.

With regard to the religious background of current emigrants, respondents of the study were predominantly Hindu (Table 3). There was more variation in religion among migrants from Andhra Pradesh than Telangana; between 40-55 percent of emigrants from East Godavari and West Godavari were Christian; Muslims and Hindus were equally represented in women’s emigration from Kadapa.

**Table 3: Religion of Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Religion	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Hindu	12	14	12	23	22	83	63
Christian	10	17	1	3	0	31	24
Muslim	0	1	11	1	3	16	12
Other	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	23	32	24	27	25	131	100

**Educational Level**

Levels of educational attainment vary considerably among migrants in the two states and five districts. It is significant that 70 percent of migrants from YSR Kadapa, half the migrants from East Godavari, and over 40 percent of migrants from West Godavari have not even been educated till Primary level (Table 4). Contrastingly, 84 percent of migrants from Hyderabad were educated at least till Upper Primary level, with 60 percent having secured education up to High School level. Only 25 percent of respondents from Nizamabad and Karim Nagar had not obtained Primary-level education; 40 percent had Secondary education and almost half the respondents had received a High School diploma.

Among the two states, migrants from Andhra Pradesh trail behind in educational background with over 50 percent of migrants below Primary educational levels, 20 percent reportedly illiterate, and only 20 percent having graduated High School or higher. Migrants from East Godavari demonstrated stark differences in their educational attainment, with either very low literacy levels (over half

below Primary level education; 40 percent illiterate) and the rest achieving higher levels of education up to High School or Secondary. Migrants from West Godavari are more evenly distributed between different levels of education, although over 40 percent have not received Primary-level education. Migrants from YSR Kadapa appear to have the lowest education levels, with over 70 percent obtaining below Primary level schooling and virtually no one having completed High School or Secondary education.

Among emigrants from Telangana State educational levels were fairly high. Almost 60 percent of migrants had achieved a High School education, with a majority of those having received a Secondary degree. Less than 20 percent of migrants from the state were lacking Primary education. A quarter of all migrants from Nizamabad and Karim Nagar had not received Primary level basic education and almost half had High School diplomas. 84 percent of migrants from Hyderabad were educated to a minimum of Upper Primary level, with 60 percent having secured education up to High School level.

**Table 4: Educational Status of Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Education Level	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Illiterate	9	7	0	5	1	22	17
Below Primary	3	7	17	2	1	30	23
Primary	0	7	1	3	2	13	10
Upper Primary	0	5	5	3	5	18	14
High School	2	1	0	2	3	8	6
Secondary	9	5	1	11	12	38	29
Others	0	0	0	1	1	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above tables it is apparent that across total respondents in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, educational attainment was low. Overall, half of the migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were educated only till Primary level or below; 40 percent of respondents did not attend Primary school, while only 35 percent of them had graduated High School or higher and 17 percent were illiterate. A marked rural-urban divide in availability of and accessibility to education is also clearly visible in the state-wise and district-wise patterns of educational attainment. The low educational status of women emigrants has broad implications for policy, outreach and orientation programmes, and recruitment practices in these regions. Formulation of outreach programs and migration initiatives must take into account the educational levels of potential and current migrants to understand how best to reach out to these communities. Technology-based initiatives or training and information sessions that are not in regional languages may miss-the-mark when it comes to engaging female emigrants from these communities. With over 65 percent of current migrants lacking a High School diploma (a requisite minimum educational threshold for not requiring emigration clearance), it is clear that domestic work migration to the Gulf will remain an important avenue for female migration from these communities. Furthermore, since 35 percent of emigrants in these contexts have at least High School education, it follows that domestic work migration is not an employment prospect sought out only by emigrants with low educational levels, rather, it represents an important opportunity for women’s migration from the region regardless of education levels.

**Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile of Return Emigrants in Andhra Pradesh**

Surveys with 120 Return Emigrants in 3 districts of Andhra Pradesh - namely East Godavari, West Godavari, YSR Kadapa –and 2 districts in Telangana – namely Nizamabad/ Karim Nagar and Hyderabad – suggest that Return Emigrants in the two states are mostly married and over the age of 35. Education levels among Return Emigrants were much lower than among current migrants, with 70 percent of respondents having attained only Primary level

education or less.

**Age, Religion and Marital Status**

On average, returnees were found to be relatively older than current emigrants; nearly 80 percent are over the age of 35 (Table 5). This appears to be because many of them have completed more than one round of migration, with some having first migrated over two decades ago. However, more than 12 percent of returnees who had migrated to the Gulf and subsequently returned were under 30 years of age at the time of interview. This indicates that a broad swath (over 20 percent from the current study) of Return Emigrants (including those between 31-34 at the time of interview) were likely well-under the stipulated minimum age of 30 at their first migration. Returnees in West Godavari district are the youngest, followed by those in East Godavari and Nizamabad and Karim Nagar. On average, returnees from Hyderabad were the oldest and generally over the age of 45. All returnees from Kadapa were over 30, almost all returnees from Hyderabad were over 30, and a significant proportion of returnees from Nizamabad and Karim Nagar were also over 30.

With respect to returnee marital status (Table 6), 73 percent of total Return Emigrants interviewed were married, while 25 percent were either widowed, separated or divorced. It is important to note that a significant number of returnees from Telangana State were either divorced, separated, or widowed (over 40 percent of Return Migrants in Nizamabad and Karim Nagar, and 35 percent in Hyderabad).

With respect to returnee marital status (Table 6), 73 percent of total Return Emigrants interviewed were married, while 25 percent were either widowed, separated or divorced. It is important to note that a significant number of returnees from Telangana State were either divorced, separated, or widowed (over 40 percent of Return Migrants in Nizamabad and Karim Nagar, and 35 percent in Hyderabad).

**Table 5: Current Age of Return Emigrants in districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Age of EM	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Age <30	4	6	0	4	1	15	12.5
Age 31-34 Years	3	2	2	3	1	11	9
Age 35-39 Years	8	8	11	7	5	39	32.5
Age 40-45 Years	1	3	7	2	5	18	15
Age >45	8	4	8	6	11	37	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

**Table 6: Marital Status of Return Migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Marital Status	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Never Married	0	2	0	0	0	2	2
Married	18	19	23	13	15	88	73
Divorced/ Separated	4	1	3	4	2	14	12
Widowed	2	1	2	5	6	16	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

The religious distribution of Return Migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana was consistent with that observed among current Emigrants; over 60 percent were Hindu, over 25 percent were Christian, and over 10 percent were Muslim (Table 7). As with current emigrants, there was more diversity in religions represented

among Return Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh; more than half of the Return Emigrants from Kadapa were Muslim, there were more Christians returnees in coastal Andhra- almost 60 percent of returnees from East Godavari and 40 percent from West Godavari were Christian.

**Table 7: Religion of Return Migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Religion	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Hindu	10	13	11	17	23	74	62
Christian	14	10	2	05	0	31	26
Muslim	0	0	15	0	0	15	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

Returnee respondents of the study were found to be considerably less-educated than current emigrants (Table 8). 70 percent of total returnees from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were educated only till Primary level or below; over 25 percent were illiterate and only around 20 percent obtained a High School level education or higher.

**Table 8: Education Levels of Return Emigrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Education Level	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Illiterate	9	9	0	11	2	31	26
Below Primary	9	5	19	3	1	37	31
Primary	0	2	7	2	5	16	13
Upper Primary	1	2	1	2	4	10	8
High School	2	2	0	2	0	6	5
Secondary	3	3	1	2	11	20	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

State-wise and district-wise patterns of education status exhibited some degree of variance, although low-literacy levels among Return Migrants was common across the board. Virtually all Return Migrants from Kadapa were only educated till Primary level or below, followed by 75 percent from East Godavari, and over 70 percent from West Godavari, Nizamabad and Karim Nagar. As with current emigrants, higher education levels were observed among returnees in Hyderabad; over 85 percent of returnees from the district had been educated at least till Primary level, and almost half of had received Secondary level schooling.

Almost 70 percent of all return migrants from Andhra Pradesh had attained below Primary level of schooling, and 25 percent were illiterate. Only a scant 15 percent of return migrants from Andhra Pradesh had acquired a High School degree or higher. This was most pronounced among returnees from Kadapa district; almost none had received a High School education and almost all respondents were at or below Primary school levels of education.

Educational attainment among returnees from Telangana was marginally higher than that of their counterparts from Andhra Pradesh. 40 percent of women returnees from the state had below Primary levels of education as compared to 70 percent from Andhra Pradesh, however about 30 percent were illiterate. A third of all returnees from Telangana had received a High School degree or higher, and this number was close to half in Hyderabad.

The state-wide disparity in educational attainment was more apparent in Telangana however, with majority of returnee respondents from Nizamabad and Karim Nagar recorded as illiterate, while almost half of the returnees from Hyderabad having attained Secondary education. This intra-district difference within states demonstrates that migration policies need to be decentralized and localized to achieve best results; policies and programmes framed primarily on a national and state-level may not adequately address the needs and challenges of women from different backgrounds in each state.

Literacy and education levels among Return Migrants from the three districts of Andhra Pradesh, and Nizamabad and Karim Nagar in Telangana, skewed towards very low levels. This raises a number of concerns for policy-makers, NGOs and other service-providers and organizations working with rural, migrant communities. Women return migrants in these regions are, on the whole, less-equipped to read contracts and migration information, as well as ascertain the legitimacy of the paperwork and contracts they are asked to sign before migrating overseas. Lower levels of women's educational attainment make it easy for unethical recruitment operators to dupe women migrants and pass on disingenuous migration documentation and employment information. In order to ensure safer, formal migration then, it becomes paramount to address the educational needs of women in these states, districts and particularly rural communities.

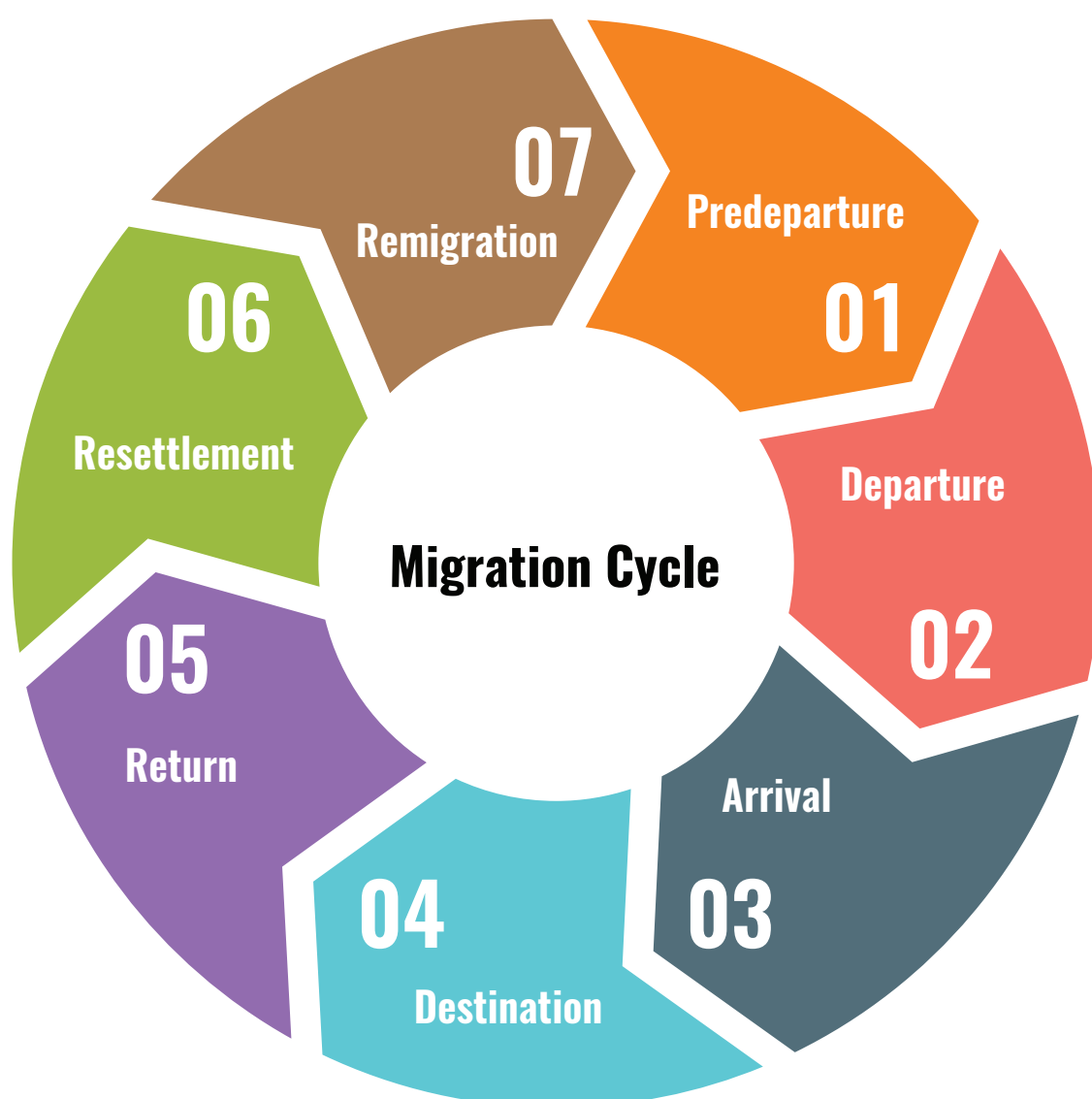


## Process of Emigration

To better understand the migration process and potential for reform, we now chart the labour migration trajectories and experiences of domestic workers through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and consultations with local officials and civil society organizations.

### Migration Cycle

The key phases of the migration cycle have been identified based on the steps taken by migrants: pre-departure; departure; arrival; living and working at the destination; return/repatriation; resettlement; and in many cases, re-migration. The boxes highlighted in blue (Figure 1) represent the principal areas for potential intervention and support by national and state governments in India.



**I. Pre-departure:** The initial phase of the cycle begins when potential and aspiring migrants first become aware of the prospects and process of migration for domestic work and continues until intending emigrants embark on their Gulf-bound journey.

**A. Accessing Information** – The availability of accurate and accessible information plays a pivotal role in migration decisions and experiences across the migration cycle. Prospective migrants turn to community members, return emigrants and village sub-agents to gather information about the costs, benefits, and risks associ-

ated with Gulf migration. The majority of respondents noted that they were first informed about migration opportunities via word-of-mouth, either through social connections (neighbours, friends, and family) or informal intermediaries (local brokers and sub-agents). More than half of our respondents had gleaned some level of information about the culture, customs, and social norms in the Gulf States prior to departure (Table 9). This means that 46 percent of migrants were unaware of the social and cultural context of the reception before their arrival, leaving them disadvantaged and unprepared for a successful transition.

**Table 9: Returnee’s awareness of the culture, customs and social norms of the Gulf before Migration**

Response	Frequency	Frequency
Yes	69	53
No	62	47
Total	120	100

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

During our visits to the field, signs, posters and flex-boards promising “Gulf jobs” were ubiquitous. These were particularly evident in Hyderabad, Nizamabad and Karim Nagar districts of Telangana, perhaps owing to the mixed migration flows from these areas, and primarily targeted male workers for construction and allied fields. In addition, it was observed that advertisements for recruitment services are often posted in local dailies, and aired over the radio. From our focus group discussions, it emerged that regional media coverage of domestic work Gulf migration overwhelmingly involves reportage on cases of abuse, trafficking, fraudulent recruitment practices, and unfree labour conditions, but does not offer

adequate information on avoiding these common pitfalls. More recently, the MEA has launched a media campaign under ‘Surakshit Jaaye, Prashikshit Jaaye’ to be broadcasted across national and private radio and television channels, as part of a broader push to encourage safe and legal migration. This involves the circulation of public advisories pertaining to the procedures and precautions to be taken prior to emigration, with special emphasis on avoiding irregular migration and trafficking. Ensuring that media and awareness campaigns are accessible to a broad-based audience in key sending districts is an essential link in improving migration and recruitment conditions of women domestic workers.

**Table 10: Emigrant’s Awareness of Prevailing Work and Living Conditions in the Gulf**

Response	Frequency	Frequency
Fully Aware	9	7
Partially Aware	73	56
No aware at all	49	37
Total	131	100

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

There are a number of other national and state-level government and non-governmental initiatives geared towards generating awareness and building capacity. Tele-enquiry services for intending migrants and family members are available through the Overseas Worker's Welfare Centre helpline and walk-in counselling services are offered at the Migrant Rights Centre, Hyderabad (among others nationally). Despite the availability of a range of services and programs, a majority of our respondents had not been reached and many remained unaware of these efforts and campaigns. In this context, it is especially evident that local caches of informal information play a prominent role in promoting and propagating Gulf migration from rural towns and villages. Local stakeholders have been making efforts to sensitize communities and provide critical information. A fact sheet prepared by the National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM) contains essential information for migrants and their families in regional languages. As an accessible resource, this has been widely distributed. Shaik Chand Pasha, social worker and founder of the Gulf Returnee Welfare Society in Jagtial has produced an informative documentary and music tapes, incorporating stories from return migrants and weaving in his own Gulf migration experiences, that have been made widely available in districts of Karim Nagar and Nizamabad. Despite these efforts, 37 percent of Emigrants from the study were found to be completely unaware of the labour laws, employment conditions, and living conditions in the Gulf before deployment, leaving them at a severe disadvantage upon arrival (Table 10). Over half of the respondents had only received partial information about prevailing conditions and less than 10 percent considered themselves well aware of local Gulf conditions. This points to a large lacuna in awareness levels among migrant communities.

**B. Decision-Making** – Among those interviewed, the decision to migrate was usually made in conjunction with the spouse or immediate family. In other cases, women reported being pressured by friends, relatives, or brokers. A fair number of emigrant households reported that women migrants had embarked on their migration based solely on an individual decision and, in some instances, had not informed the rest of the family of their departure or whereabouts. A respondent from an Emigrant Household in Kadapa, Lasmavya lamented about the lack of information regarding her daughter Sumalatha's whereabouts. She explained that after Sumalatha's first husband died, she eloped and married someone else in secret. Her current husband is an emigrant stationed in Dubai and his sister is a domestic worker in Muscat. About a year ago, Sumalatha consulted with her parents about migrating to the Gulf and leaving her children in their care, but they refused to accept this proposal. Nevertheless, a few months later Sumalatha left the house without informing her family, and leaving her two kids behind. Lasmavya speculated that Sumalatha's husband may have influenced her to go, and his sister may have had a hand in her departure by helping her arrange the visa. In this case, migration was not a joint household decision. Sumalatha's family feels deserted, and they have no address or contact with her. They are not even certain which Gulf country she has migrated to or whether she has, in fact, left the country. In their minds, she abandoned her children by leaving them as the shared responsibility of her parents.

In order to understand the factors that influence the decision-mak-

ing process, it is important to understand the context in which migration decisions are made. Commonly cited factors that contribute to women's decision to migrate included the lack of guaranteed employment opportunities, scarcity of agricultural labour employment, persistent low wages, and financial burdens in single-earner households or large families. In a few cases, the migrant either decided to leave a situation of domestic discontent owing to spousal discord, or was compelled to migrate owing to domestic violence, alcoholism or pressure from parents or in-laws. The presence of a 'culture of migration' was clearly visible in the five districts surveyed. Enumerators saw a number of people in the villages toting Lulu Hypermarket plastic bags and wearing T-shirts with Saudi Telecom and Etihad Airways logos. Homes were stocked with old Tang and Nido milk powder containers that bore witness to past migrations. The demonstration effect of fellow villagers who returned from migration also exerted a strong influence that propelled women to seek their fortunes abroad

When asked about how the decision to migrate was made, 80 percent of respondents answered that it was made in consultation with family, either parents/in-laws, together with their spouse or through discussions with family members. Only a small fraction of respondents had arrived at the migration decision by themselves or acquiesced to a spouse's decision. The influential role played by family in this critical decision-making juncture points to the importance of awareness-raising among communities in migrant-sending pockets, and the need to engage them as stakeholders in the migration process.

**C. Recruitment** – The decision-making and recruitment phases of migration are inextricably linked. Many women reported making the decision to migrate, only after having been approached by recruitment agents or sub-agents. Here too, the role of local recruitment relationships with informal intermediaries and social networks is palpable. Women from remote, rural areas appear more likely to initiate the process of migration through familiar persons they believe they can trust. Once the decision to migrate had been made, prospective migrants made travel preparations by working with an agent or intermediary to procure passports, prepare documents, process their visa, obtain emigration clearance, and purchase tickets. In some instances, sub-agents referred migrants to recruitment agents in larger towns or urban centres, however, in most cases local agents handled all necessary paperwork without the women ever having to visit an office.

**Table 11: Cost of Migration among Emigrants from Andhra and Telangana**

Cost	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
<20000	9	13	5	7	0	34	26
20000 - 30000	7	10	16	6	7	46	35
30000 - 40000	1	3	3	12	13	32	24
>40000	6	6	0	2	5	19	15
Total	23	32	24	27	25	131	100

There is a discernible state-wise difference in the costs incurred for migration by domestic workers. Respondents from Andhra Pradesh appeared to have spent less towards their migration, while costs of women’s migration from Telangana State were markedly higher (Table 11). Over 70 percent of current emigrants from East Godavari and West Godavari were charged less than 30,000 rupees, and emigrants from Kadapa reportedly paid the least, with over 87 percent paying under 30,000 rupees. On the other hand, half of the respondents from Nizamabad and Karim Nagar and over 70 percent from Hyderabad paid upwards of 30,000 rupees to finance their move. A third of all respondents paid between 20,000 to 30,000 to migrate, and 15 percent of total respondents reportedly paid amounts higher than 40,000 rupees.

In the districts surveyed, it was common for women and emigrant households go into debt to finance migration. In some cases, sub-agents themselves offered cash advances or put prospective emigrants in touch with moneylenders. These back-channel connections between recruiters and moneylenders presents further opportunities to make profit off the backs of prospective migrants. Almost all migrants required multiple sources of borrowing to fund their migration. Among current emigrants, the common sources were borrowings from friends or relatives and money lenders and contribution by the husband; 68 percent borrowed from friends or relatives; 25 percent borrowed from money lenders; 20 percent got help from their husbands; 15 percent of migrants sold or mortgaged their jewels while 12 percent borrowed from banks. Only 16 percent financed some of the cost through their own savings.

**Table 12: Return Emigrants: Sources of Financing of First Successful Migration**

Source of Financing	Frequency	Percent
Borrowing from Friends/Relatives	65	54
Borrowing from Money Lenders	61	51
Borrowing from Bank/Financial Institution	38	32
Sale of Jewellery	30	25
Loan from Recruiting Agent	27	23
Disposal of Land/Property	25	21
Pledging of Financial Assets	23	19

Among return emigrants surveyed, it was found that the need for multiple avenues for financing remain similar (Table 12). 54 percent had borrowed from a friend or relative; 51 percent borrowed from money lenders; 32 percent borrowed from banks; 25 percent raised money through sale of jewellery; 22.5 percent received loans from recruitment agents; 21 percent raised funds through the sale of land or property and 20 percent pledged financial assets. Among the returnees, many repeat migrants reported that they decided to migrate again because their initial journeys did not net them sufficient earnings to break this cycle and release them from debt.

**E. Pre-Departure Orientation** – While pre-departure briefings are considered a necessary step towards informed, safe and legal migration, a majority of our respondents had received no formal introduction to the culture, customs, working or living conditions in the countries of destination. In fact, our respondents were unaware of such programming offered through formal institutions such as state agencies, NGOs and recruitment agents. In a few cases, return migrants narrated experiences with agents claiming to offer orientation and training services in Hyderabad, and were instead detained at the agent’s premises until

departure. This has been reported as an insidious practice among agents to secure their investment and contractual obligations, and dissuade women from changing their mind before migration.

The MEA, together with the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, has underscored the importance of imparting gender and rights-based pre-departure orientation training to intending domestic workers through the India International Skill Centres (IISCs) and state agencies TOMCOM and OMCAP. In order to extend the reach of such programs and institutionalize pre-departure orientation training (PDOT) initiatives across key migration areas, a Training of Trainers was conducted in Vijayawada in August 2015, under the aegis of ICM, UN Women and OMCAP. The session brought together social workers, activists, trade union leaders and district level government officials to build capacities and sensitize them on gendered implications of migration and the links between migration and development. As an outcome, training and orientation efforts geared to Gulf-bound domestic workers will be rolled out in districts of East Godavari, West Godavari and Kadapa and soon made available in major migration pockets across the two states.

**II. Departure:** The next phase involves the movement across borders for overseas deployment. For women migrants from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, many of whom have never before travelled outside their villages and districts, the prospect of overseas travel can be intimidating. First-time emigrants were able to piece together information about the travel and flight journey by contacting return migrants and networks of current emigrants. Information regarding the journey, including travel dates and tickets, was typically shared by sub-agents and recruiters very close

to departure. Some migrants reportedly were unaware of their exact departure timeline, and even held in limbo at the premises of agents for weeks or months, delaying their departure and often resulting in abuse. From our interviews, it is apparent that a number of return emigrants travelled with forged or fraudulent documents prepared by agents without their knowledge. However, they were shepherded through emigration checks and security clearance without incident, owing to agents' collusion with officials and lack of adequate airport security measures to screen irregular migration. Migrants then boarded the flight and journeyed to various Gulf destination, transiting to other locations in some cases. Given the high volume of migration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, there are multiple daily flights that service the Gulf sector. Despite the prevalence of many low-cost carriers, migrants reported being charged hefty sums for their tickets. In most cases, migrants did not approach travel agents themselves and were unaware of ticketing procedure or actual flight costs. This presents another opportunity for unscrupulous middlemen to extract profit from migrant women.

**III. Arrival:** Upon arrival at the destination country, migrant women domestic workers are met by their employers or their representatives. It is uncommon for migrant women to be in contact with their foreign employers before deployment, and many respondents recalled being nervous about meeting their sponsors who are also their de-facto guardians in the destination. The context of reception at the airport and journey to the workplace is an important stage in the migration cycle, as it presents the migrants first entry and introduction to the host country. This is also a critical area of concern owing to the number of cases where migrant women were picked up by strangers claiming to be their *kafeel*.

**Table 13: Return Migrants: Who Did You Contact upon Arrival in the Gulf?**

Contact	Frequency	Percent
Employer representative	63	52.5
Partially Aware	36	30.0
No aware at all	21	17.5
Total	120	100

One migrant worker was picked up by Arab men that she believed were her legal sponsors and trafficked into Oman where she was left to labour in a deserted camel farm. Without papers, money or means of contact, she spent many isolated months deprived of food. In another case, there was no one at the airport to meet with a respondent and she was left waiting in the airport lobby overnight until a friendly fellow Indian contacted social workers who were able to secure temporary shelter. The worker then be-

gan to work for a different sponsor without a visa, landing her in a precarious and irregular situation. As Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states are increasingly clamping down on the number of visas that they issue to individual sponsors, it appears that this aspect of desertion at the airport has been greatly reduced. Making adequate arrangements with local sponsors for collection and contacting migrant domestic workers allows for a smooth pickup experience and to avoid long delays and confusion at the airport.

**IV. Destination:** At the destination, migrant women contend with the broader systemic structures that govern the labour market and their social lives. Most migrant domestic workers live and work in the Gulf region on temporary short-term contracts between two to five years in length. During this period their agency is found to be heavily constrained by the Kafala labour migrant management system, labour laws, religious edicts and social mores of the receiving country.

**A. Restrictive, gendered labour market** – Domestic work in the Gulf context is largely associated with an overwhelmingly performed by women. The domestic service sector is a deeply feminized niche that is seldom recognized as work. Migrant domestic workers enter this segregated Gulf labour markets on terms that allow for exploitation and impede decent work. In most Gulf countries, domestic work is excluded from labour instruments, employment standards, minimum wage mechanisms and other legal protections. The status of migrant domestic workers is particularly precarious under the Kafala sponsorship system that scaffolds the temporary labour migration regimes in Gulf States, endowing the sponsor with complete legal and economic control over migrant workers and the conditions of their employment and residence. This structural dependency leaves little room for workers' agency, mobility and flexibility. Migrant's visas and work permits are tied to employers, requiring them to obtain permission from sponsors to travel, change jobs, or access health care and public services. This makes it difficult to leave abusive situations, transfer employers, or negotiate conditions of employment.

**B. Employment Conditions** – The persistent non-recognition of domestic work as work, and the restrictive sponsorship system together create conditions that are ripe for exploitation. The lack of enforceable standard contracts or standardized employment norms, leaves domestic workers susceptible to forced and unfree labour. The harsh working conditions of domestic workers in these contexts have been well documented. Many workers endure a range of abuses, including overwork, non-payment of salaries, forced confinement, food deprivation and verbal, psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. Respondents reported working for large households with many members, and is expected to take care of cooking, cleaning, childcare and eldercare for up to twenty hours a day.

**C. Living Arrangements** – Domestic workers in the Gulf fall into two distinct categories based on their living arrangements; Live-in workers that are given room and board at their employer's residence and workers that secure independent lodging (Timothy and Sasikumar 2012), usually shared with a number of other migrant workers. Sequestered in their employer's home, live-in workers face particular challenges such as isolation, inability to meet and mingle with other migrants, the expectation to be available for work around-the-clock, vulnerability to abuse and sexual harassment. They are often put to work long hours without adequate sleep, days of rest and are not permitted to leave the workplace. Workers who live away from their employer, have a greater degree of freedom and are able to make social connections. However, among respondents that lived separate from their employers, most were only able to afford to live cramped quarters that accommodated upwards of a dozen migrants under one roof. The high cost

of living and accommodation expenses severely depleted their income and ability to send home remittances.

**D. Lack of Support Services and Legal Recourse** – Along with restrictions on the freedom of association and mobility, migrant domestic workers are absented from legislation governing working conditions in the Gulf destination countries. On arrival, women domestic workers face a dearth of service providers, resources and programs to help them adjust with the economic and social transition to the Gulf. This limits their access to healthcare, social benefits, and information regarding their rights and entitlements. Given current conditions, there is a need for portable social benefits, enforceable standard contracts, and drop-in centers to dispense relevant information to migrants. The absence of comprehensive national legislation on domestic work in Gulf countries, deprives domestic workers of much-needed legal protections from abuse and exploitation. It is essential that India lobbies Gulf governments to take urgent action to rectify this coverage gap.

**V. Return/Repatriation:** The temporary and transient nature of Gulf labour flows accentuates the importance and inevitability of the next phase in the migration cycle. This is especially critical in light of recent immigration controls, localization policies and Amnesty schemes in the Gulf that have protracted effects on the volume of migrants and the duration of their stay. A large number of respondents from the study remained in the Gulf for periods of two years or, in some cases longer or shorter stints depending on the terms of contract, work conditions and migration experiences. While the length of migration may vary, the constant turnover of migrants and returnees along this migration corridor presents an area of particular policy relevance for the Indian and State governments.

**VI. Resettlement:** For many return migrants attempting to re-settle, employment situation remained bleak after return. Over 25 percent of total returnees surveyed were unemployed at the time of interviews (Table 14). This percentage is higher among those of working age in the labour force (30 percent) and 30 percent of case study respondents were also reportedly unemployed. Of the returnees that were employed, a majority were engaged in daily wage and other insecure labour. Skills and experience acquired abroad did not appear to effectively pave the way for improved employment at home. In fact, more than 30 percent were currently waiting to re-migrate. Many migrants returned not having met financial goals, repaid loans incurred for first migration, or having secured any savings. Provision of subsidized loans to aid these migrants would go a long way towards enabling them to settle down and invest in small enterprise or local business ventures. Some states, including Kerala, have made rehabilitation packages available to return emigrants affected by the Nitaqatlocalization policy in Saudi Arabia.

Provisions for training, support, and financial services for return migrants have been made available through the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs). From the study, it is clear that a majority of migrants are unaware of existing support structures and schemes currently in place for returned migrants. Some respondents mentioned the difficulty to access rehabilitation services including

counselling and support services, while others lamented the lack of entrepreneurship training, financial management, and re-skilling or skill advancement opportunities upon return. A number of return migrants interviewed as part of the study mentioned that they would not migrate, given the chance to engage in productive employment in their hometowns and villages. Much remains to be

done in terms of successfully mainstreaming return migrants back into society. This includes improving access to resources for return emigrants, capacity development and entrepreneurship support, collecting information on the skill, sector and demographics of returnees, and using this information to provide sustainable pathways to migrant resettlement and domestic employment.

**Table 14: Current Activity Status of Return Emigrants in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**

Current Activity			Total
	Andhra Pradesh	Telangana	
Employed	37	22	59
Unemployed	11	14	25
Not in Labour Force	27	9	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>120</b>

Women returnees, in particular, confront a number of social costs accruing from their overseas migration. Many respondents discussed the difficulties they faced in resettling upon their return, owing to disintegration of the family unit, lack of savings due to the family squandering their remittances, mounting debt, as well as the prevailing social anxieties and moral assumptions about the experiences of Gulf domestic workers. For these reasons, a third of the case study respondents were no longer living in the village or district of residence prior to migration. The internal movement of migrants upon return is another area for policy attention- successful migrants may move to bigger cities and town seeking a better standard of life, whereas other migrants may move for a variety of other reasons including the inability to repay loans, pressures from local agents, and lack of local employment opportunities.

than 30 percent of returnee respondents were actively preparing to re-migrate and still, others were considering re-migration. Having gained some language skills and overseas experience, a number of respondents consider themselves to be in a better position to re-migrate, navigate overseas employment, and negotiate favourable migration outcomes. With a significant portion of respondents preparing to make their next passage to the Gulf, it is essential that the government turns a more focused eye to the needs and opportunities of this segment. Engagement with previously returned emigrants and the inclusion of skill upgradation and retooling modules in Pre Departure Orientation Sessions (PDOS) will ensure that successive cycles of migration are better informed and beneficial.

**VII. Re-Migration:** Recurring and repeat migrations are commonplace among Gulf migrants. While a return is not always followed by an eventual re-migration, this incidence of multiple migrations is high. For over half the returnees surveyed, the last migration was not their first time abroad. This was also true for the 31 in-depth case studies conducted among Return Emigrants, among whom 16 had embarked on multiple migrations. In addition, more

**Key Actors and Stakeholders**

The recruitment and migration of domestic workers from India is a large and lucrative industry with multiple actors operating at different sites and scales. In this section, we identify and map the key entities involved in the migration of women domestic workers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to the Gulf states.

## Key Stakeholders

Sending Country (India)	Receiving Country (Gulf states)
Social Networks	Social Networks
Informal Intermediaries	Foreign Employers
Registered/Unregistered Private Recruitment Agencies	Employment and Manpower supply agencies
State Recruitment Agencies (OMCAP, TOMCOM)	Indian Missions and Labour Attachés
Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)	Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior
Protector General of Emigrants and POE Offices	Shelters and Detention Centers
Passport Issuing Authority of India	Police, Courts, and Local Authorities
NGOs, Trade Unions (NDWM, MRC, MRWA, PARA)	Other Migrant Workers
Social Workers and Activists	Social Workers and Community Organizations

**Sending Country:** It is clear from our interviews that social networks play a prominent role in the promotion, propagation, and overall process of domestic work migration. In remote and rural areas of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, family, friends, and return emigrants are the first point of contact for aspiring emigrants. Neighbours and relatives help migrants raise the resources to finance the migration, and are key to the decision-making process. In more urban centers such as Hyderabad, social networks play a more streamlined role in propelling the migration of women, through links to agents and the visa trade. Return migrants are a key source of information and inspiration for aspiring women migrants in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. However, in terms of government efforts to manage and govern migration—they remain the weakest link. Sustained capacity-building efforts are needed to formalize their role in the recruitment and migration infrastructure.

Informal agents are an indispensable cog in India’s well-oiled migration machinery. Often known to migrants and their communities, sub-agents parlay these connections into recruitment opportunities. Others operate by trolling villages for recruits and approaching prospective emigrants.

These informal intermediaries operate in the unregulated space between recruitment agents and migrants, with little oversight over their roles and actions. Many do not have offices or officially exist on paper, yet their role in the migration process cannot be discounted. Aside from the facilitation of migration through providing information, connection to visas, and document processing services, many respondents reported that sub-agents were a source of help in times of need – enabling them to contact migrant family members abroad and even assisting in their repatriation, in some cases.

The continued demand for labour in the Gulf has created a competitive, commercial recruitment industry in Indian states. Private recruitment agencies include an array of registered and licensed large, medium, and small operators, as well as unregistered and unlicensed small and medium firms that process and facilitate international migration. These companies coordinate the process

of international migration through links with local sub-agents and overseas employers or manpower companies. They are usually located in well-connected urban towns and cities, with branches in key-migration districts, or employing the services of informal representatives that work in more remote migration-prone areas. According to Key Informants in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, legal and bureaucratic controls on the operation of private agencies, and the migration of women migrants, has led to increased irregularities, manipulation, and fraud in recruitment services.

To improve the governance of migration and limit the operation of private players, state-sanctioned public recruitment agencies have been established in key migrant-sending states of India including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, these public agencies have been actively involved in the training, recruitment and placement of migrant workers. Since August 2016, the emigration of women domestic workers for overseas employment has been permitted only through state-run recruitment agencies, making them the primary conduit for facilitating these flows. The state-run agencies are NORKA Roots and Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants (ODEPC) of Kerala, Overseas Manpower Corporation Ltd. (OMCL) of Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh Financial Corporation (UPFC) of Uttar Pradesh, Overseas Manpower Company Andhra Pradesh Limited (OMCAP) of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Limited (TOMCOM) of Telangana.

Since the 2016 merger of the Ministry for Overseas Affairs (MOIA) and the Ministry for External Affairs, the MEA is entrusted with the government’s efforts to engage with overseas Indians and facilitate overseas employment. Its functions include (a) policy coordination and implementation of the Emigration Act (1983), Passport Act (1967) and Passport Rules (1980), (b) provision of welfare services and assistance through Overseas Workers Resource Centres (OWRCs), Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF), Pravasi Bharatiya Bhima Yojna (PBBY), and MADAD portal, (c) protection



of emigrants and regulation of recruitment agencies through Protector General of Emigrants and regional Protector of Emigrants (POE) offices, and (d) engagement in empirical and policy research on international migration through the India Centre for Migration (ICM).

The Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) and POE offices, under the direction and political authority of the MEA, organize emigration services in India. This includes the granting of permits and licenses to recruitment agencies, endorsement of emigration clearance, and protection of overseas migrants. Authority for Passport issuance in India rests with the Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division of the Ministry of External Affairs. The department provides passport services through the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and its network of Regional Passport Offices, Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs), Passport Seva Laghu Kendras (PSLKs) and Indian Missions and Posts abroad.

There are a number of NGO's, Trade Unions, and civil society organizations in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh engaging in advocacy for migrant workers, particularly the plight of migrant domestic workers from the two states. These organizations liaise with government agencies such as the State Women's Commission, national movements such as the National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM), and individual social workers and activists to provide information and counselling services, rehabilitation support, repatriation assistance, and legal advice to migrants and migrant communities.

**Receiving Country:** Given the long history of migration to the Gulf from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, there are established overseas Indian communities across the Gulf states. Aspiring migrants make use of these informal ties to friends and relatives abroad to secure visas, employment, and support throughout the migration process. Significantly, a study by Rajan et al. (2013) concludes that migrants who embark on informal chain migration through transnational networks are likely to spend less on migration costs and fees. Respondents reported that they were more inclined to seek migration opportunities facilitated through social connections, since they perceived it to be less risky and safer overall. In some cases, recruitment of domestic workers is facilitated by manpower and placement agencies in the receiving country who coordinate with foreign employers on one hand, and agents at the destination, to secure women workers to meet local demands.

For domestic workers in the Gulf, the kafala sponsorship system renders them socially, legally, and financially dependent on employers and sponsors in majority of the cases. This is especially true in the case of live-in domestic workers whose living arrangements are also managed by the employer, often within the premises of their own home. In this case, working hours, employment conditions, access to food, medical facilities, and days of rest are all mediated by the employer.

The Ministry of Interior in Gulf countries oversees immigration, customs, and border patrol. They are also in charge of ensuring that migrants remain in legal status during the period of their stay. The Ministry of Labour is not typically applicable as a stakeholder in domestic work migration since the purview of labour legislation

does not include domestic workers, agricultural workers, seafarers and other casual workers in most Gulf countries. However, we have pre-emptively included the Ministry of Labour as a stakeholder to prompt the drafting of labour legislation that includes Domestic Workers and incorporates their concerns and conditions of life and labour. Domestic workers who find themselves in trouble or on the wrong side of the law, are generally advised to seek the assistance of the Indian Embassy or the police department because they are not covered by terms of the Labour Law.

Indian Embassies and Missions provide a number of legal, administrative, and welfare services for women domestic workers abroad. They are entrusted with attesting the contract in the case of direct employment by Foreign Employers, as well as retaining a deposit guarantee of \$2500. In some cases, such as the Embassy of Kuwait and UAE, Indian Missions have launched welfare measures and helplines to aid migrant workers in distress. Researchers, key informants, and migrants have observed that shelters in many Missions have limited capacity, that processing of out-pass and emergency certificates are typically time-taking and that Mission staff prefer engaging in mediation efforts with employer's in case of conflict, instead of litigation. This may drag on the process of seeking justice, in case of worker grievances.

Community associations play an integral role in extending support and protection to migrant workers in distress. Associations may coordinate with respective Indian Missions to dispense their services, or work on the ground to assist stranded and abused workers through counselling, fundraising for tickets and providing shelter and legal support. In the case of isolated domestic workers, it is often other migrant workers who provide support or connect them to social workers and/or Indian Missions.

## Issues and Problems Faced by Migrants at Different Stages of Migration

Migrant women are often particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuses at different points during their migration process. These constraints pose barriers to women fully benefiting from migration. This section will detail some of the challenges reported by respondents throughout their migration cycle.

At the pre-departure stage, caste and gender-based atrocities are reported almost daily among women of rural Andhra and Telangana communities, while perpetrators act with impunity. Regular exposure to discrimination and harassment has caused many women to opt for migration overcurrent conditions. Among some of the return emigrant respondents interviewed in Atrayapuram and Ravulapalam (East Godavari), there seems to be a mindset of disregard for stated risks of migration, since they face the same, if not worse, at home. Respondents appear willing to take bigger risks for potentially greater financial gains. The Gender Desk operator at an NGO in East Godavari identified some of the high-risk groups among prospective emigrants and return emigrants – women-headed households with care responsibilities for many members; families with two or more girl children; women divorced, deserted or abandoned by husbands; young widows; women facing domestic violence, partner abuse, spouse's alcoholism;

young brides and victims of child marriage or forced marriage; and Dalit communities/scheduled caste/scheduled tribe. These groups are also often the first persons contacted by predatory sub-agents, recruiters, and migration intermediaries. One respondent from Hyderabad recounted her experience with an agent who duped her with false documents and high processing fees. She was stopped at the airport and disallowed from migrating with false papers. While this transaction put her at risk and in debt, her brother's son and his wife were even less fortunate. Having both been promised Gulf jobs, they were tricked by RAs and harassed by moneylenders due to mounting debt. Ultimately, this agent fraud and repayment pressure led them to drink poison and eventually die.

Early marriage, abandonment and abuse are other common occurrences that lead women to seek their fortunes abroad. 51-year-old Kalavathi was estranged from her husband due to misunderstandings and abandoned by 25. She was recruited by an agent in August 1996 who relocated her to Bombay under the pretext of preparing her for deployment. For three months she was held in a room with 8-10 other people, misused and manhandled. She was forced to do anything to earn her passage. Kalavathi was finally deployed in October 1996. She reported that there were many others like her who gave money to agents but ultimately did not get the opportunity to go abroad. These women often get lost in "Mumbai

vices", may be forced into sex work, with elevated risks of sexually-transmitted diseases and are forced to spend any remaining money to buy their freedom. The problem of incomplete migrations and deferred dreams was commonly reported by return migrants. Some were held hostage for up to a year in bigger cities, Hyderabad, Bombay and Delhi and were only released as the stacks of passports with the agents grew.

Women migrants often face particular psycho-social costs including isolation, separation, and family disintegration. Many migrants and households associated their absence with the poor educational performance and behavioural issues of children, as well as instances of spousal infidelity, cheating, alcoholism, and desertion.

As information relating to the risks involved with Gulf migration for domestic work percolate into wider society, many women workers from the two states had to contend with rising social anxieties around women's migration. This is accompanied by moral assumptions about women migrants and feelings of betrayal, contempt, and disapproval. Gendered expectations that the woman should be the primary caregiver rests on assumptions that it is a woman's duty to perform familial and nurturing tasks. In this context, women are sometimes shamed for leaving their family behind.

**Table 15: Return Migrants Primary Responsibilities and Working Conditions in the Gulf**

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Cleaning	117	97.5
Laundry and Hand wash	110	91.7
Ironing	65	54.2
Driving Car	1	0.8
Gardening	55	45.8
Looking after Children	80	66.7
Looking after Elderly	58	48.3
Caring for frail or disabled	32	26.7

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should be the primary caregiver rests on assumptions that it is a woman's duty to perform familial and nurturing tasks. In this context, women are sometimes shamed for leaving their family behind.

Deepa is an 18-year-old paraplegic who was interviewed as part of a migrant household. Her mother, Bharathi, is a divorcee who was lured by an agent to migrate as the family's only hope for survival. After a successful two-year stay in Muscat, she returned and then left again to UAE. This time around she has been unable

to send remittances; the household (her only daughter) depends entirely on her remittances. Deepa currently lives alone in a single room with no kitchen or bathroom. Over the past 7 months she has received only a singly transfer of Rs. 13,000 from her mother and has been unable to pay rent. Money-lenders are constantly hounding her, and she lives under imminent threat of eviction. Deepa tries to convince the money collectors every month that she will repay them upon her mother's return or when the next remittance check arrives. She remains uncertain about the future.

**Table 16: Return Migrants' Difficulties Abroad**

Difficulty	Frequency	Percent
Work Condition	87	72.5
Beating Physical	6	5.0
Verbal Abuse	21	17.5
Sexual Harassment	3	2.5
Others	3	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Duped, deceived, or trafficked under the guise of Gulf migration, some migrant women were held under conditions of bonded labour, forced into sex work, or made to serve large or multiple households. Laxmi Alamkuntta was linked to sub-agents by J. Laxmi, the first successful woman migrant from her village. Having lost her husband to kidney disease, Laxmi migrated to pay for debts incurred for his funeral expenses as well as to support her children's future. Upon her arrival in the Gulf, she was spirited away to an interior desert area where she was forced to tend to cattle instead of perform domestic work as promised. For the seven months that she remained in the Gulf, she did not see a single paisa of the 15,000 Rs/month that was offered to her. Furthermore, after her arrival, she was unable to return to her village and family in Karim Nagar and had to stay in Korutla by herself, out of fear because money lenders and sub-agents were after her. Agents often force migrants to stay for the entire duration of their contract, despite difficult conditions, to avoid penalties for RAs. Since her return to the village, moneylenders continue to harass her; using their high profile connections, they took her to the police station where she was intimidated and kept in lock-up for 3 days.

In the case of Jamuna, from Karim Nagar, her short stint in Muscat was torturous. She was regularly beaten and locked in a room. Employers hurled abusive language and restricted her mobility. The neighbours and Panchayat officials mentioned to us that she had been severely sexually abused, however, she did not recount these experiences to us, choosing instead to tell us about her problems with food deprivation and overwork. In Jamuna's case, her children want to burn her passport and disallow her from going again. During her seven month sojourn, Jamuna was never allowed to leave the house. Due to this forced imprisonment, she

did not see Muscat aside from the initial drive from the airport.

Among the respondents interviewed, few had contacted the Indian missions or sought assistance from migrant-serving organizations. For those that faced legal issues or conflicts with their employers, the absence of legal representation, advisors, and Arabic-speaking interpreters hindered the resolution of cases and grievances. In its mandate, the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) has included the provision of legal assistance and support to migrants in distress. Reports of the draft Telangana State NRI policy have also mentioned the provision of legal services to migrants in Gulf jails and shelters.

Corruption and collusion, while endemic to the recruitment industry, is also common among migrant welfare providers. Key informants and respondents mentioned that social workers sometimes skimmed off the resources they raised for different emigrants, and were sometimes involved with cases purely for publicity. The case of 'beaten and battered' Burra Anuradha who was trafficked by road from Oman to UAE, was splashed across national and regional papers in August 2016, with NGO's jostling to take credit for her return. Without taking any concrete action, many posed with her family for the photo-op without assisting with compensation or follow-up after her return. This is symptomatic of a wider issue among local stakeholders. The lack of recognition and earmarking of resources for migrant organizations creates the conditions for illicit practices.

## India Centre For Migration

Many key informants noted the lack of Indian government's and Indian Missions' capacity to attend to the needs of domestic workers. One Key informant gestured to the sheer number of migrant domestic workers in jails, detentions centres, and shelters in the Gulf, as well as the number of bodies lying unattended and waiting for repatriation. At the same time, other informants noted that Minister Sushma Swaraj keen interest in Gulf migrant affairs has invigorated their own efforts. Under her tutelage the ministry

has been active and sympathetic to the plight of Gulf migrants, particularly women migrants stranded and abused. The MRCs, MADAD portal, helpline, and twitter handle of the MOE have enabled the rescue, repatriation, and rehabilitation of a number of distressed domestic workers. The active response by the Indian government has demonstrated that it recognizes its responsibility to overseas citizens.

### Challenges faced by Migrants across the Migration Cycle

Pre Departure	Departure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asymmetric Access to Information</li> <li>Escalating Costs of Migration</li> <li>Collusion among agents, sub-agents and officials</li> <li>Visa Trade and Contract Substitution</li> <li>Predatory, Targeted Recruitment of vulnerable</li> <li>Lack of Training, Orientation, and Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delay in departure (many held by RAs)</li> <li>Fake documents/Information fudging on documents lead to unsuccessful migration</li> <li>High flight fares paid despite low-cost carriers</li> <li>Rural women largely unaware of travel procedures</li> </ul>
Arrival & Transit	At Destination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long wait at airport</li> <li>Unable to contact sponsor upon arrival</li> <li>Stranded or deserted at airport (kafeel no-show)</li> <li>No information regarding sponsor or prior contact with them makes women vulnerable to deception</li> <li>Some picked up/duped by other locals</li> <li>Trafficking to other Countries</li> <li>No help-desk at origin or destination airports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower wages, non-payment or irregular payment</li> <li>Long hours (&gt;12 hours), food/unsanitary conditions</li> <li>No holiday or time off, Immense workload</li> <li>Health– arthritis, chronic pain, joint issues, paralysis</li> <li>Language barrier creates tensions</li> <li>Physical, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, rape</li> <li>No Privacy, constrained mobility and social contact</li> <li>Lack of skill training leads to devaluation</li> <li>Non-Recognition of Domestic work and no Labour Law</li> </ul>
Return/Repatriation	Resettlement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health, trauma</li> <li>Lack of support at Indian Missions</li> <li>Long wait at deportation and detention centres</li> <li>Sponsor holds passport and documentation</li> <li>Delays in issue of Emergency Certificates</li> <li>No ticket/money to return to village</li> <li>Difficulty receiving compensation for unpaid wages/abuse/health issues/accidents</li> <li>Remittance misuse/lack of savings upon return</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many return without meeting financial goals</li> <li>Some still have debt burdens</li> <li>Social stigma around women migrants, particularly sexual harassment and/or promiscuity</li> <li>Social Costs- family disintegration, children misbehave</li> <li>Marital discord, separation, unfaithfulness</li> <li>Lack of guaranteed employment</li> <li>Access to rehabilitation assistance programs</li> </ul>
Re-Migration	Challenges Across the Cycle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inability to save or pay-off loans leads to re-migration</li> <li>Re-migration of emigrants is not adequately facilitated</li> <li>Loss of original documentation and record-keeping necessitates further cumbersome processes</li> <li>Lack of Up-skilling opportunities</li> <li>Lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities at home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cumbersome, Restrictive Regulations</li> <li>Lack of Transparency</li> <li>Inaccurate/Incomplete Emigration Database</li> <li>Lack of Incentives for Official Migration Channels</li> <li>Absence of Adequate Institutional Support Services across the Migration Cycle</li> </ul>

## Benefits of Women's Emigration to the Gulf

- Remittance-led Savings and Investment
- Human Development (education and health indicators)
- Alleviates Unemployment and Poverty
- Improved Standard of Living
- Reduces Income Inequality
- Changing Social Ideas and Norms around gender, caste, women's roles
- Women's Empowerment (Independence, Liberty, Self-Sufficiency)
- Political Participation (Involvement in Local Governance)
- Community-Development (Returnee investments and chitty-funds)
- Knowledge and Skill Diffusion (Returnee source of information and support)
- Increased entrepreneurial abilities and renewed work culture
- Reductions in Fertility
- Migrant-headed household altered the gender balance in balance of labour and care-work

## Recruitment Industry

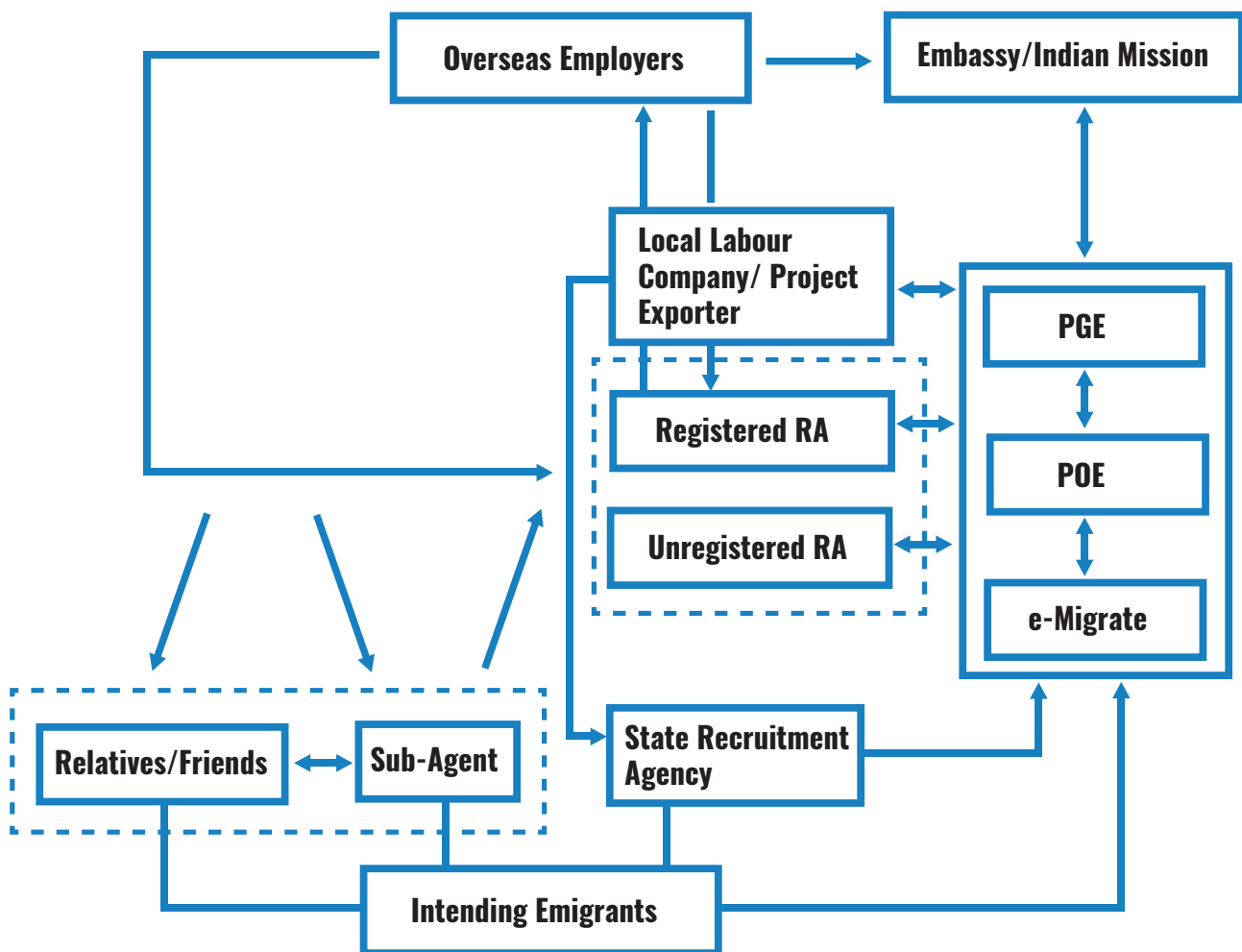
Sustained interest in overseas migration from Indian states coupled with the unrelenting demand for domestic workers in the Gulf States has encouraged the proliferation of public and private players in the recruitment industry. The recruitment of domestic workers for Gulf jobs is a thriving, profitable business comprised of profit-driven enterprises as well as government agencies. Since 2009 (Table C) upwards of 10,000 women, domestic service workers have migrated to ECR countries annually from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. If we assume that migrants pay a conservative average of INR 30,000 each, the business of recruiting migrant domestics yields 30 crore rupees per year, benefiting a broad base of stakeholders. This section sheds light on the operational aspects

of domestic worker recruitment from India to the Gulf.

### Recruitment Ecosystem

Between foreign employers in the Gulf and potential emigrants in the source districts, there operates a complex constellation of legal, quasi-legal and illegal entities. Nexus and co-operation between these different actors sustain the recruitment model. Infographic below diagrammatically represents some of the complicated processes and participants involved in the overseas labour recruitment of migrant domestic workers from the two states.

### Process of Recruitment from India to the Gulf



At present, the recruitment infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is predominantly populated by private recruitment agencies operating out of major cities and towns. This includes both Registered Recruitment Agencies and Unregistered Recruitment Agencies. These agencies match prospective emigrants to foreign employers and provide additional services and logistical support to facilitate their movement, including processing and procurement of documents, offering loans or information on Gulf conditions.

To ensure a steady supply of recruits, Registered and Unregistered private recruitment agencies enlist local middlemen (sub-agents, brokers and racketeers) that actively go out into the field and drum up business. Many of these local representatives are hired to work on the basis of commission, getting paid for every woman they are able to recruit. Under the existing provisions of the Emigration Act, 1983, sub-agents/informal agents are prohibited within the Indian migration structure. In practice, however, networks of agents and actors are involved in connecting an intending emigrant to the recruitment agents. Contracting the services of informal intermediaries has the added benefit of releasing recruiting agents from accountability for illicit practices, while shadow agents operate with relative impunity (Sasikumar and Hussain 2008).

A local government authority in Jagtial spoke to the pervasiveness of sub-agents in the region, "I recently saw an MEA statement that there are 1453 licensed RAs in India, this is an absurd number; unlicensed agents number in the lakhs with 10000 sub-agents operating in Jagtial alone." Our difficulty contacting respondents in Hyderabad's Old City area, without local connections, makes it still more evident why local sub-agents are the best link to prospective emigrants. A relatively closed and insular part of the city, local communities in Old City viewed us outsiders with suspicion. It was only after soliciting help from NGOs with a presence in the area that we were able to seek and speak to respondents who had previously remained uncommunicative. A study by NYU Center on Business and Human Rights (2015) on the recruitment of Gulf-bound construction workers from Telangana determined that sub-agents were an 'illegal yet indispensable' part of the recruitment ecosystem.

The shadow sector of sub-agents is effective because of their proximity and familiarity to local villages that engenders trust and a personal connection. Evidence from Bangladesh suggests that networks of sub-agents allow for women in even the remotest villages to be mobilized for international recruitment (Jones 2015). As the first link to prospective overseas opportunities, sub-agents hold a position of power over migrants' lives and aspirations. This often results in agents' increased political clout and collusion with government and state officials. Of the thirty-one case studies conducted among return emigrants, only two respondents reported having visited an official recruitment agents' office. In all other cases, respondents were unaware of the physical location of the agent's office, opting instead to meet local representatives in their homes or villages. Less than half the interviewees reported having a contact number for their agent, while six had been approached by neighbours or relatives who were unofficially linked to the business of recruitment. Since many sub-agents are accessible only via mobile phone or when they visit local villages, they are hard to reach and therefore, to regulate (MFA 2014). Anecdotally, during field visits in East Godavari, female enumerators of the

study were approached on two occasions by men who claimed to be agents themselves, with access to 'visas and connections'.

In the case of current emigrants, an overwhelming majority of households reported that migrants approached unregistered private recruiters and informal agents to facilitate their migration. Over 86% of current emigrants in East Godavari, West Godavari and Kadapa enlisted the support of sub-agents and local representatives. The statistical significance of this migration stream speaks to the prevalence of informal recruitment in Andhra Pradesh. In terms of migration patterns from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as a whole, this number is closer to 50% (including social networks and unregistered agents) with just over 30% of all migrants enlisting registered agents to help with their move.

A number of return migrants reported that they procured visas and job opportunities through personal connections. Leveraging social capital enabled them to circumvent restrictive regulations and avoid prohibitive commissions (Rahman 2011). Social networks facilitating access to migration include current emigrants in the Gulf who approach their sponsor (kafeel) or other kafeels to provide opportunities for aspiring migrants in their social circles, as well friends and family members who may have connections to brokers and the recruitment industry. It is sometimes difficult to draw clear distinctions between social networks and sub-agents since their roles and identities so often overlap. In the case of Deepa from Karim Nagar, it was relatives nearby who pushed her mother to migrate into domestic work. Upon her divorce in 2011, Deepa's mother Bharathi was counselled by relatives to seek opportunities abroad. The mother-daughter duo moved first from Andhra Pradesh to Telangana, upon advice from relatives who knew recruiters in Polasa village Karim Nagar. With no source of income to care for her paraplegic daughter, Bharathi migrated to Muscat in 2012. However, over two years she was scarcely able to repay the 40,000 debt incurred to her recruiter. Locked in a cycle of debt repayment, she migrated through the same agent again in 2015 – this time to UAE – where she makes a fraction of the salary promised to her. In the seven months prior to our interview, Deepa had received only one remittance payment from her mother and no phone calls after the first month. The recruitment agents are incommunicado and the relatives that linked them shirk responsibility for their plight.

In several cases, return migrants themselves were involved in connecting their neighbours, family and friends to local sub-agents or recruiters in bigger cities. Even when women were officially recruited through other channels, many indicated that return migrants were an important source of information and support. Return migrants enable recruitment by sharing their migration experiences and attesting to their positive experiences in the Gulf. The case of 36-year-old Return migrant Laxmi from Karim Nagar is illustrative. Laxmi was the very first woman to migrate from her village about a decade ago - a time when migration for male labourers was entrenched but women seeking overseas employment from her locality was highly uncommon. Presently, with two successful migrations to Muscat totalling six years under her belt, she plays the role of confidante and advisor to other prospective women migrants in the village.

In her case, migration allowed her to repay debts, while also, acting as an enabler for other women in the village to access Gulf jobs. A resourceful young woman, Laxmi recounted that she had been part of a monthly chitty fund in Muscat with local South Asian domestic workers and drivers that allowed her to send larger remittances once every three months, and defray some of the transaction costs. She has since started a chitty fund in her village among the women who approach her for migration advice. This practice assists prospective migrants in raising the high initial costs of their migration and recruitment. In addition, Laxmi's social role allows her to find new recruits to refer to her agent, qualifying her for commissions and other benefits. Owing to her active involvement in local recruitment, her agent has waived all costs associated with her upcoming Dubai migration.

Until recently, the contribution of Public Sector RAs in overseas migrant recruitment was negligible (Rajan et al 2013). The recent designation of OMCAP and TOMCOM (as well as four other agencies in other states) as the only state-sanctioned recruitment agencies endorsed to recruit women migrant domestic workers from the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh has significantly altered the recruitment process, patterns, and infrastructure. The new ordinance has effectively rendered all other Private Sector RAs and stakeholders facilitating the recruitment of women domestic workers illegal. These state-sanctioned agencies have been entrusted to ensure safe and formal flows of domestic workers, by providing information, training, assistance, and recording migration through the e-Migrate portal. While pre-departure orientation is not mandatory, or even customary for domestic workers recruited through other channels, OMCAP and TOMCOM have been offering 2-3 day intensive sessions for all migrant domestic workers that they recruit, as an essential segment of their services. Training is delivered using country-specific manuals developed by the Centre for Development Studies and resources supplied by IOM (MFA 2012). Despite their offerings, TOMCOM's location in Hyderabad and OMCAP's recent relocation from Hyderabad to Vijayawada, leave them far-removed from the villages of potential migrants. Much of their services can only be accessed in-person or over the phone thereby limiting the scope of their influence. These factors may have contributed to the dwindling numbers of women domestic workers seeking formal routes to Gulf migration opportunities in the past year.

The Protector of Emigrant (POE) offices are tasked with licensing and registration of recruitment agencies. They receive applications from and issues permission to recruitment agencies in India to undertake overseas recruitment. As per the MEA guidelines to Recruitment Agents, all parties engaging in recruitment activities are required to pay a registration fee of INR 25000 and deposit a bank guarantee of INR 5000000 (~USD 78000) to territorial POEs to be certified for business. For those agencies seeking to recruit over a 100 migrants, the application documents are forwards to the Protector General of Emigrants for review. POE offices are also responsible for the review and endorsement of Emigration Clearances for migrants.

The introduction of the e-Migrate system by the Overseas Employment Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, has automated the

operations of the POE and PGE offices. The platform has linked key recruitment stakeholders and includes portals for e-application for emigration clearance; registration of recruitment agents, project exporters and employers; grievance submissions; insurance claims; resources relating to migration and recruitment. The introduction of this initiative presents a number of opportunities for better oversight, governance, and transparency in the recruitment process.

### Recruitment Strategies and Practices

Domestic work migration from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is a booming business involving a multitude of state and social actors engaged in lucrative, often exploitative, recruitment strategies. Private Recruitment agencies, sub-agents and informal intermediaries exist in a competitive, unregulated recruitment ecosystem - leading to progressively lower business standards, and higher profit margins. Some of the key modalities of exploitative labour brokerage of female domestic workers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana include extortion, coercion, forcible confinement, harassment, debt bondage, contract substitution, and predatory recruitment practices. This section traces some of the common practices of recruitment that were observed over the course of the study.

(a) Overcharging – According to Government amendments to the 1983 Act in 2009, a ceiling has been enforced on service charges collected by private recruiting agents from workers. This amount is not to exceed the equivalent of forty-five days of overseas wages as per the employment contract (up to a maximum of INR 20000/~USD 310). However, a majority of women in our study reported paying much larger sums to secure Gulf jobs.

This is because, under current conditions, money moves through multiple hands that pocket a graduated percentage of kick-backs along the chain of recruitment. Employers and recruiters seek to keep their costs low and profit margins up, by passing along recruitment fees to the workers. Migrants are forced to shoulder the costs of migration (including document-processing, visa fees, and tickets), fees for recruitment services, as well as unauthorized fees, commissions and bribes (Jureidini 2014).

Workers are often unaware of the true costs associated with migration, and recruiters seldom explain the breakdown of expenses. Return migrants who reportedly paid outrageous sums to recruitment agents were unable to lodge cases or seek compensation since they were not provided with receipts or proof of payment. The Indian government has made several recent attempts to shore up bureaucratic restrictions on recruitment and thwart irregular practices and migration. Recruiters today must navigate a maze of documents, authorizations, clearances, and regulations to deploy a migrant overseas. With so many steps and added controls, intermediaries need to remain agile and adapt to the shifting legislative landscape. Given the number of actors and procedures involved, it is of no surprise that commissions and bribes to sub-agents, agents and officials have become a structural feature of this migration process.



**(b) Contract Substitution** – Irregularities in the signing of contracts were also widely reported. Some respondents were forced by agents to sign documents shortly before departure and others did not report receiving a contract before deployment. Those that signed contracts beforehand were usually unable to read and review the documents that were written in Arabic or English. Many were unaware that in imprinting their initials, they were agreeing to disadvantageous terms that were vastly different from those advertised and agreed upon. According to key informants, agents frequently present the signing of contracts as a superfluous part of the recruitment process, without mentioning that the documents are legally-binding and enforceable upon arrival. In a number of other cases, workers were issued, and forced to sign, a new contract upon arrival that substituted the original contractual terms with conditions far less favourable. This occurrence often took place after the migration, when migrants were left with little choice but to accept the new conditions of employment.

**(c) Visa Trading** – Sub-agents, RAs and local middlemen are frequently involved in trading of visas on the black market. Coordinating with GCC nationals (who receive permission to bring in migrant workers) and placement agencies in the Gulf, recruiters and agents access visas that they then hawk at a premium to interested migrants and employers. For a fee, migrants are offered ‘non-binding’ or ‘non-work’ visas that are framed as open or ‘floating’ work visas; purportedly leaving migrants free from contractual obligations to a single sponsor. In reality, migrants traveling on these visas enter the Gulf on illegal terms that render them irregular and precarious. During a Key Informant Interview, a police official (Jagtial district) recounted a number of cases in Korutla, Dharmapuri and neighbouring Telangana villages of women victim to cheating by disreputable sub-agents and touts. Quoting from a number of open case files, the police official detailed the fraudulent acts by both authorized and unauthorized local agents. He summarized that a number of key cases of fraud filed against recruitment agents had to do with the illegal trade of “job visas” and “azad visas”, contract substitution, forcible confinement and bonded labour. The staggering costs and occlusion associated with this transnational trade in visas renders women seeking migration opportunities vulnerable to debt traps, forced labour, and irregular migration.

**(d) Deception and False Hopes** – Many of the migrants in our study fell prey to dishonest assurances of local sub-agents. Respondents recalled the false claims of their brokers who allegedly duped them with lies regarding salary, working conditions, and in some cases, the nature of the job itself. In a focus group discussion in East Godavari, return migrants vehemently condemned the corrupt practices of local middlemen who made all manner of promises to allay their apprehensions before departure. In one case, a sub-agent who was also a member of the village, promised to take full responsibility for the two women he was recruiting, guaranteeing that they would be able to contact their family regularly and return if the job was not satisfactory. Once the women were deployed, the sub-agent avoided further contact with the families and denied any responsibility for their plight. Misleading information and lack of clarity around terms of employment and contractual obligations is an egregious abuse of migrants trust that

often lead to abuse, conditions of forced labour, or trafficking. In the case of Burra Anuradha, who was repatriated on August 16, 2016 by the Indian Mission in Oman, her recruitment was facilitated by a couple from a neighbouring village. Upon payment of 20,000 rupees, she was given passage to Dubai on a visit visa to scout for domestic work opportunities. She was put in touch with a local agent who was supposed to find her employment at a ‘good’ home. After two weeks of confinement by the local agent, Anuradha was smuggled by road to Oman where she was confined in a building with other young girls and made to work outdoors for over 18 hours a day. Upon resisting these labour conditions, she learnt from her employers that she had been sold and trafficked into farm-work by her recruiters for a sum of two lakh rupees. The police officer noted that despite the ongoing case against the two agents accused, they continued to operate in breach of the law.

**(e) Predatory and Targeted Recruitment** – During fieldwork, we encountered a number of the common abuses inherent in the recruitment process. However, a key finding to emerge was evidence that domestic work recruitment operates as a highly localized, gendered business model. To ensure a continuous supply of new female recruits and buoy profitability, local agents were found to engage in ‘deliberate targeting’ i.e. recruitment practices aimed at recently widowed, separated or divorced women and victims of domestic abuse. Through chains of local representatives, agents were made aware of women in, particularly destitute or vulnerable situations. In East Godavari and West Godavari, many local villagers were known to be informants for local sub-agents whereas, in Hyderabad Old City, shopkeepers and auto rickshaw drivers kept agents informed about women who had suffered losses, family problems, or were in dire need of a job. Opportunistic recruiters then entrapped widows, divorcees, and women in economic despair with tales of better opportunities abroad.

Among the thirty-one case studies conducted, eleven cases involved the intervention of an agent at or around a time of personal loss or family disruption. Women reported being easily lured into migrating at times like this, without acquiring much knowledge about the job or destination country. Abandoned by her husband who left her for her younger sister, Jamuna from Karim Nagar was in a state of mental shock, traumatized by her spouse’s and sister’s betrayal. Some neighbours from her village found her in this situation and pushed her to go to the Gulf to overcome her situation. They swiftly arranged her ticket, visa and employment for a fee of 70,000 rupees and within a span of few short weeks, she had migrated. Upon her arrival in Muscat, Jamuna found herself working long hours for a family of 18 members for paltry pay. Whenever she voiced her inability to perform all the tasks that were required of her daily, the employers would discipline her through verbal rebukes and physical abuse. After eight months the beating and torture became unbearable and Jamuna contacted her neighbours to help repatriate her. This was to no avail. Her neighbours-turned-agents threatened her, telling her that she could stop working but would have to pay them 40,000 rupees to release her from her employment contract and another 30,000 to arrange her return ticket. Jamuna, like many other victims of strategically-timed gendered recruitment, was approached by local representatives and networks when her circumstances were ripe to be taken advantage of.

**(f) 'Go Now Pay later' Schemes** – According to a Key Informant Interview with an NGO representative, “[a] new method being increasingly deployed by recruitment agencies is the ‘go now, pay later’ scheme, where a migrant worker does not pay recruitment costs up front but, instead, the cost incurred by the agency is deducted from the worker’s monthly salary.” While such alternative payment structures appear to make migration more accessible to the rural poor, practices such as these leave migrants indebted to recruitment agents and vulnerable to extortion, threats, and abuse. Recruiters may demand that migrants complete the full tenure of their contracts in order to service the debts incurred before departure. Locked into conditions of debt bondage and coercion, workers are intimidated into enduring exploitative employment situations. Desperate to flee from an employer in Kuwait, one migrant recalls bargaining with the agent to find a replacement migrant in her stead. This arrangement forced her to entrap other migrants and perpetuate the cycle of migration. Another migrant who wished to run away from her employer was threatened by the recruiter, who held her daughter as collateral. Not wishing to see her daughter deployed in her place, the respondent braved harsh conditions for nine additional months, during which time her entire salary was sent directly to the recruiter to release her from obligations.

**(g) Irregular Migration and Migrant Smuggling** – Agents and sub-agents frequently assist in the procurement of visas, passports and other documents. This gives them the opportunity to obtain fake and fraudulent documentation for prospective migrants that do not meet the government’s minimum age stipulation. A number of respondents produced their passports during the in-

terviews, pointing to the mismatch between their real and actual age and other identifying information. Unbeknownst to them, these forged documents placed women at undue risk throughout the migration cycle. In other cases, agents falsified contracts and misrepresented important details regarding the conditions of work, country of destination, and employers. In a Key Informant Interview conducted in Hyderabad, an NGO representative skewered the POE and Ministry in his accounts of rampant corruption. “As the controls increase, more backdoors and channels open...ultimately, migrants are exploited along the way.” According to him, recruitment agents are part of a web of systemic corruption and collusion; many government officials, ministers, MLAs, and activists moonlight as sub-agents and prop up the very processes they denounce. This allows them to channel migrants to the Gulf through unauthorized means that offer no protections throughout the migration process. Among respondents, reports of inhumane treatment, coercion, and trafficking were not uncommon. Duped, deceived, and trafficked under the guise of migration, some migrant women were held under conditions of forced labour, sexual slavery, isolated farm work, or to service large or multiple households.

The multi-layered recruitment infrastructure presents multiple opportunities for recruitment intermediaries to inflate costs, swindle and exploit workers. Given the extent of these issues, there is a pressing need for national and state governments to regulate recruitment practices and institute good practices across the cycle of migration and recruitment. The following section will analyze the broader policy and legislative structures framing these processes.

## Regulatory Framework and Institutional Support

### International Instruments

There are numerous international standards and multilateral frameworks guaranteeing human and labour rights applicable to migrant domestic workers. While some universal directives such as the International Bill of Human Rights apply broadly to all populations, others are narrower in scope and apply to particular groups such as women, migrants, migrant workers, women migrants, and domestic workers. Some of the relevant instruments and mechanisms are outlined below.

**(a) UN Conventions and Protocols** – Several conventions of relevance to women migrant domestic workers have been implemented by the United Nations through its specialized agencies (ILO, World Bank), programmes (UN Women, UNODC, UNDP, OHCHR, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants), and related organizations (IOM).

**International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families:** The United Nations Migration Convention was adopted in 1990 and entered into force in 2003. This multi-part Convention comprises 93 articles and endorses fundamental rights for all migrant workers and members of their families without discrimination or distinction of any kind and across the entire migration process (Article 1, 7). Rights enshrined by the convention include the rights to life (Article 9), liberty (Article 16), association (Article 26), fair conditions of work and remuneration (Article 25), freedom of movement (Article 8, 39), and freedom from forced or compulsory labour (Article 11). The Convention has not been widely ratified, aside from countries of emigrant origin. Most migrant receiving-countries of the Gulf and countries like India that both send and receive migrants, have not ratified till date. It is imperative that India both becomes a signatory and ratifies the Convention to promote the protection of its citizens living and working abroad. However, obligations to protect the rights of migrants within its territories is probably the reason that India has delayed action on this important instrument.

**Palermo Convention and Palermo Protocols:** The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000 (Palermo Convention) and two of the three supplementary protocols (the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air) demonstrate the need to prevent and combat trafficking and migrant smuggling, while also protecting and repatriating victims of these processes. Despite its position at the cusp of trafficking, refugee, and migratory movements, the Indian government stalled on ratifying the Convention and protocols for over a decade. Since ratifying in 2011, India is now party to peer-review and monitoring by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), under whose purview the Convention and associated protocols fall. This accentuates national obligations to manage the magnitude of migration, trafficking, and migrant smuggling within and across Indian borders.

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** Dubbed as the international bill of rights for women, CEDAW was adopted in 1979 to advance the equality and empowerment of women. It defines discrimination against women and sets an agenda for state action to eliminate all forms of such discrimination. In particular, General Recommendation 26 on Women Migrant Workers recognizes the precarious position of female migrants across the migration cycle and obliges states to uphold the rights of women migrant workers regardless of legal status. On the sending country perspective, it outlines the constraints and challenges women migrants face, including discriminatory bans and policies, detention and trafficking by recruitment agents, and exploitative fees and practices. General Recommendation No. 19 on Violence Against Women requires states to protect women against violence of any kind, including traffic (Article 6) and forms of exploitation including domestic labour recruitment, that put women at special risk (Article 6). Although CEDAW ranks among the most widely ratified of all treaties, adherence to the recommendations, clauses and provisions of the Convention leave much to be desired. In particular, persistent rights violations, marginalization, and violence against women in India require sustained policy and legal attention.

**UN Women:** The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has been instrumental in advancing the rights, protection, and skills of marginalized women and women migrant communities. In partnership with government agencies and civil society organizations, they have been actively involved in developing resources, capacity-building, and dispensing training aimed at South Asian migrant women and stakeholders involved in the migration process (Thimothy and Sasikumar 2012). In India, UN Women provides policy consultations and resources highlighting good practices for gender-responsive policies that foster safe migration, facilitate recruitment, and curb trafficking. Through projects and interventions, UN Women underscores the intersections between migration and education, health, gender, and other socio-economic indicators critical to the development process.

**(b) ILO Conventions and Recommendations** – The ILO's overarching mandate on work and labour extends to a critical focus on issues of international labour migration. It promotes international labour rights through framing international standards, legally-binding Conventions, and non-binding recommendations. Rights and freedoms enshrined in ILO Conventions are applicable to all workers, regardless of their country of origin, work or residence. ILO's primary instruments are the eight fundamental Conventions based on principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining; abolition of forced labour; equality and non-discrimination in employment; and the elimination of child labour. In addition to these core Conventions, the ILO has also framed specific Conventions to ensure labour standards, employment generation, and social protections for migrants and their families.

ILO Migrant Workers Conventions: ILO Convention 97 on Migration for Employment, 1949 underscores principles of non-discrimination in employment, advocates for social benefits for migrant workers and stresses the need for free and formal recruitment processes and regulation of irregular migration. Recommendation No. 86 supplements Convention 97 with details on providing information to migrants, and facilitating and easing migration flows between countries. Convention 143, Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 takes into account the concerns of migrants in abusive conditions, including irregular workers. Together with Recommendation 151, it calls for equality in wages, benefits and social security of all migrant workers, and imposing penalties for trafficking and migrant smuggling.

**C189 Decent Work for Domestic Workers Convention and Recommendation 201:** In addition to ILO Migrant Worker Conventions, there are two instruments that afford specific protections to domestic workers, including ground rules for their recruitment and terms and conditions of employment. The Domestic Workers Convention 181, 2011 outlines measures to promote human rights, labour rights, and decent work for domestic workers recognizing that domestic work is work and domestic workers are workers. It mandates fair remuneration, work hours, recruitment processes, and protection from abuse, harm or harassment. Provisions contained in Articles 8, 9, and 15 are of particular relevance to the case and conditions of migrant domestic workers from India to the Gulf. Article 8 recognizes the specific vulnerabilities of migrant domestic workers across the migration process. It addresses the need for written job contracts, reliable information, access to complaint mechanisms, and legal recourse. Article 9 attends to the specific risks and uncertainties for live-in domestic workers, calling for guarantees on domestic workers' choice in living arrangements, decent living and working conditions, and time off from work. Article 15 governs the operation of private recruitment agents and recommends not charging recruitment fees to domestic workers. Recommendation 201 offers practical guideline for national policy-makers to implement the Convention, as well as specific information on policies for professional development of domestic workers, and international and regional collaboration. While India is a signatory to the Convention, it is yet to ratify or make formal commitments to implement the provisions. This suggests that India's commitment to domestic workers, both within its borders and overseas, does not run deep enough to make a difference in domestic conditions and welfare services.

**ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration:** This action plan consists of non-binding principles and guidelines towards a rights-based approach to labour migration and migrant protection. It makes particular reference to the needs and concerns of women migrant workers and underscores the need to mainstream gender considerations into migration and labour policies.

All member states have an obligation to follow ILO stipulated guidelines in national policy-framing. As a founding member, India has a special commitment to aligning national priorities with ILO principles. Till date, India has ratified 45 Conventions and 1 Protocol but this does not include the Migrant Workers Conventions 97, 143 or the Domestic Workers Convention 189. In

order to protect the rights of overseas citizens, promote formal migration, and leverage migration for development, India needs to improve national compliance and ratification of international laws and Conventions. Much of ILO's work in India is organized under the umbrella of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) that seeks to promote inclusive growth and decent work. Efforts to improve domestic employment conditions, social protections, migrant welfare and skill development have been undertaken in this regard. Of particular relevance is the South Asia Labour Migration (SALM) governance project that aims to effectively protect the rights of vulnerable migrant workers, promote labour migration management, enhance the development impact of labour migration and reduce unregulated migration.

ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181): This Convention establishes international standards for the public regulation of private employment agencies. In addition, the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative (ILO-FAIR) launched in 2014 aims to increase awareness on national and international recruitment practices; to reinforce laws, policies, standards, and enforcement mechanisms in line with Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour or Compulsory Labour; to promote fair business standards and practices; and foster dialogue, partnerships, and good practices within the industry and beyond.

**(c) Sustainable Development Goals** – Expanding on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UN has framed and adopted a new, universal set of goals, targets and indicators that together form the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (also known as the the Post-2015 Development Agenda). While the MDGs did not specifically address issues relating to migration, the SDGs include and recognize the contribution of migrants and the developmental role of migration processes in origin, transit and destination countries. The primary goals and targets which foreground issues of migration and gender include:

**Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

**Target 5.1** End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

**Target 5.2** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

**Target 5.4** Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

**Target 5.C** Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

**Goal 8:** Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

**Target 8.7** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking.

**Target 8.8** Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

**Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.

**Target 10.3** Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

**Target 10.7** Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

Unlike the MDGs, gender, in/equality and migration are cross-cutting themes across the 17 SDGs, with specific goals relating to the labour and human rights, non-discrimination, and empowerment of women. The goals function as a series of guidelines for policy formulation as well as a set of benchmarks and standards for NGOs and civil society organizations to hold governments accountable to. SDGs are not legally-binding or enforceable; governments are expected to take independent ownership of their implementation, progress and review through establishing national action plans. Ultimately, the wide breadth of objectives and lack of earmarked funds makes it difficult to implement and follow-up on SDGs in the intended span of 15 years.

**(d) High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD 2006, 2013)** – As part of its commitment to leveraging migration for development and upholding the rights of migrants, the UN convened the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development from 3-4 October 2013 with an eight-point agenda for action on making migration work: protecting the human rights of all migrants; reducing the costs of labour migration; eliminating migrant exploitation, including human trafficking; addressing the plight of stranded migrants; improving public perceptions of migrants; integrating migration into the development agenda; strengthening the migration evidence base; and enhancing migration partnerships and cooperation. Member states adopted a historical joint declaration underscoring respect for human rights and international labour standards, commitment to fighting human trafficking, and condemnation of discrimination, racism and intolerance.

**(e) The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)** – This global forum was a result of the 2006 High-Level Dialogue and is open to all states that are members and observers of the United Nations. The GFMD is an informal, non-binding, voluntary and government-led process that convenes annual governmental meetings and parallel civil society meetings. The forum provides a venue for policy-makers to discuss relevant policies and challenges; exchange good practices; identify information and policy gaps; and establish strategic inter-governmental, and multi-stakeholder partnerships towards migration and development priorities. Over the past decade, Indian delegations have actively participated in the consultative processes and proceedings. At the 2016 GFMD

meeting, State Minister for External Affairs MJ Akbar presented a 9-point plan including the need for gender-sensitive policies that address the vulnerabilities of women, trafficking, human smuggling, egregious labour practices and positive contributions of formal migration.

**(f) New York Declaration for Refugees (2016) and Migrants, and Global Compact on Migration and Refugees** – The UN emphasized the importance of migration and refugee resettlement on the global political, social, economic and political agenda through the recent induction of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) into the UN system, and the adoption of the New York declaration. The expected global compact in 2018 further underscores the need for a comprehensive cooperative approach to human mobility, stemming from a shared responsibility to protect, enhance and support the lives of migrants and refugees globally

### Regional Agreements on Labour Migration

On the regional scale, there are a number of multilateral intergovernmental agreements that address issues of temporary labour mobility from Asia to the Middle East, and seek to promote safe and organized flows. India's active participation in these dialogues and deliberations implies a commitment to sharing and adopting best practices relating to temporary labour migration.

**(a) Colombo Process** – The first Ministerial Consultation on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin in Asia was convened by Asian labour-sending countries in 2003 to optimize the benefits from labour migration, while protecting their citizens from exploitative employment and recruitment conditions. Since then, the Colombo process has provided a regional forum to discuss policy priorities and challenges relating to ethical recruitment, pre-departure orientation, and reducing the costs of remittances transfer. A number of Gulf labour-receiving states have been given Observer Status at these meetings. In recent years, protection of women migrant workers, operationalization of SDGs, and provision of consular support have been identified as priorities by participating states. As part of its current thematic priorities, three regional symposiums are being convened on the regulation of recruitment intermediaries.

**(b) Abu Dhabi Dialogue** – This initiative on temporary labour migration was established in 2008 by Colombo Process Member States, in collaboration with Gulf countries, Malaysia, and Singapore. Based on a recognition of shared responsibility and mutual interest, the Abu Dhabi Declaration was adopted to develop partnerships to optimize policies relating to temporary labour migration. The framework includes clauses relating to the prevention of irregular recruitment, welfare and protection of migrant workers, including women migrants.

**(c) Dhaka Declaration** – The 2013 Dhaka Declaration emerging from the Global Leadership Meeting on Population Dynamics, encouraged Member States to advance gender equality and empowerment, enable women to make free and informed decisions regarding mobility, and protect the rights of vulnerable migrants, including women and domestic workers.

### *National Legislation and Institutional Mechanisms*

The section began with analysis of international norms to set the context of global consultations and standards around migration and gender. These mechanisms carry with them an obligation and should ideally function as a focal point of Indian national policy formulation. Our current policy trajectory, however, falls tragically short of the stated goals of the SDGs, UN and ILO Conventions and requires much-sustained effort to achieve. There is a pressing need for harmonization of national and state policies with international and regional frameworks, to foster formal labour migration, and protect the fundamental rights of migrant communities. Within this context, we now turn to an analysis of national policies and provisions.

**(a) Emigration Act 1983** – The central legislation structuring migration from India is the Emigration Act of 1983 (amended in 2009), which replaced the Immigration Act of 1922. The legislation is administered via institutional support of emigration authorities at the state and national level. The Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) New Delhi and the ten regional offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POE) are charged with –protection of Indian emigrants overseas and those seeking to go abroad; facilitation of formal emigration through the granting of Emigration Clearance, and registration of Recruitment Agents.

This dated governance framework has been severely criticized by civil society organizations and researchers alike (Sasikumar and Hussain 2008; Migrant Forum Asia 2012; Kumar and Rajan 2015). Among the many grounds for critique are the nebulous and unwieldy role of the PGE. Responsibilities of the PGE and POE offices are too broadly defined, without clear instructions on the procedures and actions to be undertaken to perform their functions. The Act rather loosely designates the PGE and POE offices as the authorities entrusted with protecting, aiding, and advising emigrants and their families. Specific measures to ensure protection are not stipulated, leaving this core function of the PGE and POEs open to interpretation and inaction. The Act leans heavily on licensing and registration guidelines to ensure the authenticity of recruitment agents, doing little to regulate the operational aspects of the recruitment process. Kumar and Rajan (2015) note that despite the deposit increase from INR 20 lakhs to INR 50 lakhs, the current penalty structure for RAs do not act as effective deterrents. It follows that many of the PGE functions are, intentionally or not, merely performative; one is not safeguarded against malpractice or exploitation simply by virtue of using a registered RA or obtaining emigration clearance (Kumar and Rajan 2015). As a corollary, using the services of an unregistered, informal agent and/or failure to obtain clearance cannot and should not leave prospective and current emigrants outside the purview of protection. Another key aspect of the Emigration

Act is the two-tier process of Emigration Clearance –ECR/ECNR Passports and ECR/ECNR Countries. A list of 18 countries, including all the Gulf States, have been identified by the Indian Government as destinations that require extra checks and precautions before migration due to apparent higher chance of exploitation. It is unclear exactly what factors were taken into consideration by the government while preparing this list. What is clear, however, is that labour infractions and exploitative practices occur globally as well as within Indian borders.

Without clear metrics or rationale, adding countries to this “watch list” is deeply discriminatory, unfair, and likely baseless. Furthermore, there is no evidence that adding an ECR tag to Passports or countries has demonstrably improved the migration experience in these contexts.

The Emigration Act of 1983 stipulates that low- and semi-skilled workers, who have not earned a tenth-grade pass certificate be issued special ECR Passports. Before emigrating for overseas employment to any of the 18 ECR countries, ECR Passport holders must obtain clearance from any of the 10POE offices located at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Trivandrum, Jaipur, Cochin, Kolkata, Chandigarh and Raebareilly. This process creates duality among passport holders, while doing little to facilitate the secure movement of citizens. Creating an artificial binary between citizens, based on educational attainment or other socio-economic criteria, goes against the principles of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity as espoused in Articles 1 and 7 the UN Migrants Convention and Target 10.3 of SDG 10. Low- and semi-skilled workers (who constitute the bulk of Indian migrants to the GCC) seeking to work/move legally are forced to navigate mounting formalities that dis-incentivize formal registration and migration.

Intended to ease the process, the recent transition to e-applications for emigration clearance appears to have had the opposite effect. In our Focus Groups, migrant women stated that they were simply not tech-savvy enough to process online emigration clearance applications. This move away from physical appointments at POEs has rendered low- and semi-skilled workers, including domestic workers, further dependent on migration intermediaries to upload and process their documents. Among respondents interviewed, a majority relied solely on RAs and informal representatives to secure paperwork and were unaware of ECR and ECNR categories. Adding new bureaucratic burdens to emigration processes creates more opportunities for agents to overcharge this marginalized segment of workers with hefty commissions. Furthermore, there are loopholes to this policy that are frequently exploited; ECR passport holders travelling abroad (including ECR countries) for purposes others than employment are not required to receive an endorsement on furnishing a return ticket. This allows agents to furnish workers with visit visas and other non-work visas that render them irregular.

The imperfect coverage, inadequate penalty structure, and divisive provisions around gender and high and low-skilled workers in the Emigration Act situates it as a relic of a bygone era (Kumar and Rajan 2015). From this discussion, it is clear that national legislative frameworks need to be strengthened and reoriented to practically manage current migration patterns, provide a legislative basis for protection of migrants, and promote international labour migration from India. The long-awaited Emigration Management Bill, which would replace the Emigration Act 1983, has been in the works since 2010. At this juncture, the current study is timely and wields the ability to inform national and state-level policies on emigration management based on empirical observations from leading migration states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

**(b) Protective Measures for Women Migrants** – Sending-country governments often erect regulatory frameworks intended to protect vulnerable emigrants. In the Indian context, national policies on recruitment and migration of women include several provisions for protection including gender- and age-based restrictions and collection of a bank guarantee from employers.

**Gendered, Age Restriction (30 years):** Imposition of the mandatory minimum age of 30 years for women emigrant workers holding ECR passports has been criticized as a tool of patriarchal control that exacerbates, rather than mitigates, migration-related risks (Kodoth and Varghese 2012; Rajan and Joseph 2015). Singling out a category of workers, based on their age, gender, literacy, or other socio-economic characteristics, constructs these groups as particularly in need of state protection and surveillance. Unrealistic gender norms and assumptions underpin the arbitrary selection of '30' as the acceptable age for women's migration. This magic number does little to equip migrants to avoid abuse or handle exploitative conditions. Furthermore, barriers to migration strip away individuals' freedom of movement as enshrined in Articles 8 and 39 of The United Nations Migration Convention. Despite India's reluctance to ratify the Convention, all Member States have an obligation to follow the stipulations articulated by UN Conventions. States are expected to treat their citizens as equals under the law. However, gender-based policy measures differentiate between the rights, freedoms, and capacities of male and female migrants based on gendered notions of maturity and vulnerability. Such paternalistic policies are flagrant violations of gender equality as espoused in SDG 5. As a party to CEDAW, the Indian government is beholden to uphold the provisions of the Convention and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. General Recommendation No. 21., Article 15, requires states to accord men and women the same rights with regard to laws relating to the movement of persons. In no uncertain terms, Article 2 of General Recommendation No. 26 on Women Migrant Workers, further instructs states of migrant origin to lift discriminatory bans or restrictions on migration, including sex-specific bans and discriminatory restrictions on women's migration (on the basis of age, marital status, pregnancy, or maternity status). Target 10.3 of the SDGs prompts states to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, through the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices. Thus, it is clear that the Indian government's institution of gender-specific controls on mobility since 2007, is a violation of international law and the fundamental human rights of women migrants. Furthermore, restrictions on migration at the source, do very little to address the exploitation and abuse of workers at the

destination.

Target 10.3 of the SDGs prompts states to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, through the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices. Thus, it is clear that the Indian government's institution of gender-specific controls on mobility since 2007, is a violation of international law and the fundamental human rights of women migrants. Furthermore, restrictions on migration at the source, do very little to address the exploitation and abuse of workers at the destination.

Next, we consider the efficacy of such restrictions in current practice. From our fieldwork it is apparent that many respondents had flouted these age- and gender-based controls; case studies suggest that most respondents were unaware of the minimum age stipulation and/or the recruiters' manipulation of age-related information on their documents. Working backwards from current reported age and year of first emigration, the initial age of surveyed Return Migrants was approximated (Table 17). Among Return Migrants in five districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 31 percent of respondents were found to have migrated before the age of 30 and 36 percent between 30-34 years, with the youngest being 24 when embarking on her first migration. Overall, the average age of migration from East Godavari, West Godavari villages and Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh was found to be significantly lower than corresponding figures from Hyderabad, Nizamabad and Karim Nagar areas of Telangana. Almost all return migrants from East Godavari and West Godavari were below the age of 34 at first departure, while 50 percent of return migrants from West Godavari and a little less than a third of return migrants from East Godavari migrated when they were below the age of 29. In contrast, 65 percent of return migrants from Hyderabad were over the age of 35 at the time of their initial migration. While the numbers are indicative of the continuing trend of young women and girls migrating, it is likely an under-estimation of the phenomenon over to under-reporting.

Among 31 case studies conducted among Return Emigrants, 11 women were found to have migrated before the age of 30. This indicates that migration of women domestic workers under the stipulated age of 30 is fairly commonplace, and is easily facilitated by sub-agents and brokers. In the case of Laxmi, a 36-year-old Return Emigrant interviewed from Karim Nagar, her age at initial migration to Oman in 2007 was 27. As she waits for her next deployment to Dubai, Laxmi acts as an ad-hoc agent and source of information for young women and girls in the locality on navigating the emigration process. When we asked her to comment on the current minimum age stipulations, Laxmi remarked that age was not an important factor; her first migration was smooth even when under the official age. Today, Laxmi has completed a cumulative 6 years in Oman with a two-year interval to take care of her mother and two daughters. The date of birth in her passport does not reflect her accurate age, yet this has not hindered her successful, successive migrations to Oman and ongoing visa application to UAE. As a key resource for prospective migrants, Laxmi shares her stories from the Gulf and experiences with the migration process. Information about migrating informally without reaching the age of 30 is passed down to eager migrants who approach her and other Return migrants.

Table 17: Process of Recruitment from India to the Gulf

Age	District					Total	Percent
	E Godavari	W Godavari	Kadapa	Nizamabad / Karim Nagar	Hyderabad		
Age <30 Years	9	11	8	7	2	37	31
Age 30-34 Years	9	9	11	8	6	43	36
Age 35-39 Years	4	4	8	4	8	25	21
Age >40 Years	2	2	1	3	7	15	12
Total	23	23	28	22	23	120	100

While it is clear that age-based restrictions do little to keep women migrants from emigrating, an insidious effect of the policy is that it channels them into irregularity. Mehru Vesuvala, Coordinator For Domestic Workers & Migrant Protection, Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF), feels strongly that restrictive migration policies have reduced the possibilities for regular and legal migration for women, forcing them to go through perilous irregular channels. Faced with mounting bureaucratic controls on movement, young girls frequently misquote their age in order to bypass government restrictions on migration. This mismatch between the real legal age and the “Passport age” was commonly reported by emigrants. Working with fraudulent agents and travelling with forged documents, significantly increases the risk and uncertainty embedded in the migration process and escalates their vulnerability to exploitation. Allowing women to access the same migration prospects as men would enable them to seek formal channels of recruitment and emigration that do not push them further into the shadows of a profiteering, parallel recruitment industry. In an increasingly globalizing world, it is imperative that the Indian government does not clip the wings of its migrant women workers by barring them from seeking meaningful employment. Instead, gender-sensitive and inclusive policies must be instated to facilitate the fair and formal flow of all citizens.

**Bank Guarantee:** Another addendum to the MEA policy measures for women migrant workers, includes directives for Foreign Employers seeking to recruit female workers with ECR Passports directly or through RAs. According to the clause, Foreign Employers intending to recruit domestic workers are required to deposit a financial guarantee of USD 2500 with the respective Indian Mission. They are then required to apply for attestation of the work contract, upon receipt of which emigration clearance endorsement is granted. The MEA states that the bank guarantee will be voided when the emigrant returns safely after the fulfilment of contractual obligations. In case of contract violations, abuse, or non-payment of salary, the bank guarantee will be used as an irrevocable obligation by the employer’s bank to pay the specified amount of money to the Mission. These funds would be used to reimburse the worker and pay for repatriation costs.

Levyng such security stipulations drives up the cost and difficulty of doing business through formal, legal pathways. The prospect of heavy penalties in case of contractual missteps causes overseas employers to increasingly resist approaching Indian Missions

for direct hiring or contract endorsement. In the case of Bahrain, Vesuvala notes that a majority of foreign employers circumvent official channels, preferring instead to approach informal agents in India who can supply workers through irregular means of exit such as “pushing”. It would be interesting and instructive for Indian Missions to compile statistics on the proportion of employer applications and bank guarantees received vis-à-vis the estimated number of emigrant domestic workers migrating to the Gulf annually. In order to incentivize the hiring of domestic workers through formal means, it is important to ease existing processes and reduce associated costs. Repealing the hefty bank guarantees and finding alternative security measures, will allow the recruitment of Indian domestic workers to remain attractive and competitive to employers in Gulf labour markets.

**(c) Recruitment Standards and Restrictions** – As per the MEA guidelines to Recruitment Agents, all parties engaging in recruitment activities are required to pay a registration fee of INR 25000 and deposit a bank guarantee of INR 5000000 (~USD 78000) to territorial POEs to be certified for business. Holders of an RA certificate must also furnish a POE inspection report of proposed RA office and conduct business from the address indicated in the application for registration. Additional legislative controls under the Emigration Act prohibit RA certificate holders from employing sub-agents in the conduct of business. This creates limitations and tensions in the labour recruitment process. In accordance with POE registration and inspection guidelines, an overwhelming majority of registered recruitment agents are located in urban centres and cities. However, prospective migrants and recruits, particularly domestic workers and other low- and semi-skilled workers, are largely based in remote, rural villages of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Restricting the activities of RAs to the locality of their registered premises and controlling the operation of informal intermediaries within the Indian migration regime, creates an impossible and untenable situation. In order to connect migrants with foreign jobs, RAs need to work with local, community representatives and sub-agents who can successfully corral prospective migrants. In our focus group discussions, we noted the resistance that respondents displayed in travelling to meet RAs in cities and towns. Women were much more comfortable approaching local brokers who could connect them to overseas opportunities. In most cases, middlemen were already familiar to aspirants and their families, putting them at ease during the recruitment process.



**Table 18: Top Districts sending female migrants (excluding nurses) to ECR Countries (2010-2016)**

District	State	2010	2014	2015	2016
W Godavari	Andhra	4418	2548	44	34
E Godavari	Andhra	3488	2326	55	26
Kollam	Kerala	390	287	75	91
Kottayam	Kerala	342	322	109	118
Ernakulam	Kerala	300	246	91	80
Hyderabad	Telangana	227	165	45	101

A recent ordinance from August 2016 (MOE 2016) has considerably changed the landscape of women's recruitment from India. This directive instructs that emigration of low- and semi-skilled women workers with ECR passports is to be channelled solely through six designated state-run recruitment agencies or directly through Foreign Employers registered on the e-Migrate system. In practice, the migration of women from India depends largely on local recruitment relationships with networks of sub-agents and social actors (Rajan et al 2013). This drastic step to formalize the recruitment of women migrants is largely misplaced; it disregards the broader context of women's migration in India and the specificities of their recruitment process. While the effects of this move remain to be seen, the sharp decline in ECR numbers from leading districts sending female migrants (Table 17) is a sure sign that formal migration flows, captured by the e-migrate system have reduced manifold. The remote coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, West Godavari and East Godavari, that held the top position as source districts of female migrants in 2010 and 2014, no longer contribute as many migrants through formal recorded means. This may be due to difficulties and hesitations in working with formal stage agencies located far-away from migrant-source districts. We submit these numbers with a caveat that the steep decline in reported numbers may likely also be due to discrepancies in data entry/recording errors in the E-migrate system. Furthermore, it is unlikely that state agencies such as TOMCOM and OMCAP have the capacity to sustainably manage the volume of female migrants from these states. If flows continue to keep pace with pre-2015 recorded levels, state governments will be obliged to bring in more resources and registered bodies into the fray to manage recruitment of aspiring migrants.

**(d) E-Migrate** – As part of its commitment to labour migration management and digital governance, the government introduced the E-Migrate system in 2014. The project aims to streamline legal migration, reduce false job contracts and fraudulent recruitment, create accountability between labour-sending and receiving countries, and bring transparency to the emigration process. Both direct recruitment of ECR Passport holders to ECR countries, and recruitment through registered RA's are processed through the e-migrate system. Foreign Employers, including those hiring domestic workers, now have to register and submit applications for approval online. E-Migrate maintains a database of registered

RAs, Foreign Employers and workers who have migrated under the system. In the event that a complaint is raised against RAs or Foreign employers, RA licenses can be immediately suspended and Foreign Employers may be placed under the prior-approval category (PAC). The website also offers an eLocker for document verification and storage to migrant workers that allows them to securely access their identity and travel documents online. This is a necessary safeguard against the rampant confiscation and destruction of Passports and identity documents by Foreign Employers that too often leaves migrants in legal limbo.

Technology-enabled migration management has been touted as a progressive step towards facilitating swift, safe and formal flows of labour. However, the transition to an online system has not been without its challenges. Migration data captured under the official online channel is currently not representative of the entirety of labour flows from India. The low number of registered RAs and Foreign Employers, indicates lags in adoption of the new system. E-migrate has certainly enabled faster and paperless processing of documents and job offers, but there have been a number of issues and glitches reported pertaining to job contract attestation and employer registration. The mounting requirements for Foreign Employers in the Gulf may push them to evade official recruitment channels or to hire workers from other countries with less cumbersome regulations. Feedback and consultations from migrants, RAs, FEs, and other stakeholders is necessary to move the initiative past these initial teething pains.

**(e) Bi-Lateral Agreements on Labour Mobility and Memoranda of Understanding** – In addition, various (non-binding) bilateral MoUs and agreements have been entered into by India and countries of labour import. These are believed to signal mutual intent to improve current recruitment and employment conditions, and enhance protection and welfare of migrants. India is signatory to MoUs with all 6 Gulf countries however, the protection and welfare clauses articulated by these agreements only extend to workers in the organized sector and not those falling outside the purview of local labour laws, such as domestic workers. Currently domestic workers are excluded from local legislation in all Gulf countries, rendering such MoUs ineffective in the protection of domestic worker rights. Draft legislation on domestic workers has been proposed by Kuwait (2012), UAE (2012) (Malit and Ghafoor 2014)

and recently, Qatar (2017).

There is little evidence that MoUs contribute to improved labour protections and migration governance. Existing agreements fall short on specific measures of protection, enforcement, and do little to tackle issues pertaining to gender or women workers. The 2014 Agreement on Labour Cooperation for Domestic Service Workers Recruitment inked between the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and the Ministry of Labour in Saudi Arabia is a notable exception in this regard. This domestic worker agreement promotes a number of good practices, including adoption of a standard employment contract (Article 3); use of legitimate, registered recruitment channels (Article 3); non-levy of recruitment fees on domestic workers and non-deduction of salary (Article 3); reference to ethical recruitment and control of recruitment costs (Article 3); easing of migration between India and Saudi Arabia (Article 5); facilitation of repatriation (Article 4, 5); setting up of employee bank accounts and grievance mechanisms (Article 4). This landmark agreement could form a template for (Article 3); easing of migration between India and Saudi Arabia (Article 5); facilitation of repatriation (Article 4, 5); setting up of employee bank accounts and grievance mechanisms (Article 4). This landmark agreement could form a template for similar agreements with Gulf receiving countries, however, to be truly effective and transformational, governments need to include and agree on specific enforcement and monitoring mechanisms.

**(f) Migrant Welfare Initiatives** – Under the aegis of the MEA, the Government of India provides a number of dedicated support services aimed at the welfare of emigrant workers in general.

The Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) is a 24x7x365 helpdesk in Gurgaon that services overseas emigrants, prospective emigrants and their families through a toll-free helpline available in 11 regional languages. The OWRC is linked to the Migrants Resource Centres (MRC) in Kochi, Gurgaon, Hyderabad and Chennai which offer walk-in counselling services, registration and follow-up of grievances and disseminate necessary information to migrants and their families. An Indian Workers Resource Centre (IWRC) has been set up in Dubai under the guidance of the UAE Embassy. It operates a toll-free 24-hour helpline, offers walk-in legal, psycho-social, and financial counselling services, as well as a temporary shelter offering boarding and lodging for domestic workers and workers seeking repatriation. Temporary shelters are also supported by Indian Missions and Embassy-authorized civil society groups in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

In 2009, the MEA established the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in ECR countries and Maldives to provide on-site assistance to Indian migrants in distress. The fund has now been extended to all 43 Indian Missions globally. It is made available to Indian Missions to provide legal assistance, temporary shelter, medical assistance and repatriation services. In addition, Indian Missions assist with conflict resolution with employers and lodging complaints against RAs in India. Where possible, one-way air tickets, travel expenses, and emergency certificates are also made available to eligible migrants on gratis basis. A grievance management and redress portal (MADAD) was

launched in 2015 to allow migrants and their representatives to lodge complaints and consular grievances regarding recruitment, contract violations, repatriation and other matters. A number of our Key Informants had used this facility to register complaints on behalf of emigrant workers and their families as well as to ensure swift return of mortal remains of deceased migrants. They opined that responses were usually neither timely nor thorough. While the online system was not accessible to rural, low-skilled workers, the roll-out of the new MADAD mobile application is more likely to bring this service into the hands of low-skilled migrants and migrant domestic workers.

A mandatory insurance policy was introduced in 2004 for all ECR passport holders migrating to ECR countries. The Pravasi Bharatiya Bhima Yojna (PBBY) Insurance policy is among the necessary documents to process emigration clearance endorsements for domestic workers. The scheme covers the duration of the contract period or two years (whichever is longer) to a maximum of INR 1000000 towards hospitalization, accidental death/disablement, repatriation, legal expenses, and contract termination. Maternity benefits for female emigrants have recently been added to the clause, however, this only covers the in-hospital birth of children in India. A great many domestic workers in the Gulf face health risks, steep medical bills and expenses from birthing children or accessing healthcare in the Gulf. A review of the policy terms is necessary to ensure that it accounts for the situation of all workers, regardless of legal status. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure that migrants are aware of the coverage they are entitled to. All too often, insurance premiums are paid as part of a bulk 'recruitment fee' charged by agents, and migrants are unaware of specific benefits and programs.

### State-level Support Structures

State policy and institutional efforts are key to implementing effective, decentralized migration and social policies. Despite the centrality of migration to the socio-economic tapestry of Indian states including Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, migration has long remained the prerogative of the Union government. At the state-level, there are few extant provisions and service providers that cater to the needs of emigrants, particularly women domestic workers. This section will trace the current status of state policy on migration in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and outline a few upcoming advancements in this direction.

**(a) State Policy on Emigration** – Telangana has joined the ranks of Kerala, Punjab, and more recently Karnataka, as some of the first states to draw up a dedicated NRI policy. The draft policy is poised to resolve issues of Gulf migrants with a range of services and solutions to wide-ranging issues including promotion of legal migration, regulation of the recruitment industry, aid and compensation for migrants and families in distress, and training of prospective migrants. This is an exciting and welcome development, and we hope that this agenda will include targeted efforts for women domestic workers.

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**Specialized Agencies and Centres:** Telangana has benefitted from an NRI Affairs wing under Chief Minister Chandrasekara Rao, with the NRI portfolio entrusted with Minister for Industry, Information Technology and NRI Affairs K. T. Rama Rao. Under the new policy, the Telangana government plans to expand and strengthen the scale of the NRI Affairs wing by setting up two separate bodies, Centre for Non-Resident Telanganites' Affairs (CENTA) and District Non-Resident Telanganites' Affairs (D-CENTA), at state and district-level respectively to carry out various welfare measures for migrants from the state. The State Minister for NRI Welfare will head CENTA, while District Collectors will be at the helm of D-CENTAs. The centres will be tasked with maintaining databases on emigrants and emigrant issues, and strategizing around issues of employment, training, and rehabilitation of migrants. Provided the roles and functions of both entities are well-defined, it promises to be an important step towards linking national, state and local efforts for migration management.

The Andhra Pradesh government also has a nodal NRI Division headed by Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu and Minister for Law and Justice and Youth, Sports, NRI empowerment and skill development Kollu Ravindra. In 2013 an online portal ([www.apnri.ap.gov.in](http://www.apnri.ap.gov.in)) providing services for migrants and diaspora was unveiled and the project is currently progressed to Phase II. This interface provides access to important information about visa types, emigration rules, insurance policies, and flight information. It also provides a platform for migrant registration, document attestation, grievance filing, and legal or medical assistance and compensation.

There are two trusted state agencies for recruitment and training of migrants, TOMCOM and OMCAP, operating in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh respectively. Acting as a gateway for the state's

youth to global labour markets, these bodies offer a full suite of services from orientation, recruitment, (job, soft skills, and language) training, to placement. TOMCOM and OMCAP have partnered with IOM, ILO, UN Women and ICM to conduct workshops, orientation programs, and training sessions for social workers and representatives of different NGOs. Since August 2016, all female migration from these states to ECR countries (including domestic workers and nurses) have been routed through these public agencies. The services and support offered by these agencies are beneficial to migrants, however, their reach is not wide. The primary thrust of these efforts have been restricted to on-site services for intending emigrants recruited through the agencies, which leaves out prospective emigrants in the villages and does not adequately engage with return migrants.

**Welfare Initiatives:** The Telangana NRI policy has been drafted in consultation with multiple stakeholders, including NGOs and social workers from within the state and destination countries. As such, it recognizes that thousands of migrants are duped in the recruitment process by brokers and sub-agents, exploited by employers at the destination, and overlooked by current state policies upon return. The policy has outlined priority areas including entrusting the district centres with the important role of disseminating awareness on emigration matters to remote and rural areas, as well as making funds available to assist with the rehabilitation of returned and repatriated workers.

Plans have also been charted to constitute an advocacy group, 'Blue Collar Migrants', to look after the needs of low- and semi-skilled workers from Telangana in Gulf and South-East Asian countries, including domestic workers. This dedicated body will rally for the needs and relief of Gulf workers in distress. As part of its wider efforts, the state government is also in the process of setting up help desks at the Hyderabad International airport, a Corpus Fund for migrant welfare, and appointing lawyers to provide legal advice to Indian prisoners in Gulf jails.

Both state governments have also set up institutional mechanisms to channel migrant and Diaspora contributions and investments to the state, and address their concerns. The Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society (NRTS) e-portal ([www.apnrt.com](http://www.apnrt.com)) was launched to redress concerns of overseas migrants and facilitate diasporic participation in state development through investments in villages and infrastructural projects. Current participation, however, has been primarily from wealthy North American and OECD NRI Associations, with only a small presence and engagement with Gulf migrant communities and associations. Given the Gulf-leaning patterns of migration from the states, it is important to reach out to and mobilize Gulf migrants. Telangana has also announced plans to establish a similar online portal targeting migrant welfare and diaspora-state relations.

**Pre Departure Orientation:** The MEA together with the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have underscored the importance of imparting gender and rights-based pre-departure orientation training to intending domestic workers through the India International Skill Centres (IISCs) and state agencies TOMCOM and OMCAP.

In order to extend the reach of such programs and institutionalize pre-departure orientation training (PDOT) initiatives across key migration areas, a Training of Trainers was conducted in Vijayawada in August 2015, under the aegis of ICM, UN Women and OMCAP. The session brought together social workers, activists, trade union leaders and district level government officials to build capacities and sensitize them on gendered implications of migration and the links between migration and development. As an outcome, training and orientation efforts geared to Gulf-bound domestic workers will be rolled out in districts of East Godavari, West Godavari and Kadapa and soon made available in major migration pockets across the two states.

**(b) Local Authorities** – Local authorities and police departments form part of the national and state infrastructure for monitoring the emigration process and delivering migrant support. In order to register as an agent, MEA guidelines stipulate that applicants must file a Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) attesting to their character and blemish-free legal record. It falls under the purview of district and local police stations to monitor the activities of recruitment agents operating in their jurisdiction. In addition, complaints and cases against agents are to be registered and investigated through local police who maintain files on open cases against fraudulent agents.

Overburdened and understaffed, many police stations fall woefully short in dispensing these migration-related duties, on top of other law and order responsibilities. One District Superintendent of Police approached for the study, however, had already conducted an ad-hoc 'survey' in the district covering migration issues. We were made privy to a ledger containing a number of past cases relating to cheating, corruption, and trafficking by sub-agents. He also noted that since his jurisdiction covered a high-volume migration region and many of the other socio-economic issues had links to

the phenomenon of Gulf migration, he had deemed it necessary to conduct a pilot survey to understand the needs and issues of residents of the district. From his analysis, he concluded that a majority of divorces, dowry-related harassment and death, and domestic violence cases in the district had their roots in Gulf Migration, and estimated that 70 percent of women in the region were 'Gulf wives' (Zachariah, Mathew and Rajan 2001). Given the socio-economic and demographic consequences of migration for Indian states and districts, it is imperative that district and local police officials and officers are given adequate training to protect the rights and interests of migrants, particularly migrant women and their families.

It is important to analyse the implications and consequences of national and state interventions on migration issues; what they achieve instrumentally and what they do politically. India's repeated commitments to inclusive, safe, orderly, migration on the global and regional stage has not translated to effective gender-responsive policies to migration management. Many existing policies intended to protect migrant women, in their current iteration, end up disempowering them, while propping up traditional notions of fragile femininity and patriarchal control. In this context, global governance structures give us standards to judge India's track record by and benchmarks to model future policy initiatives at the state- and national level.

### *Migrant Awareness Regarding National and State/Local Government Migration Policies and Services*

To gauge the effectiveness and reach of current policies and services, the interviews and focus groups probed respondents about their awareness and use of government policies and welfare provisions, including Pre-Departure Orientation, Skill Training, and consular assistance of Indian Missions.

**Table 18: Awareness of Local Authorities offering Orientation, Skill Training, or Welfare Services.**

RM Awareness of Local Authorities offering services for MDWs	
Response	Frequency
Yes	4
No	116
EH Awareness of Local Authorities offering services for MDWs	
No	131

Regarding the process of emigration for women domestic workers and age- and gender-based controls to 'safeguard' them from exploitation, our case studies suggest that most respondents were unaware of minimum age stipulations. In fact, a commonly held misplaced notion was that there was an upper-age limit of 50 years on migration for domestic work. This artificial limit was likely placed and publicized by agents to cap their applicant stream.

There are a number of national-, state-, and local-level government and non-governmental awareness-building and welfare ini-

tiatives, including tele-enquiry services for intending migrants and family members through the Overseas Worker's Welfare Centre helpline and walk-in counselling services offered at the Migrant Rights Centre, Hyderabad (among others nationally). However, a majority of our respondents were not reached or even aware of these efforts and resources (Table 18). Among Emigrant Households surveyed, none were aware of services offered to migrants and their families, or services availed of by the emigrant. Only four Return Migrants, three of them from Hyderabad, reported any knowledge regarding local authorities offering orientation, training

or welfare services to prospective migrants and their families. In two cases, return migrants narrated their experience with agents who claimed to offer orientation and training services at their offices in Hyderabad. Instead of an Orientation session, however, R. Gautami was detained at the agent's premises until departure. This has been reported as an insidious practice among agents to secure their investment and contractual obligations, and dissuade women from changing their mind before migration. The

other respondent was held by the agent with several other aspiring emigrants under threat of sexual and physical abuse. When we spoke to Jamuna at the Panchayat office of her village in Korutla, she was reluctant to divulge details regarding her experiences at the hands of illegal agents. Neighbours and family had gathered and were waiting to hear her recount her experience. From her reticence and a short chat with her son, we gathered that she had been harassed before being deployed to Oman.

**Table 19: Receipt of Pre-Departure Orientation by Return Emigrants and Emigrants**

RM Received Orientation prior to Emigration	
Response	Frequency
No	120
EH Received Gulf Orientation prior to Emigration	
No	131

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

In most cases, migrants had received no formal introduction to the culture, customs, working or living conditions in the countries of destination. In fact, our respondents in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh were unaware of such programming offered through local institutions such as state agencies, NGOs and recruitment agents.

Among Return Migrants and Emigrant Households surveyed, not a single respondent had received any such Pre-Departure Orientation (Table 19) or Skill Training for Domestic Work (Table 34) through agents, NGOs, or government agencies.

**Table 20: Receipt of Pre-Departure Orientation by Return Emigrants and Emigrants**

RM Received Domestic Work Training prior to Emigration	
Response	Frequency
No	120
EH Received Domestic Work Training prior to Emigration	
No	131

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

In two cases, return migrants narrated their experience with agents who claimed to offer orientation and training services at their offices in Hyderabad. Instead of an Orientation session, however, R. Gautami was detained at the agent's premises until departure. This has been reported as an insidious practice among agents to secure their investment and contractual obligations, and dissuade women from changing their mind before migration. The other respondent was held by the agent with several other aspiring

emigrants under threat of sexual and physical abuse. When we spoke to Jamuna at the Panchayat office of her village in Korutla, she was reluctant to divulge details regarding her experiences at the hands of illegal agents. Neighbours and family had gathered and were waiting to hear her recount her experience. From her reticence and a short chat with her son, we gathered that she had been harassed before being deployed to Oman.

Table 21: Return Migrants' Experience with Indian Missions in the Gulf

Did you approach the Indian Embassy with any problems?	
Response	Frequency
Yes	12
No	108
Did you receive a Positive Response from Embassy Officials?	
Response	Frequency
Yes	1
No	119

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

At the Gulf destination countries, few had contacted the Indian missions or sought assistance from organizations like that offer support services for migrant workers encountering difficulties overseas. Only ten percent of Return Emigrants reported approaching the Indian Missions with any complaints or issues (Table 21). Of the twelve domestic workers that approached the Embassy, only one was met with a positive response to their grievance. The others were not satisfied with the services and assistance provided by Embassy officials. One respondent mentioned fleeing her employers home and running to the Indian Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia with the help of a Pakistani taxi driver. While the embassy processed her plea and registered her complaints and application for EC, they were unable to allow her to make a call to contact her family back home. She was shocked at the lack of compassion. She was told that the embassy had no phone services to reach India. Instead, she walked outside the embassy where she found someone among the long line of migrant workers, willing to lend her their phone to place a call to her family from whom she had been long-separated.

In the same case, the Embassy granted an emergency travel certificate to the migrant and purchased a ticket, however, the ticket was only issued until Mumbai. They provided the migrant with USD 20, which was not enough to cover her travel from Mumbai to her hometown in West Godavari district. Furthermore, she arrived late at night and was unfamiliar with the place and the language. At the airport, there was no helpdesk for assistance or anyone available to guide her. With no other option, the migrant pan-handled for change and slept on the street for two days until she was able to find someone who could help her purchase bus tickets and figure out the route back to her village in Andhra Pradesh. From this account, it is evident that Missions are currently ill-equipped to handle the complex and multi-dimensional needs of migrant domestic workers. Furthermore, their services and contact information are not widely publicized and therefore, difficult to contact for migrants.

Despite the prevailing lack of awareness on migrant resources and services, there are some local caches of information that circulate through return migrants and social workers. On our vis-

its to local officials and social workers, many referred to a fact sheet prepared by Dr. Lissy Joseph, Regional Coordinator of the National Domestic Workers Movement (NDWM) which contains essential information for migrants and their families. The handout is available in Telugu, and contains information on the process of emigration, necessary precautions to be taken during recruitment and employment, and contact details of key migration service providers in India and the Gulf. The pamphlet included the helpline and phone numbers of PGE, OWRC, MRC, TOMCOM, OMCAP, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh NRI Divisions, State Women's Commission, and nine Indian missions. Similar resources have been prepared and circulated by other social organizations and passed on via word-of-mouth. In order to ensure adherence to existing processes, and optimal utilization of available services by migrant workers, it is necessary to disseminate clear, simple and reliable information on safe migration and services to migrant-rich communities and villages.

**Some Conclusions and Key Findings**

**(a) Pathway from Poverty into Precarity:** After the global crisis, Zachariah and Rajan (2012) report a scaling down of wage differentials among all categories of unskilled workers between India and the Gulf owing to changing labour market conditions. This results in reductions to the savings from migration, due to the mounting costs and bureaucratic steps associated with migration from India. This makes us consider whether the potential benefits accruing from domestic work migration to the Gulf from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana outweigh the attendant risks. Among the rural, landless women and communities, internal and international migration appears to be a panacea for their current issues. However, given the risks associated with every step of the migration cycle and insufficient information dissemination around these issues, many emigrants are unable to side-step common pitfalls of migration, recruitment and irregular migration. Furthermore, from our survey among three districts of Andhra Pradesh and two districts of Telangana, 93 percent of all emigrants (Table 22) were found to have partial information or no information about labour laws, and prevailing work and living conditions in the Gulf.

In such a context, migration for domestic work in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states functions as a pathway from poverty into precariousness.

**(b) Merchants of Migration to Agents of Development:** The interconnected circuit of intermediaries is a necessary cog in the migration cycle. Their functioning has been vital to sustaining the decades of migration to the Gulf, and has kept India at the forefront of these labour flows. Informal agents operate in a critical juncture - in proximity to prospective migrants, and in collaboration with recruitment agencies and foreign employers - i.e. they are the link and liaison between demand and supply side. For these reasons, it does not seem viable, nor desirable to eliminate this middle-ground. A better understanding of what happens in this liminal space that is largely unregulated yet integral to the migration regime is a key for unlocking further development potential. A sending state perspective presents an important opportunity for governments to leverage insights from the recruitment industry to make migration safer, sustainable, and more beneficial to all involved.

**(c) Recurring Migration:** Over half of the Return Emigrants interviewed had embarked on more than one migration and a significant number (over one-third) of Return Migrants were currently making arrangements for their next deployment. This points to a multi-migration pattern among emigrants and Return emigrants who undertake a number of successive short (1-3 year) migrations. The pattern of repeated, recurring migrations while retaining a homeland connection, is reflective of broader South-South circular migration of women domestic workers globally and presents an opportunity for good governance.

**(d) Skill-Training and Orientation:** No Current Emigrants (via Household interviews) and <5 percent of Return Migrants contacted as part of the study had received any Domestic Work Training before Emigration. Furthermore, none of the Emigrant Households and negligible number of Returnees were aware of training/awareness/PDOS services provided by local authorities. This points to the pressing need to bring in local actors into service delivery and to institutionalize skill training programmes for potential women domestic workers at the local level.

**(e) No Substitute for Sub-agents yet:** Sub-agents remain the first point-of-contact and most accessible/trusted source of information on employment and emigration. Current migrant domestic

workers and Returnees are largely unaware of blacklisted recruitment agencies and government caps on recruitment fees. This signals the need to institutionalize and regulate sub-agents and intermediaries, rather than the current move to illegalize their operations without creating necessary alternatives to fill the gaps in the recruitment ecosystem.

**(f) Other Observations:** Some other observations and conclusions are listed below. Discrepancies in job offers/expectations and contract/employment conditions are rampant (remuneration/nature of job/hours of work/leave). Only 7.6 percent were aware of the prevailing conditions in the Gulf (emigrant families) and about 55 percent were partially aware and 37 percent were not aware of any of the details of the Gulf destination. This points to the need for additional efforts to raise awareness around the migration process and include country-specific pre-departure manuals and training in information sessions. Among 78 percent of respondents, it was a joint family decision to migrate, taken together with husband and in-laws. 92.5 percent of all Return Emigrants remitted money during their time in the Gulf; among them, 60 reported that remittances were utilized efficiently. Qatar emerged as the most desirable destination for domestic workers among current emigrants; Kuwait is the clear leader among Return Emigrants. Unemployment and lack of a subsistence level wage were cited as key drivers of women's emigration at the pre-departure stage. At the time of interview, over 25 percent of returnees surveyed were unemployed (Table 14) and 30 percent of case study respondents were unemployed. This implies that employment prospects continue to be bleak for return emigrants after deployment and signals the need for Indian government attention to domestic social policy and employment generation.

**(g) Remittance Transfers by Returnees and Current Migrants:** Some observations regarding the remittance receipts by migrants and utilization by migrant households have been recorded below. Over 60 percent of Return Emigrants from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were only able to send very low amounts of remittances during their stay abroad (<Rs. 10,000), if at all (Table 36). This inability to transfer resources to family members back home, points to the continued need to mitigate informal and unfair conditions that disallow women migrants from reaping adequate gains from migration.

**Table 22: Return Emigrants Remittance Transfer**

Amount	Frequency	Percent
Not Sending	9	7.5
<10000	66	55.0
10000 - 15000	35	29.2
15000 - 25000	8	6.7
>25000	2	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Current emigrants are more successful than Return Emigrants at remitting money back home. 35 percent of current emigrants have been able to send over Rs. 15,000 to support their relatives and families back home. Almost all current migrants were able to send some amount of money since they migrated (Table 23).

**Table 23: Current Emigrants Remittance Transfer**

Amount	Frequency	Percent
Not Sending	2	1.5
<10000	44	33.6
10000 - 15000	40	30.5
15000 - 25000	23	17.6
>25000	22	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Banks and money transfer services are the primary means employed by current migrants to send remittances (Table 24). The same is true for returnees (Table 25). Current migrants appear to be slightly more predisposed to seek informal money transfers through friends than Return Migrants.

**Table 24: Emigrants Remittance and means of money transfer cross tabulation**

Age	Means of Transfer of the Money			Total
	Money Transfer	Banks	Through Friends	
<10000	17	24	3	44
10000 – 15000	19	19	2	40
15000 – 25000	8	11	4	23
>25000	2	17	3	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>129</b>



Table 25: Return Emigrants: Means of Money Transfer

Amount	Frequency	Percent
Money Transfer	34	28.3
Banks	70	58.3
Through Friends	3	2.5
Other	4	3.3
Total	111	92.5
Missing	9	7.5

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

Table 26: Current Emigrants: To whom was remittance sent and who made spending decisions?

Recipient	Frequency	Percent
Emigrant	1	.8
Parent	26	19.8
In-laws	9	6.9
Spouse	64	48.9
Siblings	14	10.7
Children	9	7.5
Relative	14	10.7
Total	129	98.7
No Remittance	2	1.5
Cumulative Total	131	100.0

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

At the household level, who receives remittances and who makes spending decisions has broad implications for savings and the utilization of migrant transfers, as well as the well-being, health, and education outcomes of children and other family members.

**Table 27: Return Emigrants: To whom was remittance sent and who made spending decisions?**

Recipient	Frequency	Percent
Emigrant	18	15.5
Parent	1	.8
In-laws	67	55.8
Spouse	3	2.5
Siblings	16	13.3
Children	5	4.2
Relative	1	.8
Total	111	92.5
No Remittance	9	7.5
Cumulative Total	120	100.0

Source: Data collected by CDS for ICM study

Among current emigrants, remittance transfers were directed primarily to the migrants' spouse in about half the cases. Parents, in-laws and other relatives were the other key recipients of migrant money transfers (Table 26). These figures also speak to the decision-making around remittance-spending. With respect to remittances from returnees, spouses were again the primary receivers and decision-makers around spending choices (Table 27).

**Table 28: Emigrants: Proportion of Remittances to HH Income**

Proportion	Frequency	Percent
10%	4	3.1
20%	31	23.7
30%	5	3.8
40%	6	4.6
15%	5	3.8
25%	3	2.3
Above 50%	75	57.3
Total	129	98.5
No Remittance	2	1.5
Cumulative Total	131	100.0

Among 60 percent of households, the remittances of current migrants are the primary source of income, accounting for over half of the total household income. In a third of the households surveyed, migrant earnings were the sole mean of household income. Furthermore, a number of households had more than 4 members relying on migrant remittances.

Table 29: Return Emigrants: What was the Remittance used for?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Day to day Household expense	44	36.7
Education of Children	22	18.3
Medical Expenses of Family	6	5.0
To pay back debt	30	25.0
Purchase of land	2	1.7
Build house	7	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>92.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>98.5</b>
No Remittance	9	7.5
<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

An important indicator of the success and effectiveness of migratory journeys lie in the utilization of remittances earned by migrants during overseas employment. Over 35 percent of return migrant earnings were utilised for daily subsistence needs of the family and household. 25 percent was used towards repayment of debts and loans, some of which were incurred towards financing the process of migration. From the above Table (Table 29) it can be noted that only in rare cases were migrant households able to use remittances towards long-term benefits such as the education of children, purchase of property, and the building of a home. For most families, migration and related remittance-transfers were simple a way to get by, not a means to get ahead. This is likely borne of the chronic levels of poverty and unemployment in many sending districts. Sustained policy intervention at the local level is required to understand the needs, challenges and opportunities arising from the migration of women domestic workers from these states and districts to the Gulf.

### Policy Implications and Recommendations

A number of key policy recommendations emanating from the above observations and analysis have been collated below:

#### National Level

- Elimination of individualized and gender-based controls on women's migration (ECR endorsement and 30-year age threshold)
- Incentivize Ethical Recruitment: priority-processing for applications from tier-1 recruiters who follow guidelines, lower fees, tax-breaks and subsidies
- Skill Development and Certification (national policy, operationalized at local-level)
- Bi-lateral Migration Partnerships between India and Gulf States to facilitate short-term temporary labour mobility facilitated through state-run agencies and decoupled from kafala sponsorship system
- Review MGNREGA: Increase workdays and enforce per day minimum wage of Rs 300 to correct state-level variations in wage levels
- Extend Digital India program that supports e-governance initiatives to Migration (Develop simple apps and user-friendly mobile technologies to deliver information on safe migration, training material, language learning, helpline/ redressal) eg: Nepal's 'Shuva-yatra' (Safe Journey) app, Duo-Lingo etc
- Include sub-agents as part of formal migration infrastructure (through registration with RA they are associated with and Panchayat/ local officials where they operate) eg: Sri Lanka SLBFE circular in 2011.
- Country-specific manuals and training to be made available to Registered RAs, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations working on the issue of migrant workers
- Abolish ECR Passports and provide skills to domestic workers.
- Repeal the FE Bank Guarantee and substitute with tri-level Employer Registration (Background check, Reference and collection of contact details)
- Gender-Desk at Indian Missions and training to frontline staff to better respond to the needs and concerns of female domestic workers who have been subjected to abuse and rights violations

- Consular protection and temporary shelter for DWs in distress at all Missions
- Improve Repatriation Services (airport assistance, fares to home village)
- Entrepreneurial support and development (capacity-building, low-interest small-business and agricultural loans)
- Favourable interest rates/schemes for savings and remittances
- Financial management training and support via NGOs
- Psycho-social & family counseling and health services for returnees
- Steps towards eradicating caste- and gender-based violence
- Survey among RAs & sub-agents to gauge possible interventions in local recruitment industries
- Scholarships for school, college, vocational training of dependents of MDWs
- Awareness Campaigns: Boost Radio and Visual campaigns promoting safe, legal migration
- Country-Specific Pre-Departure Orientation in partnership with NGOs
- Language training
- Skill Development/Skill Upgradation Programs for Prospective Migrants and Return Migrants with Skill Certification
- Working with grass-root level stakeholders (Returnees, social workers, NGOs, district and Panchayat officials)
- Return migrants to be incorporated into migration infrastructure- as PDOS trainers, sub-agents, and invited to discussions on gender and migration issues on local radio and tv programs to increase awareness.
- Steps towards eradicating caste- and gender-based violence
- Awareness Campaigns: Boost Radio and Visual outreach promoting safe, legal migration
- Country-Specific Pre-Departure Orientation in partnership with NGOs
- Arabic-Language Training Centres in key migration districts
- Consultations and Coordination with local and grass-root level stakeholders (Returnees, Social Workers, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, Trade Unions, District & Panchayat officials)
- Gender-Sensitive Migration Training for RAs; many unaware of changing regulations
- Leverage the knowledge, experience and social remittances of Return migrants - as PDOS trainers, sub-agents, and invitations to discussions on gender and migration issues on local radio and TV programs to increase awareness.
- Policy Implications

Given the current conditions, we recommend the following steps to reform the migration regime and ensure recruitment does not continue under exploitative conditions. As the analysis continues, each proposed recommendation will be accompanied by allied measures at the national, state and local administrative levels.

### • Policies that protect the rights of workers and promote safe, legal, inclusive labour migration.

This involves (a) easing the migration process and enshrining the rights of workers. The more complex the migration system, the more opportunities and loopholes that exist, breeding corruption and allowing intermediaries to collect bribes and engage in fraudulent recruitment practices (Verite 2016), (b) elimination of individualized and gender-based controls on migration. Such restrictions run counter to a rights-protection agenda. Controls on mobility and sanctions for irregular migration criminalize and individualize the symptoms of a systemic disconnect in recruitment and regulatory procedures. Furthermore, these barriers are regularly bypassed, effectively raising the cost of migration, creating the need for informal sub-agents in the recruitment process and leaving migrants increasingly vulnerable to trafficking, forced labour and irregular flows. (c) mainstreaming gender into policy-building. Placing patriarchal controls on the mobility of a sub-set of workers is discriminatory and reveals deep-seated gendered assumptions. Adopting gender-inclusive policies will enhance women's well-being and access to decent employment, both at home and in source countries. This includes specific steps towards eradicating caste and gender-based violence that disproportionately affect women from marginal communities (particularly Dalit women) in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

### • Close pervasive regulation and enforcement gaps.

Need for grounded, comprehensive legislation and oversight over end-to-end governance of labour recruitment processes. While setting limits on fees that can be charged by recruiters is a necessary measure, the lack of adequate enforcement and monitoring infrastructure, means that this does little to prevent widespread overcharging. Furthermore, it is often informal, sub-agents who operate at arms-length from recruiters that levy astronomical fees and engage in the most exploitative practices. This means that recruiters cannot be held directly accountable for the illicit actions of intermediaries. Current legislative guidelines prohibit the operation of sub-agents and middlemen between recruiters and emigrants, however, in practice, they are a vital and widespread component of the recruitment regime. Legislative frameworks must be expanded to bring the shadow sector of informal intermediaries under licensing and operational regulations. As a first step, finalising the Emigration Management Bill, which would replace the Emigration Act 1983 is imperative. According to media reports, this will include provisions for speedier and more stringent action against recruitment agencies and sub-agents in case of complaints. Enabling market-driven regulations of sub-agents that seek to institutionalize their role and add additional oversight will likely prove more effective than attempts to curb the functioning of this cadre of recruitment stakeholders.

### Incentives for Ethical Recruitment

As a corollary to the calls for easing the process of migration and enforcement of recruitment regulations, incentivising recruiters who follow regulations and adopt ethical recruitment practices will stimulate good business practices. This can be in the form of priority-processing for applications from tier-1 recruiters, lower fees, or tax-breaks and subsidies. Such an approach would allow recruiters that abide by the regulations to lower their operating costs and remain competitive. Social incentives, such as awards for recruiters and agents who adhere to guidelines will also increase the visibility of recognized recruiters among migrant-sending communities and employers, and consequently their share of the recruitment business.

- **Information on migration to be disseminated at the start of the migration cycle and not only at pre-departure phase.**

Currently Pre-Departure Orientations are made available as the last step in the recruitment process, and often at recruitment agency offices in bigger cities and towns. However, the effectiveness of this model is questionable when migrants have paid for and processed their paper-work, and are already too financially and emotionally invested to rethink decision based on any adverse information gleaned from the sessions (MFA 2014). Awareness-building should be made widely available at source areas of migrant origin to ensure prospective migrants are making informed choices and address stereotypes that circulate around migration, domestic work and the Gulf. Migrant Rights Council, as part of their programming, conducts Information sessions at the village and mandal level that include camps and counselling sessions for prospective emigrants, households and communities to sensitize them and provide information about safe, legal channels and their rights as migrants and workers.

- **Capacity building of state and non-state stakeholders.** Currently Pre-Departure Orientations are made available as the last step in the recruitment process, and often at recruitment agency offices in bigger cities and towns. However, the effectiveness of this model is questionable when migrants have paid for and processed their paper-work, and are already too financially and emotionally invested to rethink decision based on any adverse information gleaned from the sessions (MFA 2014). Awareness-building should be made widely available at source areas of migrant origin to ensure prospective migrants are making informed choices and address stereotypes that circulate around migration, domestic work and the Gulf. Migrant Rights Council, as part of their programming, conducts Information sessions at the village and mandal level that include camps and counselling sessions for prospective emigrants, households and communities to sensitize them and provide information about safe, legal channels and their rights as migrants and workers.

- **Training, certification and skill-development programs.**

Language, skill and core competency training efforts ensure women are aware of and equipped for expectations and responsibilities of the role. Such efforts will allow state and national governments to advocate for better minimum wages and employment standards for their overseas domestic workers, while raising demand for quality, qualified workers. The recognition and skill-training received by migrant workers through such efforts would allow them to wield more control over their migration process and negotiate for better outcomes.

- **Improving conditions of domestic employment and social security.**

In order to negotiate for better conditions for our workers abroad, states in India need to raise minimum wages, make provisions for better work conditions at home and ensure viable, sustainable livelihoods are available to the rural poor. India also needs to ratify and implement key International Conventions enshrining the rights of migrants and domestic workers in particular, such as ILO C189 Domestic Worker's Convention. A commitment to improving labour and social protections of the MDWs it hosts will also result in better ability to negotiate bi-laterally for improved conditions for overseas workers.

- **Access to helplines and redressal mechanisms.**

While a number of helplines and resource centres have been instated at the national and state-level, migrant workers must be made aware of and have access to a toll-free number with multilingual support in all key source districts and destination countries. At the origin, helplines, grievance processes and social security provisioning for migrants and their households will allow migrants to report abuses, and seek redress and support.

- **Incorporation of Return Emigrants into Recruitment Reform.**

States to incorporate return migrants into the migration recruitment and training process and leverage their skills and knowledge. From field work, it is apparent that return emigrants already function as an information bank to their communities and aspiring migrants. Enlisting their expertise and experiences will generate employment opportunities, ease their transition and better prepare the next cadre of MDWs. This is also an important opportunity towards facilitating the smooth reintegration of return emigrants and utilizing their skills and expertise to amplify the benefits of migration.

As long as Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, as well as India more generally, does little to facilitate movement and eliminate obstacles to safe and affordable legal migration, they will remain an incidental labour contributor, not an intentional labour facilitator. Current moves to repeal and revise the existing Emigration Act presents a strong opportunity for policy-makers to frame an Emigration Management Bill that would facilitate formal flows and protect migrants at each stage of the migration cycle.

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## About ICM

The India Centre for Migration (ICM) is a research think-tank of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on all matters related to international migration. Apart from academic research, ICM has been involved in undertaking various activities and programmes at the ground level for the benefit of migrant workers.

## The Centre

ICM's efforts are dovetailed in the government's comprehensive approach towards ensuring safe, orderly, legal and humane migration process. The Centre:

- Undertakes empirical, analytical and policy related research in migration related matters.
- Implements pilot projects to document best practices with specific focus on Indian workers migrating abroad for employment.
- Partners with institutions and organizations to drive its research agenda



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