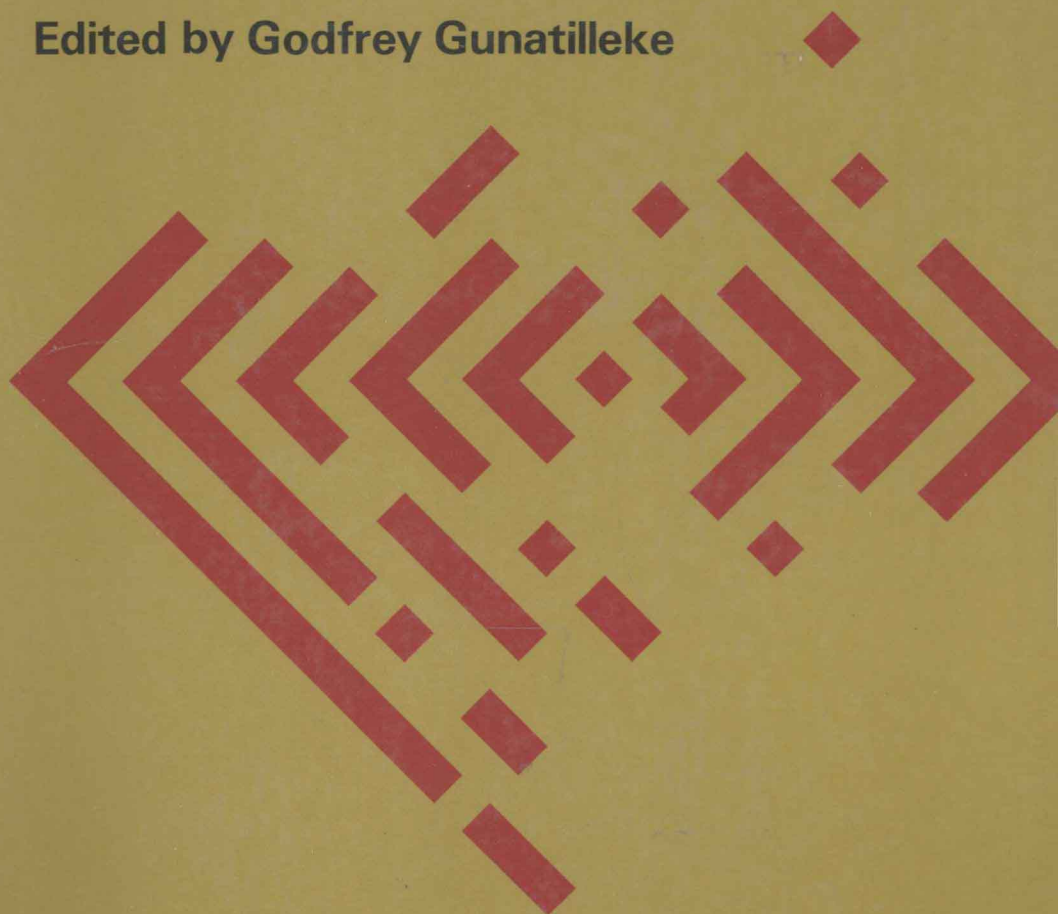


# Migration of Asian Workers to the Arab World

Edited by Godfrey Gunatilleke



THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

# **MIGRATION OF ASIAN WORKERS TO THE ARAB WORLD**

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In 1983 the United Nations University launched a project on the Global Impact of Human Migration, with a major focus on migration caused by uneven industrialization in different countries and regions of the world. The impact of large-scale migration is not limited to economic effects but has social and cultural dimensions as well, in both the sending and the receiving countries. The first phase of the project was concerned with surveying the migration flows from seven Asian countries to the Arab region. The second phase studied the problems encountered by Asian migrant workers in the pre- and post-migration periods as well as during their stay in the host countries through questionnaires and interviews with the returnees. Country reports resulting from these studies will be published in 1987.

*Migration of Asian Workers to the Arab World*, a first product of the project, reports on the present status of migration to the Arab region from the seven countries studied. How many people migrate each year, and for how long? Who are the migrant workers, in terms of their age, sex, profession, and education? What types of work do they perform in the host country, and how much do they earn and send home? What kinds of problems do they face on their return? The book takes a comparative view of these problems, using data from the countries concerned, and provides useful information for both further research and policymaking by governments.

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## **From the CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY**

### **ARTICLE I**

#### **Purposes and structure**

1. The United Nations University shall be an international community of scholars, engaged in research, post-graduate training and dissemination of knowledge in furtherance of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In achieving its stated objectives, it shall function under the joint sponsorship of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter referred to as UNESCO), through a central programming and co-ordinating body and a network of research and post-graduate training centres and programmes located in the developed and developing countries.

2. The University shall devote its work to research into the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations and its agencies, with due attention to the social sciences and the humanities as well as natural sciences, pure and applied.

3. The research programmes of the institutions of the University shall include, among other subjects, coexistence between peoples having different cultures, languages and social systems; peaceful relations between States and the maintenance of peace and security; human rights; economic and social change and development; the environment and the proper use of resources; basic scientific research and the application of the results of science and technology in the interests of development; and universal human values related to the improvement of the quality of life.

4. The University shall disseminate the knowledge gained in its activities to the United Nations and its agencies, to scholars and to the public, in order to increase dynamic interaction in the world-wide community of learning and research.

5. The University and all those who work in it shall

act in accordance with the spirit of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO and with the fundamental principles of contemporary international law.

6. The University shall have as a central objective of its research and training centres and programmes the continuing growth of vigorous academic and scientific communities everywhere and particularly in the developing countries, devoted to their vital needs in the fields of learning and research within the framework of the aims assigned to those centres and programmes in the present Charter. It shall endeavour to alleviate the intellectual isolation of persons in such communities in the developing countries which might otherwise become a reason for their moving to developed countries.

7. In its post-graduate training the University shall assist scholars, especially young scholars, to participate in research in order to increase their capability to contribute to the extension, application and diffusion of knowledge. The University may also undertake the training of persons who will serve in international or national technical assistance programmes, particularly in regard to an interdisciplinary approach to the problems with which they will be called upon to deal.

### **ARTICLE II**

#### **Academic freedom and autonomy**

1. The University shall enjoy autonomy within the framework of the United Nations. It shall also enjoy the academic freedom required for the achievement of its objectives, with particular reference to the choice of subjects and methods of research and training, the selection of persons and institutions to share in its tasks, and freedom of expression. The University shall decide freely on the use of the financial resources allocated for the execution of its functions . . .

## PREFACE

The United Nations University undertook in 1983 and 1984 a state-of-the-art survey on migrant workers to the Arab world from seven Asian countries as a first step in its project on the Global Impact of Human Migration. The survey was conducted in a comparative framework to cover the common problems of migration both for the workers and for the government agencies concerned, with a view to making policy recommendations.

The migration from these Asian countries to the Arab region is brought about by several factors — primarily, however, by the uneven availability of capital and of material and human resources in the sending and receiving countries. The impact of such large-scale migration is not limited to economic effects but also has social and cultural dimensions in these countries. On the basis of the data and information collected and analysed in the seven country surveys, the project has studied the problems encountered by the Asian migrant workers in the pre- and post-migration periods as well as during their stay in the host countries through questionnaires and interviews with returnees in each country. Results of these studies are expected to be published in 1987.

We are grateful to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its financial assistance to the project, particularly for the organization of a meeting of researchers and government officials in New Delhi 17-19 February 1984 to review the findings of the survey.

We wish to express appreciation to the researchers and their collaborators in Bangladesh, India, the Republic of Korea, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand for their tireless and conscientious work throughout the survey. Our warm thanks go to Mr. Godfrey Gunatilleke of the Marga Institute in Colombo, who has acted as co-ordinator and editor for the project and for the present publication.

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# INTRODUCTION

## **Godfrey Gunatilleke**

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### **Characteristics of the Asian Labour Migration to the Middle East**

The collection of studies in this volume has been designed to survey the present state of knowledge on the migration of Asian workers to the Middle East. It also reviews and evaluates Asian policies and institutions that are currently dealing with this migration. Although the studies point to the crucial role of migration in the Asian economies, several critical gaps in the available data are also identified. The authors emphasise the urgent need to improve the systems for collecting more reliable data on all aspects of the migration as well as to improve the institutional arrangements and policy frameworks within which this labour migration is managed.

The authors conclude that the labour migration has had far-reaching socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic consequences. The magnitude of the migration is significant enough to make it an important factor in national employment strategies and manpower planning. The workers participating in this flow of migration most often come from the young, reproductive age groups — and this is probably having a significant demographic impact. Remittances from these workers have become a major source of foreign exchange earnings, and most of these countries have come to depend on them heavily to manage their balance of payments. This migration of labour to the Middle East has had a considerable impact on income distribution and, consequently, on the prevailing social stratifications and relationships. Low-income groups are migrating in large numbers and are exposed to new consumption patterns, patterns that were far beyond their reach in the past. This exposure, together with higher income levels, is stimulating changes in life-styles, attitudes, and values at a more rapid pace than other factors that have hitherto been promoting change in the low-income strata. The demonstration effect of a small new-rich group is both dramatic and widespread. In surveying all these aspects of the migration, the authors conclude that the available information is not adequate for a reliable and proper identification of the benefits and costs of the migration. The studies also raise a number of conceptual and theoretical issues about migration. These issues will have to

be taken into account in any formulation of national policies on the migration of Asian workers to the Middle East.

Each author notes that the Middle East migration can be clearly distinguished from earlier migrations. Past migrations were often motivated by a desire to establish a permanent or long-term residence abroad, resulting in the movement of entire families and the formation of small migrant communities in the host countries. The motivation to maintain links with the country of origin or to transfer savings to that country is not likely to be strong in such cases. The Middle East migration, on the other hand, is almost entirely temporary and tied to fixed-term contracts of employment, which hold out no prospects for naturalisation or assimilation. Migrants are almost always obliged to return to their home countries after completing their employment contracts, the duration of which will vary according to contract and level of skill. For instance, most migrants to the Middle East are not permitted to take their families with them. From the outset, therefore, the migrant will view his migration in terms of its impact on his economic status and living conditions in the home country. During his employment abroad, separation from his family and his concern for it constantly reinforce his ties with the home country. The contractual limitations on his stay will direct his attention to the situation with which he will have to cope upon his return. These concerns will inevitably influence his patterns of consumption, savings, and transfer of income to the home country.

At each of the different levels — that of the individual migrant, the household, and the community — this single-migrant, temporary flow of labour will have effects that are fundamentally different from past migrations. The long periods of separation will affect family relationships, marriage, and fertility. It will lead to a new disposition of roles within the household. In many cases there will be some enhancement of responsibility for women. But as the following studies show, Asian migration to the Middle East also has important sociocultural and human costs. Adjustment problems for the migrant and his family are likely to impose heavy emotional and psychological strains. The temporary nature of the migration also poses a major problem both to the migrant and the economy. When the migrant returns and re-enters the workforce, his readjustment to a lower level of income and to an occupation commensurate with the skills he has acquired abroad may be difficult and frustrating. At the macro-economic level, the absorption of returnees will require special strategies on the part of the planners and policy-makers.

The Asian labour migration to the Middle East is also distinguished from previous migratory flows by the wide participation of different socioeconomic groups. Whereas past Asian migrations were confined largely to professional and other highly educated strata, the current migration to the Middle East spans the entire range of manpower, from unskilled to skilled and professional employees. Nevertheless, manual workers, both unskilled and skilled, form by far the largest proportion of migrants. They are recruited from the lower-income groups, predominantly from the rural areas. Through



the migration to the Middle East these groups have enjoyed access to employment opportunities at relatively high income levels, often surpassing the incomes enjoyed by upper-income groups in their own societies.

A further important feature of the Middle East migration is the special type of interdependence it has created between the countries importing the labour and those supplying it. Most of the economies of the labour-supplying countries have become heavily dependent on their migrant workforce in the Middle East; it helps them manage their balance of payments and it relieves unemployment. The degree of dependence varies from country to country, the Republic of Korea's dependence being relatively low and Pakistan's quite high. On the other hand, the workforce of the labour-importing countries contains an unusually high proportion of migrants. The dependence of these countries on their expatriate workforce is by no means marginal. It can be described as structural. At least for a considerable period in the future, these economies will have to rely on a large stock of migrant workers, both to maintain their levels of consumption and to expand their economies at reasonable rates of growth. We need, however, much more reliable and detailed information on the stock and flow of the migrant workforce, together with shifts in demand in the labour markets of the labour-importing countries, before we can define the exact dimensions of the problems and assess their implications for Asia. Nevertheless, it will be used to devote some space to considering the estimates and data that are available. This should help us to ascertain at least some broad orders of magnitude within which the problem can be perceived.

## **The Migrant Workforce: Trends and Prospects**

The studies in the present volume indicate that, with the exception of the Republic of Korea, there are no firm data on the existing stock of migrants in the Middle East. This applies in particular to Pakistan and India. The estimates made thus far by various scholars and institutions show wide divergences in regard to both the national workforces and the migrant component. If we accept one of the more oft-quoted sources, in 1975 the non-national workforce in the major labour-importing Middle East countries was 1.79 million. This amounted to 48.7 per cent of the total workforce in seven major labour-importing countries, where 20.3 per cent of the migrant workforce, or approximately 350,000, were Asians (see Table 1). Since 1975 the migrant workforce has expanded rapidly. The gross outflow of migrants from the Asian countries alone has multiplied severalfold. It is difficult to estimate the net increment to the migrant stock during this period, because information on the return flow is extremely scanty and unreliable.

Most analysts of the Middle East labour migration have commented on the shrinking supply of labour from the poorer Arab countries and the increasing dependence of the oil-rich Middle East on Asian migrant labour. Most of the initial migration to the

rich Arab states came from the poorer Arab countries nearby. By the mid-1970s, however, the labour-importing countries were finding new sources of labour in Asia. Birks and Sinclair have argued that by 1975 the volume of Arab migrant workers represented "a number close to the demographic and economic potential and certainly to the political limits of Arab labour exportation." Moreover, the type of labour migration from Asian countries is likely to be more politically acceptable to the host countries; it could be managed more easily within a temporary enclave that would tend to ensure the return home of the migrants. Therefore, Asian migrant labour probably increased its share of the workforce in the labour-importing Arab countries from 1975 to 1980 and has continued to do so thereafter.

TABLE 1. Population, National Workforce, and Migrant Workforce for Major Arab Labour-Importing Countries, 1975 (in thousands)

	Population			Workforce				
	National	Migrant	Asian	National	Migrant	%	Asian	%
Saudi Arabia	4592.5	1565	93.8	1026.5	773	43	38	2.1
Libya	2223.7	531.4	14.6	449.2	332	42.5	5.5	.7
Oman	550.0	132.2	103.7	137	70.7		58.7	28.2
Kuwait	472.1	502.4	56.1	91.8	208	69.4	33.6	11.2
Bahrain	214.0	56.0	36.5	45.8	30	34.0	16.6	21.9
U.A.E.	200.0	456	311.3	45.0	251.5	84.8	163.5	55.1
Qatar	67.9	97.0	58.2	12.5	53.7	81.1	34.01	51.3
Total	8320.2	3497.9	691.8	1807.8	1719.7		349.9	

Source: Birks and Sinclair.

We could try to get another set of estimates of the stock of migrants in the Middle East as well as their rates of growth by examining first the absorptive capacity of the economies and the feasible limits to the expansion of the migrant workforce. According to World Bank estimates, the labour force of high-income oil exporters grew at approximately 3.8 per cent from 1960 to 1970, and 4.5 per cent from 1970 to 1982. It is expected to grow at an annual average of 3.8 per cent from 1982 to 2000. It is difficult to estimate the foreign component of the incremental workforce. The participation rates of the national population in the workforce is now exceptionally low in these countries, but it would be reasonable to expect a higher rate of work participation as structural changes take place, as the agricultural workforce declines as a share of the total, and as female labour participation increases. Table 2 presents some tentative estimates and projections based on the assumption that the workforce for the labour-importing Arab states has grown up to 1982 at the rates reported by the World Bank and will grow for the period 1982-1990 at 4 per cent per annum. It is assumed that the national workforce will grow at an annual

TABLE 2. Migration of Asian Labour to Arab Countries — Estimates up to 1982 and Projections to 1990 (in thousands)

	1975 <sup>1</sup>		1980		1982		1985		1990	
	Number	Growth Rate, %	Number	Growth Rate, %	Number	Growth Rate, %	Number	Growth Rate, %	Number	Growth Rate, %
Total workforce	3539.5	4.5	4394.6	4.5	4807.0	4.5	5403.0	4	6570.0	4
National workforce	1807.8	2.6	2052.7	2.6	2159.6	2.6	2332.3	2.6	2649.4	2.6
Migrant workforce	1719.7	6.6	2341.0	6.4	2647.4	5	3070.7	5	3921.0	5
Asian migrant workforce	349.0	23	971.0	14	1269.0	10.1	1692.0	8.5	2542.0	

1. Birks and Sinclair.

average of 2.6 per cent — the estimate adopted by Birks and Sinclair for their projections for the period 1975–1980. Based on these estimates, the migrant workforce should have grown to 2.341 million in 1980, 2.647 million in 1982, and 3.07 million in 1985. If, for the reasons stated earlier, we assume that the additional supply will come entirely from Asia, then the outer limits for the Asian migrant workforce in the Middle East according to these estimates would be 971,000 in 1980, 1.269 million in 1982, and approximately 1.7 million in 1985.

TABLE 3. Estimates of Gross Annual Flow and Stock of Asian Migrants to the Middle East (in thousands)

	India	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Thailand <sup>1</sup>	Philippines <sup>2</sup>	Republic of Korea	Pakistan
1976	Annual average 67.5	6.08	1.5	—	19.2	21.2	—
1977		15.7	7.5	—	31.1	52.24	—
1978		22.8	12.5	5.1	43.2	81.98	—
1979		24.48	24.0	12.9	78.6	99.14	118.3
1980	Annual average 220.0	30.57	27.0	42.3	133.7	127.3	118.3
1981		55.78	55.0	69.7	179.2	153.6	153.0
1982		62.80	55.0	104.0	212.5	159.9	137.0
1983		1st quarter 26.40					
Stock as at 1982 <sup>3</sup>	1000.0	118.5	110.0	173.7	391.6	170.0	1250.0

Based on data in country studies.

1. Estimated on total annual flow of remittances and average remittance per worker as given in the study for years 1978-81 (assuming return flow equal to previous year's outflow). Ministry of Labour figure for 1982.
2. Estimated at 85% of the figure for land-based contract workers, as given in study.
3. As estimated in the country studies for India, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea. For other countries, the stock as at end of 1982 is estimated as the total of the flow for 1981 and 1982.

These estimates are much lower than those derived from the data quoted in the country studies (see Table 3). They are also far below forecasts made by the World Bank in 1979, which estimated that the migrant workforce would grow to approximately 3.8 million by 1985 (see Table 4). The World Bank projections were, however, made when the prospects for the oil-exporting countries were quite favourable, prior to the downturn in oil prices. The high estimates of the stock of migrants derived from the country studies and various other sources — particularly those for India and Pakistan — do not appear to be consistent with reasonable projections of the workforce made on realistic assumptions of growth rates. This situation underscores the urgent need for more reliable and comprehensive information on the stock and flow of migrant workers, which is vital for manpower planning and the management of labour markets, both in the host and the labour-exporting countries.

The long-term scenario will feature major shifts in both the demand and supply of migrant labour; labour-supplying and labour-importing countries need to take this into account. On the one hand, there will be a growing demand for manpower in the labour-supplying countries themselves as their economies undergo structural transformation. These changes will take place at different rates among the different countries, affecting their ability to supply labour to the Middle East market both in terms of volume and skill composition. This would mean that the level of country participation in the migration will change over time. All may not supply the same skills. As domestic wages increase, demand for employment abroad will contract in some countries faster than in others. As the structures of their economies change, the differentials between domestic wages and the wages in host countries will narrow. Even in the current situation, significant differences prevail in regard both to the wage structure within the labour-supplying countries and to the skill composition of the migrant workers. Already in the Republic of Korea we have witnessed the narrowing of the differentials between foreign and domestic wages. Between 1976 and 1980 the ratio of overseas to domestic remuneration decreased from 5.4 to 2.6 for carpenters, 5.1 to 2.3 for welders, and 4.3 to 1.9 for other skilled workers. The migration from the Philippines appears to be largely from among the better-educated and more skilled workers. The largest reservoir of unemployed, low-wage workers is likely to be in the South Asian countries. Therefore, the changes that take place in the economies of labour-supplying countries may enable them to make adjustments among themselves, accommodate the shifts in supply, and manage the migration flow in a less disruptive and less competitive manner over the medium and long term.

The geographical distribution of Asian migration by country of destination in the Middle East varies significantly for these countries (see Table 4). South Korean and Thai migrant workers are mainly in Saudi Arabia. The South Asian countries have a different geographical distribution of the migration. Pakistan, which is the South Asian country with the highest proportion of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, still has only about half of its workforce in this country, compared to 84.7 per cent for South Korea. The Indian labour migration is lowest in Saudi Arabia and highest in

TABLE 4. Destination of Asian Migrants to the Middle East for Selected Years (percentages)

	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	U.A.E.	Qatar	Iraq	Libya	Oman	Bahrain	Others
Republic of Korea (1982)	70.8	3.3	0.7	0.8	12.3	10.1	—	—	2.0
Thailand (1982)	84.7	0.58	0.3	2.7	3.0	8.6	—	—	—
Bangladesh (1981/82)	25.6	10.3	8.7	3.4	27.7	6.1	12.3	2.8	3.1
India <sup>1</sup>	14.5	14.5	45.5	4.54	—	—	11.8	4.54	4.54 <sup>2</sup>
Pakistan <sup>1</sup>	49.2	—	28.7	—	—	—	—	—	22.4 <sup>3</sup>
Sri Lanka (1979)	25.5	24.7	22.2	5.0	—	—	6.4	9.1	6.8

Figures are not available for the Philippines.

1. Refers to the distribution of the stock in Middle East countries.

2. Migrants in Iraq and Libya included here.

3. Migrants in all countries other than Saudi Arabi and U.A.E. included here.

the United Arab Emirates. The migrant flows of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are more evenly distributed, with about a quarter moving into Saudi Arabia. In short, each country has different degrees of concentration in the various labour-importing countries of the Middle East. On the basis of the present studies, it is not possible to provide a clear explanation for the variations. They have been influenced by historic ties between the labour-importing and -supplying countries, as in the case of India and the United Arab Emirates. The links between Thai labour and U.S. construction firms established during the Viet Nam war may have been the principal factor in the flow of Thailand's migrant labour to Saudi Arabia. Whatever the causes, the geographical distribution of the migrant workforce will have important consequences for each labour-supplying country. The economic condition in each labour-importing country and its prospects for growth will vary. Policies of recruitment and retrenchment will depend on these internal changes. At least in the short term, labour-supplying countries will be affected according to the present distribution of their workforces in foreign countries.

The host countries, on the other hand, will want to reduce their dependence on a foreign workforce. Their capacity to replace the migrants with local manpower is, however, strictly limited, as it is the overall shortage of manpower that led in the first instance to their recruitment of a foreign workforce. It is only through far-reaching technological change and increased productivity that the host countries will be able to contain the growth of the foreign workforce and their dependence on it. These changes will affect the skill composition of expatriate labour needed by Middle East countries in the future. According to the demand projections made by the World Bank, the major increases will occur in the service, manufacturing, and agriculture sectors. The migrant workforce in the construction sector, which expanded rapidly in the 1970s, was expected to grow only marginally over the 1980-1985 period, increasing from an estimated 737,000 to 770,000. The World Bank estimates, however, projected a rapid increase in the share of the market for professional and subprofessional technical workers, with skilled office and manual workers following close behind. According to these estimates, all office workers in the skilled and semiskilled categories would have together accounted for 698,000, or 62 per cent, of the 1,127,000 additional migrant workers that the Middle East would have required during the 1980-1985 period (see Table 5).

The foregoing discussion indicates that structural changes, both in the countries supplying the manpower and in the host countries, must lead to an equilibrium in the long term which would produce stable and mutually beneficial conditions of interdependence between them. It would be in the mutual interests of these countries to cooperate in working towards such a smooth transition. Both groups of countries need to manage the process of migration so as to realise the fullest benefits from it and to mitigate its inherent economic, political, and sociocultural problems. For the labour-importing countries, the regular turnover of the migrant workforce might be an essential condition to ensure temporary stays for their migrant workers. It

would therefore be in their long-term interest to provide incentives for the smooth, homeward-bound flow of migrants via a regular turnover of the workforce. Similarly, the labour-supplying countries should organise and plan their supply of manpower so as to sustain the migration without creating bottlenecks or shortages of the critically important skills required for the long-term structural transformation of their economies. This is particularly important in view of the anticipated changes in the skill composition of the expatriate labour required by the Middle East. These medium- and long-term adjustments will call for greater cooperation and policy coordination between labour-supplying and -importing countries.

TABLE 5. Demand for Expatriate Labour in the Middle East and North Africa, 1980-85 (by occupation)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Professional and technical percentage change	139,405	149,179 7.0	159,195 6.7	170,730 7.2	184,073 7.8	210,769 14.5
Other professional percentage change	252,636	271,614 7.5	291,234 7.2	313,506 7.6	337,300 7.6	380,960 12.9
Subprofessional and technical percentage change	200,095	221,327 10.6	238,262 7.6	254,173 6.7	275,317 8.3	313,322 13.8
Other subprofessional percentage change	115,321	125,245 8.6	130,577 4.3	133,078 1.9	138,399 4.0	151,371 9.5
Skilled office and manual percentage change	801,148	858,594 7.2	914,064 6.4	973,108 6.4	1,043,997 7.3	1,152,784 10.4
Semiskilled office and manual percentage change	599,118	660,478 10.2	721,919 9.3	793,902 10.0	882,674 11.2	947,988 7.4
Unskilled percentage change	474,417	487,044 2.7	497,994 2.2	512,659 3.0	547,874 6.9	551,946 0.7
Total percentage change	2,582,140	2,773,481 7.4	2,953,245 6.5	3,151,156 6.7	3,409,634 8.2	3,709,140 8.8

Projections cover the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.

Source: World Bank, 7 September 1979, cited in World Bank, *Labor Migration from Bangladesh to the Middle East, 1981*.



## A New Conceptual Framework

A definitional and analytical framework that takes full account of the characteristics of the Asian labour migration to the Middle East has to include many new elements. In many past migrations, various noneconomic factors played an important role. Religious persecutions, political upheavals, imperialistic expansion, and disasters such as the Irish famine all led to large movements of people across national boundaries. Much of this migration was involuntary. In addition, these movements took place when the distribution of the population over the earth's habitable surface offered more scope for new habitats and for permanent, large-scale migrations.

The emergence of an international labour market is a more recent phenomenon and has generated equilibrating forces, resulting in the movement of manpower across national boundaries. The growth and expansion of capitalist modes of production in various parts of the world, and the resulting imbalances in the supply of capital and labour are largely responsible for the creation of this new labour market. In the colonial phase of capitalist expansion, large flows of voluntary migration occurred between imperial centres and the colonies as well as among the colonies themselves. These helped, among other things, to supply the manpower needs of the colonial economic system. The Asian countries participated in the migrations by supplying unskilled labour to plantations and mines in Asian countries and by sending high- and mid-level manpower to the African colonies. The voluntary international flows of manpower during the postcolonial phase are of a significantly different order, occurring in the aftermath of the profound global changes and the unprecedented expansion of the world economy following World War II. Even within these changes, the Asian labour migration to the Middle East forms part of the later phase, when economic relations between the developed and developing countries, as well as the relations among the developing countries themselves, underwent major adjustments. The Asian labour migration, therefore, should be analysed within the framework of the more recent developments in the world capitalist system. It must also be considered in the context of the changing North-South and South-South relations.

The changes in the world economic structure must be viewed alongside the vast technological advances in transport and communication. These revolutionary improvements in international travel and communication have to a large extent removed many of the privations formerly associated with the movement of people across vast distances. They have transformed international migration. In many cases, these advances have eased the migrants' problems of adjustment by enabling them to have continuing contact with their families and by vastly extending the potential for mobility and interaction in the modern world. Today, this mobility takes place in a continuum that includes short-term international travel for specific purposes at one end, temporary migration for employment abroad at another point, and permanent migration and resettlement. The sociocultural and human implications of international migration in the modern world, therefore, require a different frame