Comprehensive Mapping and Assessment of Reintegration Measures in South Asian Colombo Process Member States

International Labour Organization

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Comprehensive Mapping and Assessment of Reintegration Measures in South Asian Colombo Process Member States

Final Report 2022

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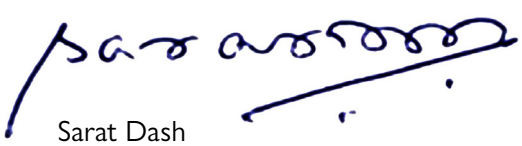
Foreword

Labour migration has been a long-standing and major phenomenon among many of the South Asian States, contributing to improved economic outcomes both at the individual and national levels. The process of return and reintegration of migrants to their country of origin is recognized as a critical step in the migration cycle. Empowering the migrant workers before their return from the country of destination can facilitate a dignified return and support to uphold their rights and well-being.

Many South Asian countries have taken measures to develop policies at national levels pertaining to the return and reintegration of migrant workers. However, they are limited in focus and call for a continuing need to improve the existing support mechanisms.

This report has been jointly commissioned by IOM and the ILO under the Governance of Labour Migration in South and Southeast Asia (GOALS) programme in collaboration with UN-Women, and seeks to map out and assess the nature and gaps in the reintegration support provided to returnee migrant workers from five South Asian Colombo Process member States: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The three-year GOALS programme is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Corporation (SDC).

The findings of the report provide valuable insights into the existing support measures at the structural, community and individual levels in terms of the labour market and economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration within each country considered. We are hopeful that the findings of the report would be useful for policymakers and other stakeholders working on labour migration governance in South Asia. In addition, the report has further contributed to the design of a Regional Model on Reintegration for South Asian Migrant Workers, supported by the GOALS programme that could serve as a useful reference for the Colombo Process member States.



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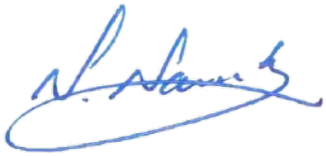

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AVR	assisted voluntary return
AVRR	assisted voluntary return and reintegration
BE&OE	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (Pakistan)
BLA	bilateral agreement
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (Bangladesh)
BNSK	Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIMS	Centre for Indian Migrant Studies
COD	country of destination
CRS	composite reintegration score
CSO	civil service organization
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics (Sri Lanka)
DEMO	District Employment and Manpower Office (Bangladesh)
EPS	Employment Permit System
ESCO	Eastern Self-Reliant Community Awakening Organisation
FEB	Foreign Employment Board (Nepal)
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue (Pakistan)
FGD	focus group discussion

GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Agency for International Cooperation)
G2G	government-to-government
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INR	Indian rupee
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka
KII	key informant interview
KNOMAD	Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development
LKR	Sri Lankan rupee
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (Bangladesh)
MOLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (Nepal)
MOPHRD	Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NAVTTC	National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (Pakistan)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NLMP	National Labour Migration Policy (Sri Lanka)
NORKA	Non-Resident Keralites Affairs
NPR	Nepalese rupee
NRK	non-resident Keralite
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OPF	Overseas Pakistanis Foundation
ORS	Online Reintegration Survey
PKB	Probashi Kallyan Bank
PWF	Pakistani Workers' Federation
RAISE	Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment
REAG/GARP	Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany/Government Assisted Repatriation Programme
ReMiMIS	Returning Migrants Management of Information Systems
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SaMi	Safer Migration Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SED	Small Enterprises Development Division (Sri Lanka)
SIYB	Start and Improve Your Business
SLBFE	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Pakistan)
SMFEPMD	State Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotions and Market Diversification (Sri Lanka)
SWADES	Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support
TTC	Technical Training Centre
TEVTA	Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (Pakistan)
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
USD	United States dollars
VOM	Voice of Migrants

1. Introduction

Reintegration is an important aspect of labour migration from South Asia, as majority of migrant workers leave the region as temporary migrants with the intention of returning back. For migrant workers, return takes place in different ways and under different conditions, leading to diverse challenges and opportunities for social, psychosocial, economic and labour market reintegration. Migrants' experiences of returning and reintegrating into their origin societies are often shaped by their diverse experiences during the migration cycle, as well as the conditions under which they returned. Therefore, returnees require various types of support based on their individual needs and experiences. Hence, it is important for reintegration to be successful and sustainable in a manner that maximizes the benefits of the migrant work and also ensures that migrant workers and their families sustain the social, psychosocial and economic benefits of labour migration and remigration is a choice-based decision, free of compulsion. Such a holistic approach to sustainable reintegration begins at the pre-departure stage and culminates at the post-reintegration stage. Moreover, for sustainable and successful reintegration, it is important to adopt a needs-based response, spanning the levels of individual, community and structural support for returnees, and ensure that migrants, their families and their communities drive and take ownership of the reintegration process through active participation and empowerment. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic aptly highlighted the need for reintegration support for migrant workers and the importance of the scalability and effectiveness of such measures. As such, it is important for reintegration programmes to be developed, implemented and adapted using continuous assessment and learning, and understand the wider environment they are structured in.

Literature underscores ideal reintegration may be successful, sustainable and effective. The United Nations Network on Migration (2021:4) considers *sustainable reintegration* as "a process which enables individuals to secure and sustain the political, economic, social and psychosocial conditions needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity in the country and community they return or are returned to, in full respect of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights". Wickramasekara (2019:4) defines *effective reintegration* as "successful reintegration of returning workers into their families, communities, the economy, and society", which from the viewpoint of a country of origin means "that their migrant workers return in a safe and dignified manner after achieving their migration objectives overseas". The definition of IOM of sustainable reintegration considers that reintegration is sustainable when "returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers". It further considered that "having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather

than necessity" (IOM, 2019:11.). In the absence of a universally accepted definition of sustainable, effective and successful reintegration, borrowing from literature (IOM, 2019; United Nations Network on Migration, 2021; Wickramasekara, 2019), in this study, sustainable reintegration is when a returnee has achieved economic self-sufficiency, labour market integration, social stability and psychosocial well-being, to the extent of having the necessary context and resources to remain in the place of return, where any remigration decision is based on choice without compulsion.

The aim of this study is to take stock and assess effectiveness of existing reintegration measures by comprehensively mapping the same in specific South Asian Colombo Process member States – namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka – and assess their effectiveness. As such, the study maps in detail the currently available and fully developed plans of reintegration support mechanisms for return migrant workers, their families and communities, and assess effectiveness of existing mechanism along the contours of economic and labour market, social and psychosocial dimensions, including gender considerations, in achieving sustainable reintegration across the six identified countries.

To address this aim, three broad research questions are answered for each of the countries as follows:

(a) What are the existing reintegration support mechanisms available at the individual, community and structural levels along the economic and labour market and social and psychosocial dimensions?
(b) What are the gaps in reintegration support mechanisms available at the individual, community and structural levels along the economic and labour market and social and psychosocial dimensions?
(c) How effective, sustainable and gender responsive is existing reintegration support?

The approach adopted for this study draws from the normative framework of international standards, instruments and frameworks, while the conceptual framework approaches successful and sustainable reintegration to involve reintegration across economic, labour market, social and psychosocial dimensions. For reintegration to be both successful and sustainable, support should be delivered at the individual, community and structural levels.

Economic and employment-support measures are necessary to ensure that returnees are independent and self-sufficient once they return to their home countries. To this end, economic and labour market reintegration support is considered to be initiatives and programmes that provide returnees with the resources and skills that can help them earn sustainable incomes. Thus, economic and labour market reintegration encompass the ability for migrants to rejoin the workforce. Social reintegration support refers to the provision of and access to things such

as housing, education, health services and legal support, which improve migrants' overall quality of life. Psychosocial reintegration support refers to programmes and mechanisms that can assist returnees to deal with any emotional difficulties, traumas or other problems that they face because of the migration experience or even their subsequent reintegration.

Individual-level support refers to support that is targeted specifically, and directly at the migrant, to aid them and improve their well-being. Community-level support is the support that is delivered through the communities that migrants belong to in order to promote their networks and general belonging in these communities. Such support would also address tensions between returnees and their communities and respond to the needs of migrants' families and communities. Structural-level[2] support refers to support beyond institutional level, where institutional level of reintegration support particularly looks at how institutions govern the sectors under their responsibility through rules, regulations, policies and specific measures; whereas, the structural level of reintegration includes the institutional-level support but is broader, also encompassing cultural preferences, historical factors and other elements that influence policymaking.

The analysis adopts a Concurrent Mixed Method approach based on primary and secondary sources. This study mainly relies on qualitative data collected through 57 KIIs and 6 FGDs conducted virtually between September 2021 and January 2022. These KIIs and FGDs were conducted with a diverse cross section of stakeholders from various institutions spanning governments, civil society, academia and trade unions from the five countries in question. This rich qualitative data is complemented by quantitative data collected through an ORS, modelled after Reintegration Sustainability Survey of IOM. In addition to this data, information has also been collected from existing data through a desk review of existing literature and policy documents. The remainder of this report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides background about the South Asian region and the global normative framework for return and reintegration of migrant workers. Chapter 3 onwards are the five country chapters, each including a labour market update and a reintegration profile, which includes mapping, assessment, summary and recommendations. Details on the approach, conceptual framework, data and methodology used for the overall study, as well as annexes are compiled separately. Details on the approach, conceptual framework, data and methodology used for the overall study, as well as annexes can be provided upon request.

[2] In this context, structural level refers to the services provided by the government, both local and national, as well as through regional level organizations and MOUs and G2G agreements.

2. Background

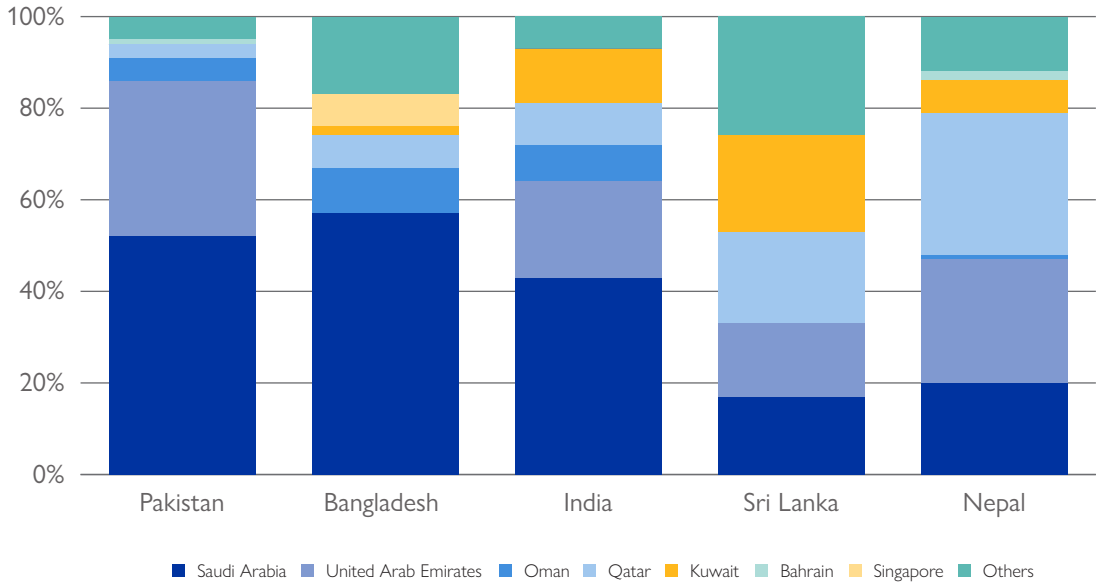
2.1. Migration trends in South Asia

With a GDP of USD 3.3 trillion in 2020, South Asia is home to a labour force of 647 million, out of which over 22 per cent are women. South Asian countries are key countries of origin that rely heavily on remittance income from international labour migration. Before the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, in 2019, there were large regular outflows of migrant workers from South Asian countries, ranging from 203,186 from Sri Lanka to 700,159 from Bangladesh (Weeraratne, 2020:24). A key feature of labour migration from South Asia is the popularity of the Gulf region as a destination, which provides limited opportunities for permanent migration. In recent years, countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar have absorbed the largest number of South Asian migrants (see Figure 1). These migrant workers from South Asia are disproportionately concentrated in relatively low-skilled occupations. For instance, in 2019, around 50 per cent of migrant workers from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were employed in low-skilled and medium-skilled occupations (Weeraratne, 2020).

Since the majority of migrant workers from South Asia are temporary workers who leave their families behind in the country of origin, there is a regular inflow of remittances to South Asian economies. In 2019, the region received 20 per cent (USD 140 billion) of total global remittances (KNOMAD, 2020). In 2020, India was the highest recipient of remittances (USD 83 billion) followed by Pakistan (USD 26.1 billion) and Bangladesh (USD 21.7 billion) (KNOMAD, 2021). When it comes to reliance on remittance income, in 2020, Nepal had the greatest reliance at 23.5 per cent of GDP, followed by Pakistan (9.9%) and Sri Lanka (8.8%) (ibid.).

Key reasons for high reliance of the South Asian population on labour migration can be traced back to poverty and labour market issues in the region. Artuc et al. (2019) underscore that millions of people still live in extreme poverty, where an estimated 12.4 per cent of the population live on less than USD 1.90 a day, which is equal to one third of all the global poor. In terms of the labour market, issues such as low-quality jobs mainly in the informal sector, large wage gaps between different demographic groups, significant population growth pressure are some such key issues that contribute towards labour migratory decisions (ibid.).

Figure 1. **Migrant workers' destinations by origin (2019)**



Source: Weeraratne, 2020.

2.2. Global normative and policy frameworks on reintegration

Return and reintegration forms an integral part of human mobility and migration. In light of complex and dynamic migration flows, the discourse on return and reintegration has gained much attention in global agendas, laws and programmes in recent years (Nguyen, 2019) and especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This section outlines the global normative framework that relate to reintegration of migrant workers in terms of international standards, instruments and frameworks, which cover wider aspects of return and reintegration.

2.2.1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees freedom of movement within and across borders including return migration. For instance, article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underpins the right to leave any country, including his own and to return to his country (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018).

2.2.2. New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) also contains provisions on return and reintegration of migrants. In essence, paragraph 58 articulates "to ensure that migrants without authorization to remain could be returned to their countries of origin or nationality in a safer, orderly and dignified manner; in accordance with international law, human rights law and non-refoulement and with consideration for the best interests of the children". Moreover, it

explicitly states the importance of providing reintegration assistance for those who are returned, with the due consideration of vulnerable groups "such as children, older persons, persons with disabilities and victims of trafficking" (United Nations, 2016).

2.2.3. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The Global Compact for Migration (2018) also contains provisions on return and reintegration of migrant workers. Specifically, Objective 21 explicitly states to "cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration". More importantly, the three proposed actions under this objective are as follows: (a) promote gender-responsive and child-sensitive return and reintegration programmes; (b) provide equal access to a full range of services and protections, as well as economic opportunities for migrants to reintegrate in and contribute to society; and (c) address the needs of communities of return by making them a part of national and local development plans, budgets and infrastructure needs (United Nations, 2018).

2.2.4. United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscores "the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship" and recall that States must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015:2). More importantly, Target 8.8 (to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environment for all workers), Target 10.7 (to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people) and Target 10.c (to reduce the transaction costs of migrant remittances) include specifications on migration and related aspects, which can be focused on reintegration policies and programmes. Additionally, Target 5.c (to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at all levels) and Target 5.2 (to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation), which especially focus on gender equality and empowering all women and girls, can also be referred in reintegration policies and programmes (United Nations, n.d.).

2.2.5. International conventions and standards covering reintegration of migrant workers

In principle, all international labour standards, unless otherwise stated, are applicable to migrant workers.[3] ILO International standards and guidance contains several provisions on return and reintegration of migrant workers. For instance, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised) (1949, No. 97) and ILO Migration for Employment Recommendation

[3] See www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/standards/lang--en/index.htm.

(Revised) (1949, No. 86) outline various measures to safeguard the rights of migrant workers and their families on return while in the COD.

Specifically, Article III of Migration for Employment Recommendation 86 of underscores that migrants and their families in CODs should receive advice in a language that they can understand, on matters relating return to the country of origin, and provide facilities for migrants and their families with regard to the fulfilment of administrative formalities and other steps to be taken in connection with the return to the country of origin or of emigration.

The Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) outlines conditions and specifications for the return of migrant workers and their family members. For instance, Article 9 underscores that if a migrant fails to secure the employment for reasons beyond his/her control, the cost of his/her and their authorized family members' return shall not fall upon the migrant.

Moreover, Article 67 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families notes that CODs "shall co-operate as appropriate in the adoption of measures regarding the orderly return of migrant workers and members of their families to the State of origin when they have to or decide to return" and "shall co-operate as appropriate on terms of agreed upon by those States, with a view of promoting adequate economic conditions for the resettlement of migrant workers and their families, and to facilitate their durable social and cultural reintegration in the state of origin" (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2005:45). Given that sustainable reintegration spans the in-service period, the well-being of migrant workers ensured by these conventions while in the COD contributes to sustainable reintegration upon return. Hence, through this convention, the need to ensure the socioeconomic and labour market reintegration of migrant workers and their families in the countries of origin is solidified.

Similarly, other ILO guidelines, such as Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation (2017, No. 205), ILO Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market and ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (ILO, 2006) show specific measures for voluntary repatriation and reintegration of returnees including creating labour market opportunities and decent work for all, as well as facilitating livelihood and self-reliance, which covers wider aspects of reintegration.

For instance, principle 12 and guideline 12.2 of the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration specially mention about return and reintegration of migrant workers. Principle 12 denotes "[a]n orderly and equitable process of labour migration should be promoted in both origin and destination countries to guide men and women migrant workers through all stages of migration … [including] return and reintegration" and guideline 12.2 denotes to "facilitate migrant

workers' return by providing information, training and assistance prior to their departure and on arrival in their home country concerning the return process, the journey and reintegration" (ibid.).

2.2.6. Gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches to reintegration

Literature stresses the fact that women and men migrant workers may experience different issues and challenges throughout the migration cycle, and it is important to factor gender considerations into all interventions (Wickramasekara, 2019). In fact, women are more likely to face greater discrimination and violence in workplaces/public spaces/accommodations, along with trafficking and forced labour due to their employment in unprotected sectors such as domestic work. Also, evidence suggest that some women workers may return prematurely because of pregnancy testing being practised in some CODs (ibid.). Also, for many women migrant workers, the mismanagement or poor reinvestment of remittances at both structural (institutional and other mechanisms) and household level often push them back into informal or unregulated employment or make them to recourse to unsafe migration channels (ILO and UN-Women, 2014). As such, women may face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence at all stages of the migration process based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic condition, nationality, age, migration status and gender. These can create barriers to safe and regular migration, including reintegrating into their communities of origin. Moreover, women face several other challenges when returning, due to stigma attached to migration and lack of access to gender-responsive support services, such as psychosocial care and social protection schemes, including integrated gender-based violence assistance in countries of origin (Gioli et al., 2017).

In this setting, the Joint ILO–UN-Women Regional Workshop on Effective Social and Economic Reintegration of Women Migrant Workers was held in 2014, in Kathmandu, Nepal, with the aim of identifying special needs and issues of women migrant workers throughout the migration cycle (ILO and UN-Women, 2014).

Further, ASEAN Consensus has specifically advocated the promotion of fair treatment of migrant workers in relation to gender (ASEAN, 2017), and recommendation 19 of the Fifth ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour also refers to gender-sensitive reintegration, among others (ILO, 2019). In fact, recommendation 19 underscores special provisions to optimize the potential and role of returning migrant workers in information-sharing with the communities on gender differential migration experiences, recruitment costs, agencies and practices and emigration procedures. This was implemented in close collaboration among tripartite partners and civil society organizations and applicable to all migrant workers (ASEAN, 2017).

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women contains several provisions on preventing discrimination of women including migrant women. The general recommendation no. 26 specifically entails certain conditions and specifications on return and reintegration of

women migrant workers. For instance; article 3 underscores the fact that "States parties should ensure that women who wish to return to their countries of origin are able to do so free of coercion and abuse", as well as article 2.c and 3 underscore the fact that "States parties should design or oversee comprehensive socio-economic, psychological and legal services aimed at facilitating the reintegration of women who have returned" (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2008).

3. Bangladesh

3.1. Labour market

Bangladesh has a low unemployment rate (4%), with high involvement in vulnerable work, self-employment, own account work and unpaid family work or day labour, partly because remaining unemployed is unaffordable (ADB, 2016). Therefore, skills training initiatives have played a key role in the country's national development plans, while a significant structural economic shift away from traditional agriculture and towards export-oriented manufacturing and services sectors has increased demand for skilled workers (OECD and ILO, 2017). Gu et al. (2021) indicated that much of the economic growth in Bangladesh was attributable to this expansion in the manufacturing sector, which grew at around 10.1 per cent on average from 2007 to 2019. However, this was hampered with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruptions to the economy.

In order to resolve a mismatch between the demand and supply of skills, the Government of Bangladesh initiated reforms in the TVET system, including increasing the participation of the private sector. With the initiation of the TVET reform programme, the concept of apprenticeship gained prominence, particularly as a result of the formation of Industrial Skills Councils. Currently, there are 12 Industrial Skills Councils representing 12 industrial subsectors (ibid.). They play a vital role in bridging the gap between the formal institutional training system and enterprises. With the closure of the TVET reform project in December 2015, its successor Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity Project (B-SEP) continued to support strengthening apprenticeship in Bangladesh until 2019 (ibid.). Further, Bangladesh has benefited from entrepreneurship development programmes such as the SIYB programme of ILO. In 2020, ILO in Bangladesh initiated training programmes to train local instructors in 13 TVET institutes across Bangladesh.

As per the findings of this qualitative research, a wide cross-section of institutions is involved in providing labour market support in Bangladesh, including the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Ministry of Education handling the skills development component of the labour market. These institutions are governed by the National Employment Policy, National Skills Development Policy, as well as the Five-Year Development Plan. The main labour market support mechanism is granted via BMET, which provides technical and vocational training through DEMOs, TTCs and Institutes of Marine Technology and Apprenticeship Training Offices under BMET at present (Bangladesh, BMET, n.d.). Beside its regular institutional programme, BMET also engages in other industry-based, specialized programmes on request (Islam, n.d.). The total output of these existing

(both regular and special courses) stands at approximately 47,000 skilled persons per year (ADB, 2009). Yet, the qualitative research from this study highlights that the mismatch between the demand and supply of services provided persists and that the curriculums are in need of updating.

Apart from issues with existing mechanisms, the labour market had become highly distorted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This makes reintegration into the labour market more challenging for returnee migrants. Qualitative information further revealed the disconnect between the returnees and the domestic demand for labour in Bangladesh. This disconnect can be attributed to heavy focus on outward migration and remigration, with limited focus on using existing returnee skills to fill labour market demand.

In addition, Bangladesh initiated Union Digital Centres to provide digital services and information for the people regardless of their digital literacy levels. The services offered include job application assistance for both overseas and government jobs. The centres aimed to provide a solution for long waiting times and costs associated with receiving government support services. The qualitative research of this study also confirmed the benefits of these centres. More recently, there have been several initiatives to develop mobile applications that provide migrant workers and returnees with useful information and access to services, such as Ami Probashi and Bdesh Jaatra.[4]

3.2. Mapping of reintegration support

Bangladesh has made headway in reintegration service provision for return migrant workers in recent years (Rashid and Hannan, 2018). MoEWOE is the major State institution that oversees migration- and reintegration-related concerns, mainly through BMET, Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited, PKB and Wage Earners' Welfare Board. Moreover, district-level service provision occurs mainly through DEMOs, TTCs and PKB (ibid.). Additionally, some strong programmes covering multidimensional support services have been implemented (or are in the pipeline to be implemented) in recent years by international organizations, such as IOM, ILO, UN-Women and the World Bank in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh.

[4] See https://amiprobashi.com/ and https://bangladeshpost.net/posts/migration-information-platform-bdesh-jaatra-launched-47862.

3.2.1. Institutional reintegration support

Policy framework

According to the *Bangladesh Migration Governance Framework* published by IOM, there is no specific policy or strategy for returning migrants at present (Barkat et al., 2020). The Government of Bangladesh has recently expressed an interest in developing a national reintegration policy with the support of ILO, IOM and UN-Women. At present, however, there are several different policies as outlined by IOM (2018). For instance, the definition of migrant worker adopted in the Overseas Employment Act of 2013 includes not only those planning for migration or currently employed in a foreign country, but also those who have returned. Furthermore, the rights of migrants are applicable to those who are detained, stranded or in distress conditions to return home. Another key policy is the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016, which has provisions for rehabilitation of the poor and distressed returnee migrants with the involvement of State and non-State stakeholders. It aims to integrate returnee migrants into development activities at local levels, promoting the welfare services and social rehabilitation.

The Wage Earners' Welfare Fund Rules 2002 and the Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act 2018 identify social and economic rehabilitation and reintegration of returnee migrants not limiting to hospitals, housing and employment of migrant workers, repatriation and medical support for migrant workers with illness, injury or disabilities and repatriation of deceased migrant workers' bodies. Apart from this, the latter act has provisions for emergency support for migrants, including support for social, economic and labour market reintegration, providing educational scholarship and support for children with disabilities or dependants of migrants (Siddiqui et al., 2019). Additionally, the Seventh Five-Year Plan (2016–2020) had focused on rehabilitation loans for the migrants in destitute and vulnerable conditions, while the Eighth-Five-Year Plan (2020–2025) included reintegration as a point under the ten-point agenda for overseas employment and the well-being of migrant workers (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 2020).

There were contested evidence in qualitative data, where some highlighted an absence of a streamlined policy, strategy or a mechanism for returning migrants, while others highlighted the anticipated policy based on the Government of Bangladesh's decision in 2021 to develop a national reintegration strategy. Moreover, although the reintegration of returnee migrants has been mentioned in the above existing and proposed policies, the qualitative research suggested in these provisions may not be fully implemented in practice. On a positive note, as highlighted in the qualitative evidence, many of the legal and policy frameworks are currently being updated, such as the review and revision of the Overseas Employment Act 2013 by the Government of Bangladesh with the support of ILO. Similarly, a reintegration rule is currently be drafted under the Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act 2018.

Service providers/Stakeholder coordination

In addition to the above State-level stakeholders, the qualitative research highlighted the availability of non-governmental institutions focusing on reintegration of returnees. For instance, the activities of the United Nations Network on Migration are supporting the Government's reintegration efforts with stakeholders, such as the Labour Migration Technical Working Group and the Counter Trafficking Technical Working Group. Further, there are two national forums for discussing related issues: (a) the National Steering Committee on Migration, which is an interministerial committee headed by the Prime Minister; and (b) the Labour Migration Committee, which is headed by MoEWOE, engages with development partners and meets on a quarterly basis. As such, CSOs and NGOs are key stakeholders in providing some reintegration services; however, efforts are not fully coordinated. These providers extend their services at the local level in the form of awareness-raising campaigns, reintegration of returnees, training and legal support, among others (Barkat et al., 2020).

Memorandums of understanding and government-to-government arrangements

Some migration-related agreements between Bangladesh and its CODs include BLAs with Qatar and Kuwait, as well as MOUs with China; Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China; Iraq; Jordan; Libya; Maldives; Malaysia; Oman; Saudi Arabia; the Republic of Korea; and the United Arab Emirates. Bangladesh is also a participant of regional consultative processes including the Colombo Process (Colombo Process, n.d.), the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, the Bali Process and the Budapest Process (IOM and Sri Lanka, MoEWOE, 2019). However, as confirmed by the qualitative research, most agreements are not concerned with issues beyond the return of migrants. The only agreement that contains publicly available information on reintegration is EPS of the Republic of Korea (Human Resources Development Service of Korea, n.d.). As a new development, the ILO Country Office in Bangladesh has issued a series of publications as a guide for future BLAs and MOUs on labour migration, which include reintegration as a component (ILO, 2018a; ILO, 2018b; ILO, 2018c).

Economic and labour market reintegration support

This State-owned bank, PKB, established in 2010, is a specialized financial institution serving non-resident Bangladeshis. One of its main economic and labour market reintegration support services is the concessionary long-term loan facility, providing low-cost rehabilitation loans to returnee migrants who are destitute. Under project loans, returnees are provided with loans up to 70 per cent of the total cost, as well as suggestions for the projects. By 2019 however, this bank had provided rehabilitation loans to only 163 returnees for amounts ranging from BDT 2 lakh to BDT 10 lakh (approximately USD 2,330–11,660) (PKB, 2020). The need for greater credit access was discussed through the qualitative research as well, where it was suggested that returnees were hesitant to apply for financial assistance due to complex application procedures

and the desire to remigrate rather than reintegrate. In fact, ICMPD (2022) indicated that majority of the returnees preferred to remigrate.

Apart from this, the RPL programme initiated by the Ministry of Education in 2013 has been useful particularly for low- and medium-skilled migrant workers to obtain recognized qualifications for their work experiences and gain better employment opportunities once they return (Rashid and Hannan, 2018). There are also services accessible to the general population including returnees, such as concessionary loan provision and in-kind support for businesses, training and advisory/counselling services. These are offered by institutions such as District Livestock Offices, Department of Agricultural Extension, Department of Youth Development and Department of Social Services (ibid.).

Bangladesh's flagship migrant worker reintegration initiative is the Prottasha Programme for Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance. It is an ongoing initiative led by the Government of Bangladesh, funded by the European Union and implemented by IOM in partnership with BRAC. It provides immediate needs assessment and sustainable reintegration support for a targeted 3,000 mainly women returnees, in terms of social, economic and psychosocial support (IOM, n.d.a). The economic support provided are as follows: (a) enterprise support, including immediate cash or seed capital; and (b) labour market support, ranging from career counselling, leadership and entrepreneurship training, financial literacy and digital literacy. Based on the latest Prottasha monthly update for January 2022, 3,431 beneficiaries had been assisted through reintegration support, while 1,340,601 persons were reached through awareness-raising activities (IOM, 2022).

Two other major projects are the AVR and AVRR programmes carried out by IOM in Bangladesh. This programme focuses on providing comprehensive return and reintegration support. Activities can range from assistance at the airport to developing a reintegration plan and monitoring the progress of returnees in terms of reintegration (IOM, n.d.b). The qualitative research reiterated that in the case of economic support, the programme provides trainings on entrepreneurship, financial management and even in-kind support to initiate small businesses. Aside from this, various social and psychosocial support are also provided.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, specific measures for economic remigration was provided for returning migrant workers. For instance, the Bangladesh Bank announced a loan programme focusing on forcefully returned migrants and their family members, where they can access up to USD 6,250 without providing migration documents (Chowdhury and Chakraborty, 2021). Other reintegration measure outlined during the pandemic included training for returnees with specific skills from abroad (Siddiqui, 2021). The COVID-19 related BMET trainings would cover 38 trades

and come under two streams: one for reintegration and one for remigration. Qualitative research also brought out reintegration support provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, one project by UN-Women involved training returning women migrant workers to produce high-quality masks, run mobile food carts or small restaurants in government training centres. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that community-level economic support for reintegration was limited.

Social reintegration support

Several social support mechanisms have been carried out or are in the pipeline to be carried out collaboratively by a multitude of stakeholders. IOM, ILO, UN-Women, along with the Government of Bangladesh and other parties, have planned to conduct the joint programme addressing the medium- to long-term reintegration needs and strengthening social protection support mechanisms for the social inclusion of Bangladeshi migrants under the broader implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (IOM, 2021a). This programme will support return migrant workers who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic by providing social support services, addressing discrimination through community-based interventions and assisting respective authorities to develop social integration support mechanisms. This also includes a major component of women's empowerment (ibid.).

Another programme is the RAISE project. The World Bank has committed to funding USD 200 million of the USD 300 million total cost, while the implementing agency would be the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation of Government of Bangladesh (World Bank, n.d.). The project aims to support approximately 200,000 returnees forced to return due to the pandemic. The support will consist of an economic inclusion programme that will include training on essential life skills, on-the-job learning opportunities, business management and financial management for returnees, as well as training for field officers who will be expected to conduct counselling and profiling services for returned migrants so that they can be referred to appropriate socioeconomic reintegration services according to their preference for reintegration or remigration. Cash grants would also be provided to enable migrants to access the referred services. The project will also contribute towards upgrading and integrating information systems to streamline social protection delivery for migrants both prior to, during and after migration, which was confirmed by the qualitative research as well (World Bank, 2021).

In terms of programmes that have taken place, UN-Women has conducted one of the earliest reintegration pilot programmes focusing on women migrant workers in 2015 under an ILO project on decent work funded by SDC (ILO, n.d.a).

Additionally, the qualitative research indicated that programmes conducted by UN-Women had provided medical support for returning women, which more recently included the provision of 10,000 health and hygiene kits and hygiene training during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well

as facilities to test for COVID-19 and vaccination for returnees planning remigrate. In terms of community-level social reintegration support, the organization has involved returning women as resource persons to share knowledge and experience with their community members.

Other aspects of social reintegration support available in Bangladesh include networks among returnees. One major network is BNSK, which was registered in 2012. Despite not being a national-level network, BNSK was involved at the community level to provide counselling and awareness about CODs among the migrant community. Some CSOs also organize community-level gatherings and some limited counselling/training.

Psychosocial reintegration support

The qualitative research confirmed that few organizations provided psychosocial support. One programme with such a component is the previously mentioned Prottasha programme where returnees are provided with short-term psychosocial support on a case-by-case basis. The project has also harnessed existing State structures by entering into an MOU with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, where the project staff were trained by counsellors and psychologists. Another project that included a component on psychosocial support is the Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers in Bangladesh project by SDC that commence in 2019. This focused on all three dimensions of reintegration and was discussed through the qualitative research as well. Some of its expected results include sensitizing the community members regarding irregular migration and enabling returnee women migrants to receive counselling for reintegration.

Most psychosocial support programmes offered in Bangladesh are one-off support such as one orientation or workshop. Long-term psychosocial support available beyond project cycles are rare, except in the case of a few migrants abused in CODs. Qualitative research further revealed that although psychosocial issues were sensitive topics, returning women migrant workers are receptive to psychosocial support and that this form of support was often intertwined with labour market support, such as career counselling, economic leadership training, financial literacy, digital literacy and self-management skills.

3.2.2. Other thematic considerations

Another theme emerging was the use of technology and digital services for reintegration support. A notable recent intervention by MoEWOE was the launch of the digital platform ReMiMIS in 2020, with the support of IOM, to collect, analyse and store data of returning migrants in order to identify the needs and vulnerabilities of returnees and target reintegration support programmes within Bangladesh (IOM, 2021b). Moreover, the collection of information on skills of returnees enables matching them with the demand for their skills. The qualitative research however highlighted that low outreach and poor digital literacy resulted in limited participation.

Another intervention is the hotline service for obtaining information related to reintegration initiated by the Prottasha project. The qualitative research indicated that this initiative is to be handed over and combined with the government's existing hotlines (IOM, n.d.a).

A further theme in reintegration support highlighted in qualitative research is the gender differences in reintegration support in Bangladesh. It was suggested that when it comes to providing loans for migrants, the process including documentation can be challenging, particularly for women. Moreover, in-kind support for women was driven towards home-based or domesticated sector, which reflected gender norms. Overall, migration of women in relation to men was also looked down upon, resulting in gender-sensitive reintegration effort.

3.3. Assessment of gaps, effectiveness and sustainability

3.3.1. Data collection on returnees and enhanced targeting of returnee needs

One of the key challenges in Bangladesh's reintegration support efforts is the absence of comprehensive data on returnees. There is ad hoc data collection efforts such as the Probashi Kollyan Desk at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for recording the number of returnees during the COVID-19 pandemic period with the support of IOM (IOM, 2021c). But there are no national-level mechanisms with required information, such as educational attainment levels, training needs and reintegration support requirements. As a result, most reintegration programmes suffer from a lack of targeting and a mismatch in the support provided, which was confirmed by the qualitative research. Moreover, the qualitative research indicated the need for linking the training and financial support provided. In one instance, returnees who could not make productive use of a cow or a sewing machine provided due to the absence of required training liquidated the asset for sustenance. Another dimension of targeting gaps was the overemphasis on individual-level support as opposed to striking balance between individual- and community-level reintegration support.

3.3.2. Capacity-building

While the need for capacity-building is recognized and carried out by several current projects, some areas for improvement include digital literacy support for returnees, continuous/long-term support in a post-training setting to ensure sustainability of training received. Similarly, capacity-building among returnees and service providers is needed for collectivization and solidarity-building among returnees.

3.3.3. Coordinated reintegration programme

The qualitative research also highlighted the need for a coordinated national-level reintegration programme. Pre-departure training provided by both State and other organizations do not provide

reintegration-related information per se, covering mostly aspects on financial management. Similarly, desk and qualitative research indicate that temporary migration is often with the objective of capital accumulation (Bossavie et al., 2022). Nevertheless, information provided at pre-departure training does not contain information with an investment perspective.

3.3.4. Dimensions and levels of reintegration support

There is an overemphasis on labour market and economic reintegration support relative to social and psychosocial reintegration support. Within economic support, there is a strong focus on concessional loans, with limited focus on skills training aspects of economic support. The qualitative research points out that returnees could experience difficulties in accessing social and psychosocial support, in particular medical services such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing or vaccination during the pandemic. Another issue highlighted was the capacity constraints in providing psychosocial support. Insufficient capacity in the reintegration mechanisms can perhaps be attributed to the low awareness and demand for psychosocial support among returnees. Qualitative data also showed a high concentration of reintegration assistance at the individual level, with most community-level support programmes being "on paper" but not rolled out.

3.3.5. Gender sensitivity

While there were reintegration support mechanisms that take gender into consideration, there is a need to provide further gender sensitivity training in relation to programme implementation. The qualitative research showed that gender sensitivity should be included in capacity-building of service providers such as CSOs.

3.3.6. Effectiveness

Reintegration services and stakeholders in Bangladesh are effective to a certain extent to successfully reintegrating returnees. The programmes need to be holistic and coordinated for all returnees to access. Further, there is a need for more awareness and education on available services among migrants. Apart from the government loan facility to returnees, other programmes in their current forms may focus on sustainability aspects to increase the number of beneficiaries.

3.4. Recommendations

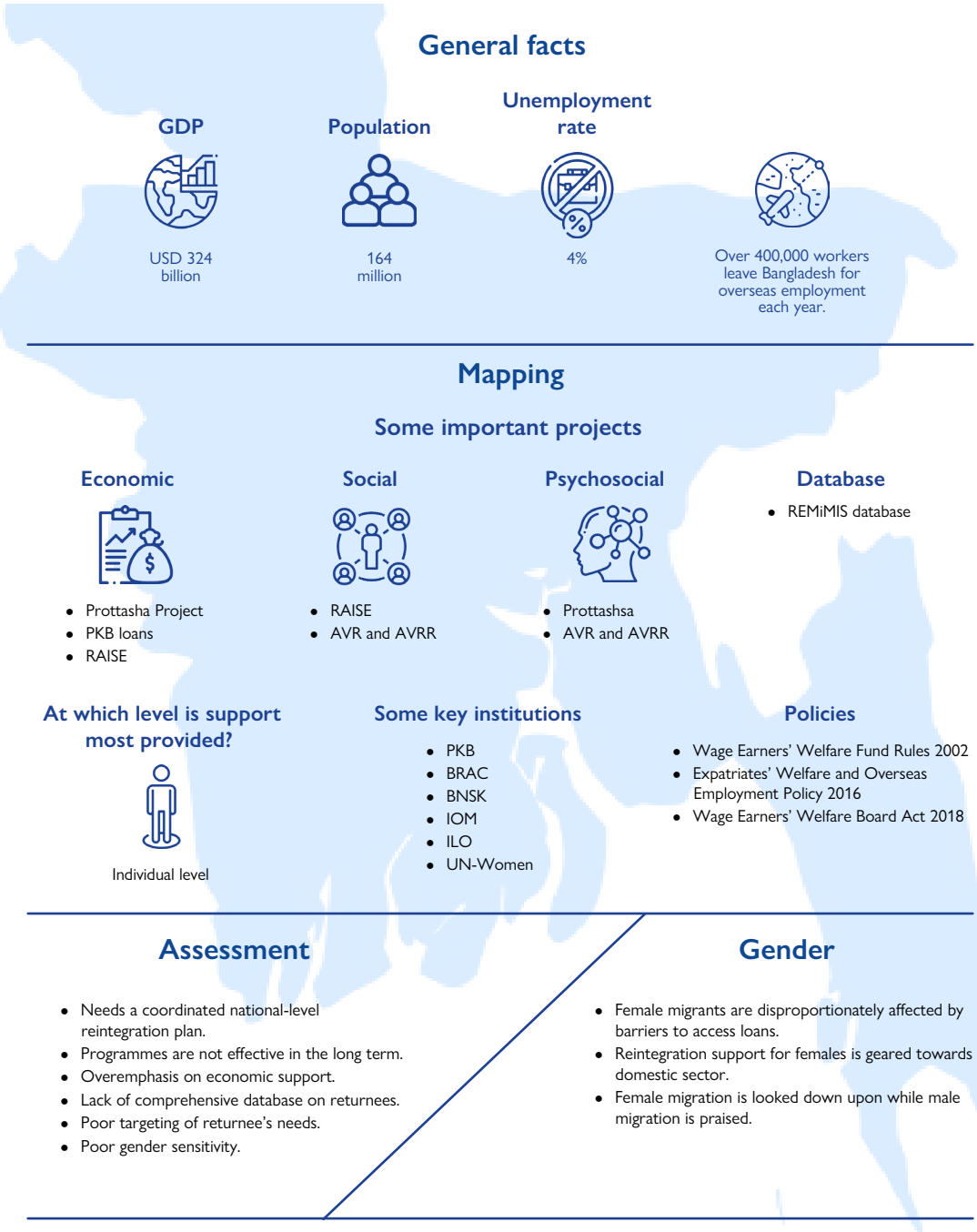
Recommended strategies to improve further sustainability and effectiveness of reintegration services, include the following:

- Establish a mechanism for long-term data collection of national-level disaggregated data on returnees beyond the COVID-19 pandemic period. This information should include skill levels, demographic characteristics and reintegration needs to better target

reintegration support and ensure sustainability. Utilizing such data, returnee migrants can be connected to market value chains within their communities and the region when implementing reintegration support.

- While the institutional framework for migration governance in Bangladesh is commendable, there is a need for greater emphasis on the implementation aspect, particularly at the local level. Currently, institutions such as DEMO provide some labour market support for reintegration. This can be expanded as more comprehensive support addressing the economic, social and psychosocial aspects of reintegration support.
- As suggested by the limited use of the project loans and advisory services available through PKB, returnees may not be fully aware of the services available to them. As such, providing greater awareness of existing support mechanisms to migrant communities would be useful. Additionally, further research can be done to identify other reasons for limited demand for support services.
- It is also necessary to focus on the sustainability and coverage of reintegration support services in Bangladesh, since many facilities tend to be project-based endeavours. This requires greater collaboration among the various State and non-State groups from the national to the community levels. While the Government of Bangladesh has worked in partnership with various international NGOs for projects, there is a greater scope for engagement with returnee/diaspora networks, local CSOs and trade unions. For instance, to ensure sustainability, services provided during the project cycle can be linked with existing support services provided by the State. It is also possible to promote capacity-building among migrant networks and community volunteer groups.
- The gender sensitivity of reintegration support mechanisms available could be enhanced. For instance, providing additional support in financial literacy for women, creating safe, welcoming spaces to engage with reintegration service providers, and involving women in the community in consultative processes for projects can be useful in providing more gender-sensitive reintegration support.

Figure 2. **Return and reintegration support in Bangladesh**



Source: Author's depictions based on qualitative data.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

4. India

4.1. Labour market

With over 500 million workers, the Indian labour force is the world's second largest. In the Indian labour market, there has been a shift out of agriculture, while construction has absorbed more workers in recent years. As per ILO estimates, in 2020, more than 90 per cent of workers were in the informal sector while there is a notable disparity in the labour force participation rates of men and women (Mishra, 2020).

India is the only country under analysis with a well-developed passive labour market policy of unemployment insurance; however, only 2 per cent of workers are covered by this. In 2005, India added an unemployment allowance to its established Employees' State Insurance scheme that provides medical, sickness, maternity and disability protection to formal sector workers earning up to INR 10,000 (USD 243) per month (Vandenberg, 2008). India's active labour market policies include job search services and skills trainings. The Skill Development Initiative provides short courses on skills training for informal sector workers, while the Center of Excellence Scheme aims to improve vocational education, with representatives of the business community being directly involved in the management of these centres. The Government of India also operates the National Apprenticeship Training Scheme that supports on-the-job training at businesses and other workplaces. For instance, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has recently given approval to train over 9 lakh people under the National Apprenticeship Training Scheme during the period of 2021/22 to 2025/26 with an outlay of INR 3,054 crore (*News18*, 2021). The Government of India has also developed a skills certification system to certify skills gained on the job and provides public works and self-employment programmes. Additionally, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is another common initiative available for rural workers of India, which the returnee migrants can also access. This is controlled under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005, which aims at enriching the livelihood of people in rural areas by ensuring 100 days of wage employment for a financial year in unskilled manual work (India, Ministry of Rural Development, 2021). However, qualitative data highlighted that the scheme was mainly earthwork-related activities more suitable for lower-skilled workers. Moreover, the Government of India has given several incentives and tax relaxations for micro, small- and medium-scale business start-ups facilitating access to seed capital, which were available for returnees as well.

As migrant workers form a large part of the labour market, IOM is actively engaged with the Government of India in facilitating safe and regulated migration pathways through the following: (a) increasing awareness among migrant workers; (b) building capacity businesses and recruitment agencies on ethical business and fair recruitment practices; and (c) inculcating capacity for entrepreneurship development targeting return migrant workers.

4.2. Mapping of reintegration support

Khan and Arokkiaraj (2021) state that there has been limited focus on reintegration of international returnee labour migrants in the national development programmes. Both literature and qualitative data highlight that main support for reintegration is provided at the State level as evident in Kerala (Muhammed, 2014). Therefore, much of the mapping of reintegration in India focuses on experience from Kerala.

4.2.1. Institutional reintegration support

Policy framework

Given the magnitude of migration and return migration and the relatively large electoral constituency among this community, and as noted in qualitative data, there is a substantial mainstreaming of migration in Kerala. Qualitative data and literature confirm these to include a separate department for migration in Kerala, a minister of country and migration affairs, with a portfolio on return migration and NRK rehabilitation, the NORKA Rehabilitation Policy of 2018, the Non-Resident Keralites Welfare Board and a Kerala Budget, with allocations for returnees (Rajan and Pattath, 2021).

Apart from Kerala, departures for labour migration take place from a few other States, such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, but as highlighted in the qualitative data, evidence on returnees and reintegration programmes are mostly available in Kerala. Support for returnees during the 2007–2008 financial crisis provides valuable lessons for similar efforts during the pandemic. Confirming Zachariah and Rajan (2010), qualitative data shows that then Government of Kerala set up a committee to develop a programme for reintegrating and rehabilitating returnees. Qualitative evidence also highlights that returnee data collection that started with the COVID-19 pandemic has been the turning point for returnees' data in India. Efforts were made (with support from National Skill Development Corporation) for collecting information of migrants repatriated through Vande Bharat flights under SWADES (Khan and Arokkiaraj, 2021). SWADES maps the skills and experience of returnees, and by January 2021, it had over 30,500 migrants registered (India, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2021). Currently, SWADES is integrated with Skill India's Aatmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping (ASEEM) portal, which has over 800 employers and a combined

demand of more than 500,000 employees. Qualitative data also highlighted the importance of this skill mapping programme where returnees can also access the programme named National Skill Development in India. Consistent with findings in the region by IPS (2021), qualitative data indicated that data captured from returnees in Vande Bharat flights may be positively selected due to affordability. Similarly, qualitative data also underscored that returnees during normal times may be negatively selected due vulnerability to job losses and economic situation in the host countries. Therefore, qualitative evidence emphasizes the importance of data disaggregated by the needs and skills set of the returnee migrant.

Local and foreign stakeholder coordination

Qualitative data from several stakeholders converged about the coordination among various stakeholders to address return and reintegration concerns of migrant workers, especially during the pandemic. One such well-documented and qualitative data–backed example is collaborative efforts taken in response to the non-payment of wages experienced by migrant workers who returned during the pandemic (Rajan and Akhil, 2021). As found in qualitative data and confirmed in literature, CSOs such as CIMS in Kerala, Emigrants Welfare Forum in Telangana and National Domestic Workers' Movement in Tamil Nadu have set up helplines and online complaint mechanisms in order to document and understand the scope of the problem (ibid.). Similarly, qualitative evidence highlights the awareness campaigns for returnee migrants through media – such as those carried out by CIMS – are under documented.

Similarly, qualitative evidence underscores reintegration as an area with potential for bilateral and regional cooperation. Yet, MOUs and G2G arrangements that India is party to on migration do not directly relate to reintegration, while those recently signed are yet to be fully executed. Confirming IPS (2021) qualitative evidence highlights the potential for regional collaboration for common issues such as non-payment of wages, through collective efforts under the Colombo Process or South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

4.2.2. Individual- and community-level reintegration support

Economic and labour market reintegration support

Qualitative evidence suggests that while economic reintegration encompasses labour market reintegration, these two aspects are overlapping and difficult to differentiate. In India, reintegration support for returnee migrant workers has been focused on economic and labour market reintegration (Rajan and Akhil, 2021). Literature and data confirms that Kerala has a comprehensive economic and labour market reintegration support structure (Akhil et al., 2020). For example, Santhwana is a distress relief fund established for NRKs (ibid.). Qualitative data further confirmed that Santhwana covers medical treatments, death assistance, marriage assistance and purchase of physical aids for disability for returnees. Another initiative is the NORKA Department Project for Return Emigrants, which helps returnee migrants to develop sustainable business models for

livelihood and offers 15 per cent subsidy on the rate (ibid.). As per qualitative data, there are more than 5,800 branches of 16 financial institutions serving returnees under the NORKA Department Project for Return Emigrants project. As highlighted by Khan and Arokkiaraj (2021) and qualitative data, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Government in Kerala had provided USD 65.97 (INR 5,000) to all the returnee migrants in Kerala who could not return for foreign employment. Qualitative data further confirmed that some returnees in February 2020 had job offers and visas for foreign employment but were held back due to lockdown and absence of commercial flights out of India. Qualitative evidence further indicated that the State Government of Kerala has established a web portal to register the migrant workers intending to return due to the pandemic.

Moreover, qualitative data and CIMS (n.d.) highlight a collaborative project between CIMS, Kerala State Backward Classes Development Corporation and Migrant Forum in Asia, for economic and labour market reintegration of returning irregular domestic migrant women who are not eligible for NORKA services. Qualitative data underscored that all these beneficiaries had endured physical and/or mental trauma and weak financial backgrounds, which prevented them from accessing women's empowerment and self-employment schemes.

As noted by the Ministry of Rural Development (2020) and qualitative evidence, Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan is a programme initiated by the Central Government aimed to empower and provide livelihood opportunities based on matched skills and competencies of returnee migrant workers and other rural citizens in the areas. This programme covers 116 districts in six States with higher number of returnee migrant workers received due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, literature and qualitative data revealed skills development programmes conducted by UN-Women to build non-traditional livelihood skills for vulnerable women, including returnees such as the Second Chance Education programme. This has reached more than 50,000 women across four States in India and benefited more than 15,000, enabling women to re-enter formal education, access vocational training, develop entrepreneurial skills and link up with employment and business opportunities (UN-Women, n.d.).

Social reintegration support

Targeted social support for returnees towards their reintegration is limited at the national level in India. One of the few available national-level social reintegration support mechanisms is the pension and life insurance fund for overseas Indian migrant workers under the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana scheme launched in 2012. This fund also include government guaranteed contributions for migrants' return and resettlement (India, Ministry of External Affairs, n.d.).

In Kerala, the Non-Resident Keralites Welfare Board deals with the welfare and rehabilitation of returnee migrant workers, and provides welfare schemes such as pension schemes, medical, death, marriage and educational assistance, for its over 3 Lakhs NRKs members (Kerala Non-

Resident Keralites Welfare Board, n.d.). This was further confirmed with qualitative evidence as the NORKA Roots have started a Pravasi Scholarship Scheme for children of eligible NRKs.

Literature and qualitative evidence confirm that there are community-level returnee migrants' associations in India such as the Return Migrant Association in Kerala, which provide an opportunity for returnees for collectivization (ILO, n.d.b). Similarly, qualitative data revealed that in the Gulf region, Indian migrant workers have associations along political, religious and caste affinities, which helped distressed Indian migrant workers in CODs, supported their return, in some cases performed the final rights of those who died with COVID-19, as their remains could not be brought down to India. Given that remittance and related financial support by migrant workers to countries of origin is counter-cyclical, Kerala migrant workers overseas supported immensely during the 2018 flooding (KNOMAD, 2019). However, as highlighted in qualitative evidence, there was no reciprocal support to migrant workers when they were in distress during the pandemic. This shows the imbalance of the support obtained from migrant workers and the support provided to migrant workers upon their return at times of difficulty.

Psychosocial reintegration support

The qualitative data shows that there is limited psychosocial support. Nevertheless, the need for psychosocial support is evident. As highlighted by literature and qualitative data during the 2007 financial crisis when returnees did not have money, employment or remigration opportunities and felt helpless to see their family suffer due to lack of money, where the compounded economic, social and psychosocial challenges resulted in some returnees committing suicide (Zachariah and Rajan, 2010). Similar stressful experiences were seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many had to return following job losses, with little to no money and having had contracted COVID-19 or had to undergo quarantine. For instance, as evident from qualitative data, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai addressed some such gaps and provided several psychosocial support services for returnees (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, n.d.). One such initiative was providing psychological support over the phone or online. However, the details of effectiveness or receptiveness of these programmes are yet to be made available.

Additionally, qualitative data reveals the counselling support provided by several church groups for distressed returnee migrant worker groups in the State of Kerala. Such group counselling was offered once in a month, while other support included home visits for counselling/mental support for the returnee migrants. Qualitative data also discerned information of an online counselling programme carried out by the Government of Kerala targeting repatriated workers, with the onset of pandemic. However, the progress made so far from this programme is not evident from qualitative data. Overall, despite the experience of psychological and emotional stress among many returnees, there were limited psychosocial support measures. In the absence of mechanisms to assess the need for psychosocial support or a referral system, as highlighted in qualitative data, if needed, it was up to the returnee to access mental health and counselling services available to the public.

4.2.3. Other thematic considerations

There is no supportive evidence emerging from qualitative data on preparation for reintegration throughout the migration cycle. However, availability of a helpline for any issues in CODs, passport loss services, e-migrate portal and e-locker to keep documents safely were reflected from qualitative data. Such support during pre-departure and in service stages and related favourable outcomes are likely to contribute towards better reintegration outcomes. Additionally, it was revealed through qualitative data that gendered reintegration support is limited. For example, the policy initiatives in Kerala do not specifically address women's issues and needs. Similarly, a study conducted by Self Employed Women's Association found that women migrant workers who have returned after nearly 20 years of service in Gulf Cooperation Council countries are mostly over 60 years of age and they are not eligible for most of the provisions made by current policies in Kerala.

4.3. Assessment of gaps, effectiveness and sustainability

4.3.1. Acknowledgment of returnee specific needs

Qualitative data underscores the need for recognition of returnee specific challenges. Qualitative data showed that migrants' trauma and experience in COD affects their reintegration upon return. Similarly, to access support available to all citizens, a returnee needs to have achieved a basic level of reintegration, and some returnees have difficulty in normalizing to society such as accessing poverty assistance schemes in India. Thus, demand-driven reintegration support could be difficult to access when returnees have limited awareness of available services and capacity constraints to understand their reintegration needs. This is echoed in literature regarding the need for more proactive measures towards addressing the returnee migrants' problems (Rajan and Akhil, 2021). Similarly, qualitative data shows the need for a proper system to track the migrant workers' skills or matching their skills in the labour market and more attention needed for older returnee migrant workers (above 55 years).

4.3.2. Comprehensive data on returnees

Rajan and Akhil (2021) note data was collected at ports during the pandemic to provide quarantine facilities for repatriated workers. Evidence from this study shows that data collected from SWADES does not reflect the scale and magnitude of return migration due to the self-selected nature of its respondents.

4.3.3. Mechanism for returnees' collectively voice

Qualitative data showed that despite the presence of a few associations, such as the Return Migrant Association in Kerala, there is no mechanism for these associations to channel returnee migrants' voice towards policymaking. This further highlights the need for a bottom-up approach in obtaining information for providing reintegration support.

4.3.4. Linking better reintegration support and capacity to benefit

As per qualitative findings, the State of Kerala allocates funds for rehabilitation of returnee migrant workers on entrepreneurship. However, such funds are underutilized, as returnees lack entrepreneurship skills that is necessary to request funds for investment opportunities supported under these budgetary allocations. As shown in qualitative data, similar capacity constraints existed during the 2007 financial crisis, where loan for self-employment or starting a business was unsuccessful, as returnees do not have the capacity to pursue such assistance.

4.3.5. Increased awareness for returnees' support

Qualitative data confirms findings by Rajan and Pattath (2021) on the limited awareness among returnees of information on support services available to them. Moreover, qualitative evidence and literature suggest that the returnees have comparatively higher awareness towards State-/regional-level programmes rather government-/national-level programmes (ibid.).

4.3.6. Attention for social and psychosocial support

Qualitative data shows limitations in family, social and psychosocial reintegration support, and such support should extend to those left behind as well. Specifically, findings reveal there is very limited focus on family members of migrants. Moreover, Rajan and Akhil (2021) note that except for few States like Kerala, reintegration support is limited to economic and labour market reintegration, while qualitative data reveals that majority of available interventions are targeted at internal migrants and not international migrants.

4.3.7. Enhanced monitoring and coordination among stakeholders when implementing the programmes

This leads to high default rates and affects the sustainability of most programmes. Akhil et al. (2020) highlight the high rate of defaulters and the lengthy waiting period for loans by NORKA, while qualitative data reveals NORKA has limited involvement in monitoring beneficiaries' investment of programme funds into productive purposes and the limited coordination among policy-level stakeholders and NORKA.

4.4. Recommendations

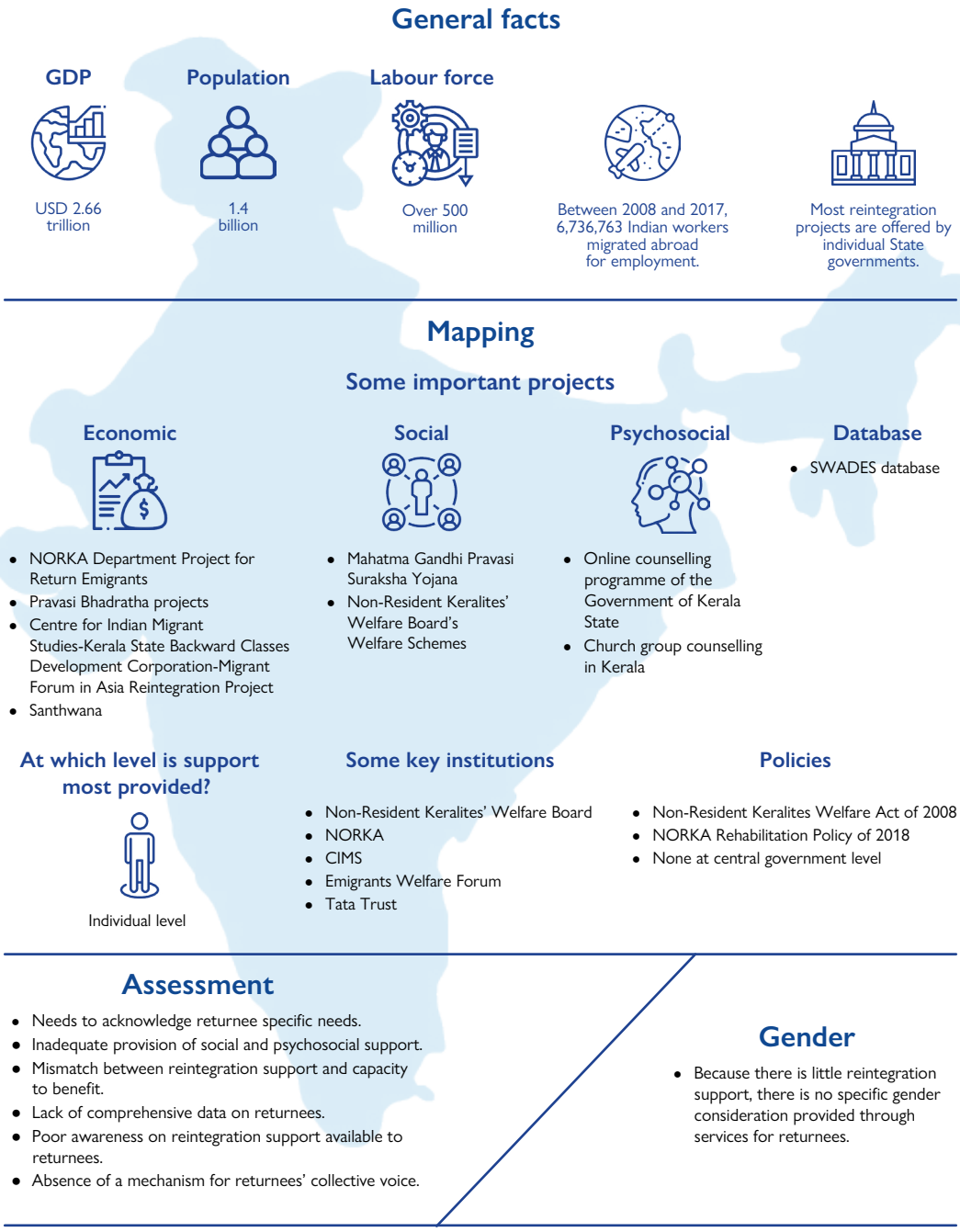
The following are recommended strategies to improve sustainability and effectiveness of reintegration services, emerging from qualitative data and literature.

- Develop a long-term country-level policy for reintegration that connects the State government activities and the central government activities. The State-level action plans could be crafted based on the State-specific needs drawing from good practices from States such as Kerala. Hence, it is crucial to focus on systematic policy initiatives

and planning from the central government and the departments at local level with the involvement of several stakeholders, including local communities, local self-governments and the migrants (Muhammed, 2014). Similarly, long-term reintegration preparedness could include counselling, awareness programmes on financial literacy, capacity-building and technology-related skills development starting from the migrants' period abroad. Long-term, sustainable reintegration strategies should be used to solve the grievances of migrant workers related to issues in CODs. For greater accessibility and outreach, issues on non-payment of wages should be addressed by grassroots-level CSOs and NGOs.

- Integrate these into MOUs and G2G agreements to ensure practical implementation, while benefiting from existing good practices in the AVRR programmes conducted by IOM India since 2001; that is, include clauses to ensure provision of impartial and confidential advice and counselling for potential returnees to make informed decision on return, and provide assistance return, reception and longer-term reintegration. The reintegration strategies after return should consist of job referrals, business counselling, community organizing, and network with institutions (Akhil et al., 2020). Additionally, connect returnee migrants with up-to-date information about employment services and current labour market situation at their origin places once they return. For that, State Governments should have an up-to-date database/web portals to connect the returnees with the labour market.
- Local- and State-level governments should play an active role in supporting, monitoring and governing the reintegration of international labour migrants by improving capacity to better understand the characteristics of returnees and tailor support accordingly. To this end, it would be useful to develop a comprehensive database of returnees including their age, gender, marital status, income level, skill level, sector and country employed, return locality and aspirations after return to better customize the programmes targeting reintegration.
- Develop more gender-sensitive and inclusive reintegration support and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. As men and women experience migration differently, reintegration programmes need to be tailored to their diverse reintegration needs, with an emphasis on gender concerns. Similarly, reintegration support measures should be accessible to older returnees.
- State governments can seek the support from grassroots-level CSOs/NGOs to identify unemployed returnees in need assistance. Actively include remigration in reintegration policies by factoring remigration as a choice. Include components for safe, orderly, formally regulated remigration in reintegration support.
- Harness the experiences, policy frameworks, institutional structures and capacities of support mechanisms for returning internal migrants towards returnee overseas migrants. Government and relevant authorities to focus on indebtedness and lack of long-term economic security among migrants and returnees to assist/educate the returnees in their financial/remittance management practices.

Figure 3. **Return and reintegration support in India**



Source: Author's depictions based on qualitative data.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

5. Nepal

5.1. Labour market

Nepal's economy added nearly 4 million jobs over the past decade, and average job quality increased significantly according to the World Bank's *Nepal Jobs Diagnostic* report (Ruppert Bulmer et al., 2020). However, continued job creation is needed to absorb underutilized workers into better-quality and well-paid jobs. The latest recorded unemployment rate in Nepal stood at 11.6 per cent in 2017/18 (Nepal, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019), and the labour force has been growing at an average rate of 2 per cent between 2001–2011, implying an additional 5 million people would enter the labour market by 2025 (GIZ and ILO, 2015). Historically, the lack of jobs and increasing income gaps acted as drivers for the youth to turn to foreign markets for employment. There is an observed pattern of the better educated getting absorbed into domestic jobs as the economy shifts from agriculture to service sector growth, while the less educated turn to foreign employment, albeit, not far beyond India due to high cost of migration (ibid.).

Labour market support policies in Nepal may be further enhanced and employer protection needs to be further developed. The focus has thus far been on improving worker rights and working conditions, due to the prevalence of bonded labour situations and relatively high levels of child labour when compared with South Asian peers (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2019). Nepal has an established yet limited TVET system in place. The leading TVET provider in Nepal is the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training, under which 31 technical schools operate along with several accredited affiliated private TVET (GIZ and ILO, 2015). However, the current annual student intake capacity of TVET courses is limited to less than 114,000, whereas 512,000 young people enter the labour market every year (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2019). Other than skills development, qualitative research evidence shows government employment programmes such as the Prime Minister's Employment Programme and other enterprise development programmes run by organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme in collaboration with government bodies in Nepal, loan programmes from banks at subsidized rates, and government-run labour bank database. However, the qualitative research indicated that these programmes could be further enhanced in terms of coverage and effectiveness.

When it comes to social protection in Nepal, the system has suffered from low coverage. However, it is being reshaped in recent years. For instance, in 2018, employees from the private sector were

being absorbed along with provisions to extend medical insurance for every worker, including informal workers (GIZ and ILO, 2015). Furthermore, trade unions and employers' organizations play a large role in Nepal, especially at the local level and the newly formed provincial levels. Trade union density of total employment was 11 per cent in 2018, which is relatively high in comparison with Southern Asia peers (ibid.).

5.2. Mapping of reintegration support

5.2.1. Institutional reintegration support

Policy framework

There are three layers of regulations in Nepal pertaining to reintegration. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 indirectly alludes to reintegration of returnees by referring to utilizing the skills and knowledge of returnees, while the Foreign Employment Act mentions that reintegration will be conducted by FEB. The Local Government Operation Act of 2017 mandates local government involvement for integration of returnee migrants in terms of social reunification of returnee migrant workers, as well as utilization of knowledge, skills and entrepreneurship gained by returned migrant workers during their foreign employment (Nepal, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, 2020). The qualitative evidence suggested that reintegration was considered within Nepal's policy framework when the Foreign Employment Act was drafted in 2007. FEB is identified as the agency responsible for reintegration programmes.

In terms of institutional structure, MOLESS is the apex body mandated for labour migration governance. The Department of Foreign Employment is the key regulatory institution under MOLESS, responsible for management and regulatory activities. FEB carries out welfare-related activities for migrant workers and their families, including compensation, orientation and returnee programmes. The provincial labour and employment offices renew labour approvals of migrant workers. Along with these key institutions, others, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Immigration and diplomatic missions, play a key role in migration governance. In addition, the Nepal Rastra Bank manages and regulates the remittance industry (ibid.). There is a need for publicly available data on returnees. More recently, the Government of Nepal launched the Foreign Employment Information Management System and the Baideshik Rojgari mobile application to enable the Department of Foreign Employment to maintain records of returning migrants for the first time (*The Kathmandu Post*, 2018). Moreover, qualitative evidence highlights that priority is placed on reintegration at the local level in the new Local Government Operation Act of 2017, which gives municipalities the responsibility of data collection on migrant workers with a focus on employment generation and reintegration support. It was further stressed that it is crucial for the ministry to address this issue on the federal level. It could be helpful for the pre-departure system in Nepal to provide more information regarding reintegration.

Service providers/Stakeholder coordination

A combination of State and non-State actors collaborate to provide reintegration services. For instance, Nepal displays how local government structures can be used to help migrants. At the time of writing, there is ongoing momentum for local-level support for reintegration with international donor support (i.e. SDC). Additionally, through the SaMi project by the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Labour and SDC, resource centres were established at the municipality level (SaMi, n.d.). Similarly, UN-Women and IFAD are also important actors in this realm. Collaborations between national and international bodies have resulted in the creation of specialized local organizations such as Pourakhi, which works with women migrant workers throughout the migration cycle, and was created with the support of UN-Women and Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (Pourakhi Nepal, n.d.). In addition, diaspora groups such as the Non-Resident Nepali Association work with domestic and international partners to encourage investments in the Nepali economy (Sen, 2021).

Memorandums of understanding and government-to-government arrangements

The Government of Nepal is party to several MOUs, BLAs and G2G agreements with host countries, without any reference to reintegration concerns. One exception was the agreement between Nepal and Israel in relation to agricultural work, which specifies "return" is limited to the employers' duties in case of death of worker (Nepal, MOLESS, 2020). As noted by the qualitative data, reintegration concerns are not addressed in most agreements. It was further emphasized that there were some efforts under way for lobbying for inclusion of migrant workers in social security schemes.

5.2.2. Individual- and community-level reintegration support

Economic and labour market reintegration support

Several economic and labour market reintegration support mechanisms are available at the national level. The RPL programme is conducted by FEB in collaboration with the National Skills Testing Board to help returnee migrants certify their skills and experiences acquired in destination countries free of charge (ibid.). In addition, there are soft loan facilities for returnees facilitated by FEB in coordination with Nepal Rastra Bank, where a loan scheme is introduced to encourage returnee entrepreneurs to borrow at subsidized interest rates up to NPR 1 million (ibid.). However, as noted in qualitative data, the effectiveness of such initiatives is however debatable (Manandhar, 2020).

Under the Felicitation of Returnee Entrepreneurs, MOLESS recognizes and offers awards for successful returnees involved in entrepreneurial activities, with the aim of providing a platform to showcase good examples of knowledge and skills transfer, job creation and productive use of remittances (Nepal, MOLESS, 2020).

At the provincial level, there is a budget allocation for entrepreneurship programmes targeting returnee migrants. For instance, NPR 70 million was allocated for agriculture and livestock development programmes, and NPR 20 million was allocated under the Chief Minister Youth Entrepreneurship programme, which specifically targets returnee migrants (ibid.). Collaborations between State and non-State bodies are also present. One such programme is the Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project named Samriddhi, which is jointly carried out by the Government of Nepal and IFAD. The project operates in 16 districts from 2015 to 2022, and is aimed at providing sustainable income sources to poor and migrant households. It engages specifically with returned migrants by supporting the creation of rural enterprises (Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (SAMRIDDHI), n.d.). At the community level, some limited support is available. The qualitative research showed that while cooperatives provide some loan support, high interests are charged; yet the process of disbursing loans is simpler so those who are hesitant to approach banks, including migrants, tend to use this facility. In addition, all municipalities in Nepal have a designated coordinator for employment who would provide information to all citizens including returnees. The qualitative data pointed to the broad nature of labour market programmes. For instance, a programme that provides skills and training to returnees may not be oriented towards existing demand and would not provide a return on the training.

Social reintegration support

The qualitative research suggested that social reintegration support mechanisms in Nepal could be further enhanced. At the national level, the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund is available under the Foreign Employment Act of 2007, where funds are generated through migrant workers' contributions (Nepal, Government of, 2007). Compensation is granted from this fund covering insurance, death and compensation for families. Further, scholarship programmes are available for migrant workers' children under this programme. However, social/psychosocial counselling is not a component of this government programme. The qualitative research also alluded to certain small-scale social reintegration programmes conducted by NGOs that are mainly available in Kathmandu. For example, with the support of IFAD, UN-Women conducted a pilot returnee programme in 2011 named Making Remittance Work with Women. This involved a two-day orientation provided to 1,500 returnees and an eight-day training programme on enterprise development provided to 708 women migrant workers returning from Gulf countries in 2009–2011. Despite this early engagement, it is clear that successful reintegration required continuity in the counselling, exposure and training support to be provided.

Returnees are also able to access similar social support programmes through the CSOs and NGOs including Pourakhi and Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee, n.d.). SaMi is a collaboration between the Government of Nepal and Switzerland. At the national level, it works with partner organizations and networks, while at the local level, it initiates MRCs that provide access to information on safe migration, skills training and essential

services, such as legal aid and psychosocial support for aspiring and current migrants, returnees and their families. Additionally, it utilizes returnee volunteers for community outreach work as well (SaMi, n.d.). The qualitative research further suggested that the level of social integration among some returnees has been high. However, it was identified that when migrant workers return after a long period of time, they experienced greater difficulties obtaining reintegration support due to the information gap of the local systems since the date of departure and return.

Psychosocial reintegration support

The availability of psychosocial reintegration support for returnees to Nepal could be strengthened, which was confirmed by the qualitative research. Pourakhi, the Prabhasi Nepali Coordination Committee and SaMi project provide some psychological support for returnees, especially women who have been subjected to exploitation and harassment. The qualitative research indicated that psychosocial counselors under the SaMi project supported migrants and families on a case-by-case basis with tailored counselling sessions. Similarly, the short-term project on Making Remittance Work with Women contained a psychosocial component as well.

One possible explanation for the limited emphasis on psychosocial reintegration was viewed as the social stigma surrounding mental health–related issues. Furthermore, the qualitative research indicated that more recently, psychosocial counselling programmes were available at some quarantine centres for returnees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2.3. Other thematic considerations

The gender differences in reintegration support were another theme emerging from the qualitative data. Specifically, it was mentioned that women are a vulnerable group with low levels of literacy and therefore require some specially targeted services, education and demand creation for reintegration services because they are currently not in a position to benefit from these in an effective manner. It was also emphasized that there is heavy stigmatization of women migrant workers in Nepal. The lack of willingness to identify as migrant workers upon return has left many women unable to access services for returnees.

Another theme emerging from qualitative data is the limited adoption of technology and digital services. However, efforts are being made to improve the use of such technologies; one example is the use of the Facebook call function during the pandemic to deliver information on obtaining loans. Others include the Migrant Recruitment Advisor and Shuba Yatra by ILO. However, digital literacy and access to these services remained a key issue. The qualitative research further discussed the importance of social media platforms such as Facebook in enabling returnees to access information.

5.3. Assessment of gaps, effectiveness and sustainability

5.3.1. Awareness on reintegration support

Returnees have low awareness on existing reintegration programmes and policies. For instance, in a study by UN-Women, it was found that Nepal's Industrial Policy of 2011 offered a 35 per cent discounted registration fee for businesses registered in women's names, but only 11 per cent of returnee woman migrants were aware of this offer (UN-Women, 2019). There is a need for more information on how they can claim existing support services. Further, there is a need to link the information delivered and the capacity of returnees to make use of the information.

5.3.2. Strengthened reintegration support

Although skills trainings exist, job opportunities are limited; and although enterprise development programmes exist, markets to sell products is not always available. Further, as mentioned in the qualitative research, there is a need for more institutionalized reintegration programmes in addition to the initiatives by CSOs and other stakeholders.

5.3.3. Targeting differentiated returnee needs

A special characteristic in Nepal is the clear distinction between returnees from India and those from other countries. The former mainly look for support to find paid employment focusing on labour-intensive occupations, while the latter have broader ideas in terms of employment that aligns more with self-employment and entrepreneurship, involving digital businesses, commercial farming, tourism and smart enterprises, to name a few. This differentiation implies the need for appropriate targeting of reintegration support.

5.3.4. Capacity and institutional setting

There is a need to increase institutional capacity for assisting return migrant workers. Addressing this may positively impact the implementation of reintegration policies despite the existence of a formal multilevel policy framework that is in place in Nepal. In particular, there is a need for improved coordination between the central government and the provinces.

5.3.5. Remigration

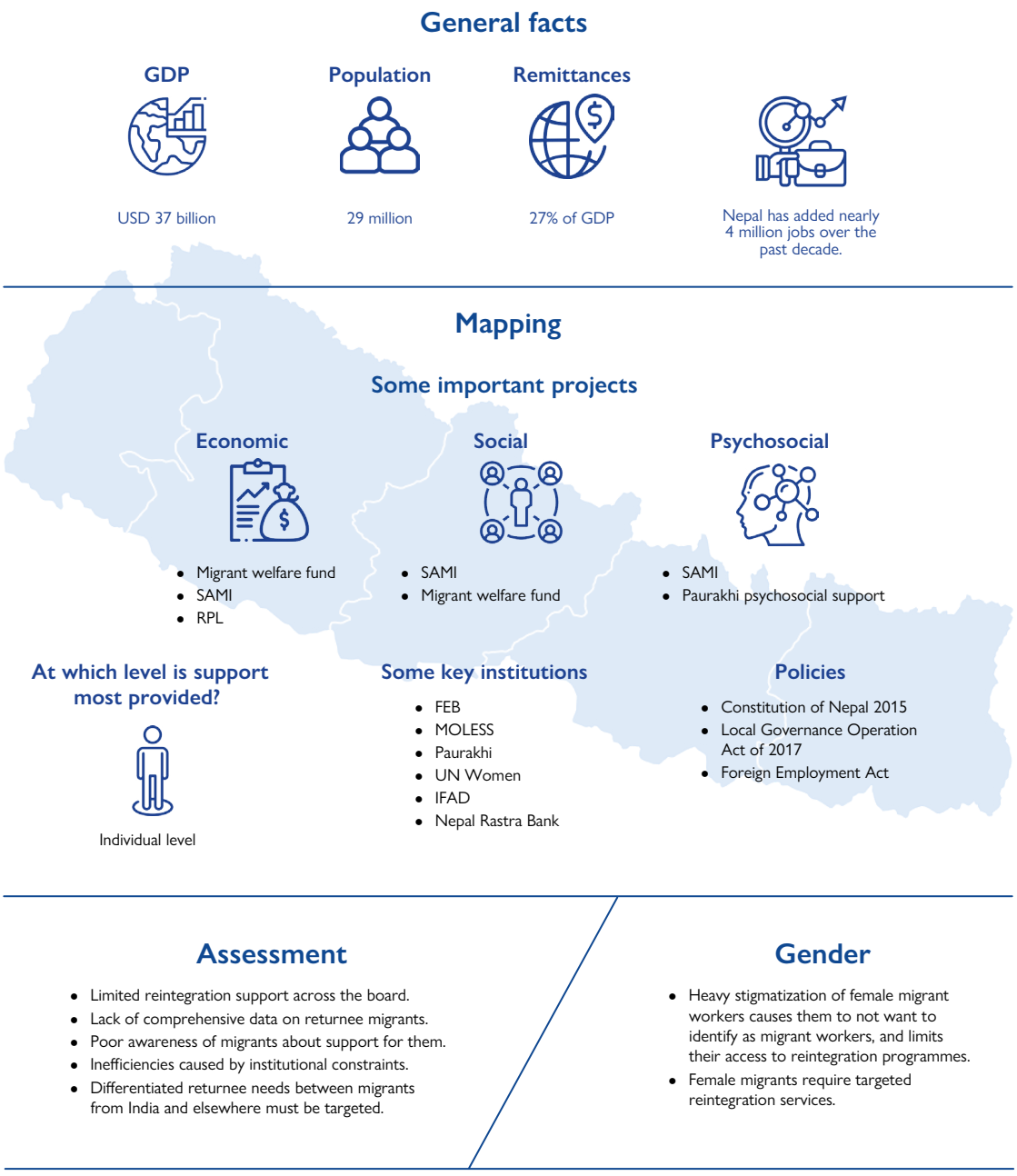
Qualitative data indicated an observed willingness to remigrate among migrants, especially since COVID-19 has affected availability of jobs in Nepal. Hence, longer-term reintegration programmes tend to be more fruitful than one-off programmes. Nevertheless, if returnees give up the process of reintegration midway to remigrate, the effort taken would be less productive in the perspective of service providers/donors.

5.4. Recommendations

Recommended strategies to improve sustainability of reintegration services include the following:

- The foregone analysis highlights the role to be played by local government municipalities in providing reintegration support. Hence, it is important to establish stronger collaboration between central government and these municipalities to promote higher sustainability and effectiveness of programmes. For instance, municipal-level labour information centres can be leveraged to provide more coverage for returnee reintegration support. Moreover, to overcome central government capacity issues, divesting more responsibility to the local government authorities would be helpful. At the same time, it is also important to improve capacity at the central government level, as well as other relevant institutions such as in banks to assess project feasibility and viability and disbursing of loans.
- Adopt enhanced inter-institutional coordination for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach and a well-linked reintegration support structure. Similarly, it is important to stimulate and nurture a policy dialogue on how reintegration programmes can contribute to economic growth at the national level, focusing on successful reintegration the potential contribution for national development. Further, incorporating reintegration concerns into the MOUs, BLAs and G2G agreements is needed.
- Further enhance the Prime Minister's Employment Programme to create additional jobs, while investing in the expansion of public employment programme and enhancing self-employment programmes and loan facilities prioritizing migrant workers.
- Provide comprehensive education on reintegration services including information relevant to the household of the migrant worker, starting from the pre-departure orientation programme. Further, it is important to match the level of information, with the returnee's capacity to comprehend and utilize said information effectively.

Figure 4. **Return and reintegration support in Nepal**



Source: Author's depictions based on qualitative data.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

6. Pakistan

6.1. Background

6.1.1. Labour market

The Pakistan labour market, with its 71.76 million labour force, is characterized by high informality (72.5%) and low female labour participation (15.5%), high rate of unemployment (6.3%) and skills mismatches between demand and supply of labour (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

The policy focus in the Pakistani labour market has been mainly on active labour market policies. To provide skills training, Pakistan has emphasized on strengthening the TVET system and associated support mechanisms in the country. For instance, the recently developed Pakistan Decent Work Country Programme (2016–2022) with ILO focuses on designing and rolling out job creation strategies for youth and vulnerable categories of workers supporting skills development and vocational training including lifelong learning for existing workers and new entrants to the labour market. Similarly, this programme also focuses on supporting apprenticeship and recognition of prior learning (ILO, n.d.c). A number of international organizations also support the Government of Pakistan in skills development of the workforce (Shah et al., 2020).

According to the latest Pakistan Economic Survey 2020–21, the Government of Pakistan has now given highest priority to youth empowerment at the national level. In line with this, the National Youth Development Framework was developed based on three underlying principles of 3Es, namely education, employment and engagement (Pakistan, Government of, 2021). Towards this end, the Government of Pakistan has initiated a comprehensive programme called Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Programme, which includes six components, of which the first is the Prime Minister's Hunarmand Pakistan Programme (Skills for All) and the fifth is Prime Minister's National Youth Internship Programme (ibid.). Both these components linked to skills development were also highlighted in the qualitative data. As revealed from the qualitative data, the Kamyab Jawan Programme is one of the labour market support programmes providing vocational training and financial assistance for youth in Pakistan.

In addition to skills training, labour market support in Pakistan also extends to entrepreneurship development. As such, the Pakistan Decent Work Country Programme (2016–2022) consists of components for training and mentoring for enterprise development and self-employment opportunities, training for accessing finance and policy mechanisms and supporting apprenticeship

(ILO, n.d.c). Additionally, the availability of several loan programmes under Naya Pakistan Scheme as well as small loans for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial training were also evident from the qualitative data. Similarly, the National Youth Development Framework and the related Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Programme also includes components, such as the Prime Minister's Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme and Prime Minister's Startup Pakistan, which targets entrepreneurship development (Pakistan, Government of, 2021). The Government of Pakistan has initiated the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme and Hunarmand Pakistan Programme (Skills for All). The Prime Minister's Startup Pakistan is in its last stage of implementation. The remaining three programmes are still pending in implementation (ibid.).

6.2. Mapping of reintegration support

6.2.1. Institutional reintegration support

Policy framework

Labour migration from Pakistan is governed by Pakistan's Emigration Ordinance 1979, which includes a governance structure, mechanisms for the regulation of emigration and the recruitment of emigrants and mechanisms to protect migrants, including welfare funds and measures to address the grievances. The National Emigration Policy 2009 highlights several strategies for facilitating the socioeconomic and labour market reintegration of returnee migrants. These include dissemination of information at major airports on investment, employment and skills enhancement opportunities targeted at returnees, while another is to develop reintegration strategies at the local level such as growth triangles supported by organizations such as the Aik Hunar Aik Nagar authority in high emigration areas (World Bank, 2018). Currently, the National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis is being drafted. The proposed policy has three main pillars: (a) promotion and expansion of safe, orderly and regular migration; (b) protection and welfare of overseas Pakistanis; and (c) reintegration of returnee migrant workers (Shah et al., 2020). The proposed policy focus on reintegration was further validated in qualitative data, while it also highlighted that the existing National Emigration Policy lacked an action plan.

Additionally, there are other policy documents related to labour migration and reintegration. For instance, the Labour Policy 2010 considers returnee migrants as a potential asset and commits to expanding existing schemes to attract the investment of migrants both abroad and returning. Further, the Punjab Labour Policy[5] outlines the need for maintaining proper records on returning migrants to formulate evidence-based return policies (World Bank, n.d.).

[5] The Punjab Labour Policy (2018) is a State-level policy.

Stakeholders and coordination

At the institutional level, MOPHRD, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Narcotics Control and the provincial governments govern labour migration in Pakistan. As triangulated by literature (ibid.) and qualitative evidence, MOPHRD has three institutions, namely BE&OE, OPF and OEC. BE&OE is the main regulatory arm consisting of nine regional offices across Pakistan called Protectorate of Emigrant Offices, which handle the requirements of potential migrants. OPF handles the welfare aspects of migrants, while OEC is responsible of locating jobs and recruiting workers. Moreover, Community Welfare Attachés are operated under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Skills development of migrants is handled by institutions, such as NAVTTC, TEVTA, training providers and TTCs. NAVTTC sets policies for vocational education and identifies the need for skills development to enhance the global competitiveness of the Pakistani workforce, while these institutions also link trainees with overseas employers (ibid.).

As such, pre-departure training is provided by the private sector overseas employment promoters, as well as by the Government of Pakistan through MOPHRD and provincial governments (ibid.). Similarly, MRCs, NGOs and the media provide services to migrants during the pre-departure phase. For instance, MRC is a one-stop shop for information and provides counselling services for potential migrants, such as overseas employment, migrant rights and protection, skills development and vocational training programmes (ibid.). However, qualitative data highlighted that the need for reintegration-focused support given to migrants during pre-departure or in service stages.

MOPHRD, financial institutions and Community Welfare Attachés support migrants during the in-service phase of the migration cycle (ibid.). Qualitative data indicates that there were many cases of migrants being negatively affected during the recruitment and pre-departure stage due to issues such as irregular migration, which impact their reintegration upon return. Once returned to Pakistan, the main State-level responsibility for reintegration support lies with OPF. As triangulated by literature and qualitative data, the reintegration support provided by OPF include financial assistance, health/medical assistance, vocational training, assistance in crisis and various housing schemes for migrants (ibid.). Linking up with other government agencies, BE&OE has an MOU with the Federal Investigation Agency for accessing the data on outgoing/returning migrants from the Federal Investigation Agency database. The initiative would be helpful in getting benefits from the exposure/experiences migrants gain from foreign jobs and would also help in their reintegration (Pakistan, BE&OE, 2020). Apart from government entities, support for reintegration is also coordinated by non-governmental, international and United Nations organizations. For instance, as noted in literature and validated by qualitative data, Pakistani Workers' Federation is involved in migration/reintegration support through its 30 migration centres, which run awareness campaigns and sensitization on safe migration (ILO, n.d.d).

Memorandums of agreement and government-to-government arrangements

Pakistan has signed MOUs with a number of Gulf Cooperation Council and European Union countries in relation to various aspects of manpower, training and employment of migrant workers (Shah et al., 2020). However, as validated by qualitative data, no MOUs or G2G agreements signed focus on return and reintegration of migrant workers.

6.2.2. Individual- and community-level reintegration support

Economic and labour market reintegration support

As triangulated by literature and qualitative evidence, economic and labour market reintegration support in Pakistan is mainly provided through OPF financial assistance programmes (OPF, n.d.). As emphasized by qualitative data, these include loans programmes targeting returnee migrants to start small businesses.

For returnees' skills requirements, the OPF website provides skills development and vocational training information and provides a link to TEVTA (ibid.). Additionally, as revealed by qualitative data, OPF is providing skills training for returnees from Germany and other European countries for trades like electrician, carpenter and masonry.

Job matching support for returnees is provided via data collection efforts, such as the portal launched by OEC to register COVID-19 pandemic–related returnee migrants to Pakistan. As triangulated by literature and qualitative data, this database is shared with other stakeholders to coordinate support for labour market reintegration in the local and international job markets. Other labour market reintegration support for returnee migrants includes sharing the data with stakeholders, such as NAVTTC, OPF, Benazir Income Support Programme, Ehsaas Programme and SMEDA (Pakistan, National Assembly Secretariat, 2021). By end of March 2021, this portal had 93,081 returnee migrants registered (ibid.).

Further, as evident from qualitative data, BE&OE has shared returnees' data with programmes such as Ehsaas Programme and Kamyab Jawan Programme to include the returnee migrants as beneficiaries of these programmes. Additionally, the Prime Minister's Office has launched a voluntary portal for returnees to lodge complaints/grievances (Prime Minister's Performance Delivery Unit, n.d.). In addition to confirming this, qualitative evidence also highlighted that through this data, the Government will provide job matching for those who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, after the pandemic, much of the information collection and dissemination related to returnee migrant workers has adopted technology and digital facilities.

Literature and qualitative data collected so far have limited direct evidence of reintegration support for entrepreneurship among returnee migrant workers. The few indications include

the plan to establish a one-stop shop aimed to provide counselling for returnees for starting businesses, as well answering any reintegration queries or handling disputes with employers. Additionally, as triangulated by literature and qualitative data, the OPF website offers information and guidance on investment, project feasibility, business start-ups and securing microloans and plots in economic zones. These reintegration services also provide support to establish links between returnee migrants and different organizations, such as BE&OE, FBR, SMEDA, Board of Investment, microfinance banks and trade unions (OPF, n.d.). As per qualitative data, the OPF website has paved the path to create links between returnees and several organizations, such as BE&OE, FBR, NAVTTC, TEVTA, SMEDA, Board of Investment, Prime Minister's Youth Business Loan, microfinance banks and trade unions, which can be deduced as support towards entrepreneurship, self-employment and business start-ups.

Further, economic and labour market reintegration support is coordinated with CODs, whereas the GARP programme, implemented by Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, and GIZ programmes are best examples, which were emerged from literature and was confirmed by qualitative data. For instance, GARP programme is implemented by Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and provides financial assistance for returnees, especially with the onset of the pandemic (REAG/GARP, n.d.). Under this programme, there are many initiatives to fund and facilitate voluntary return, as well as empower migrants to return to their countries of origin and receive financial assistance (such as to recover travel costs) upon their return to home countries (ibid.). The GIZ programme is working with the Government of Pakistan to provide financial assistance for returnees to start entrepreneurial initiatives. For instance, under this programme, a database was developed to help returnees in developing business models that match their interests and capabilities.

Social reintegration support

OPF covers several social reintegration schemes focusing on housing, education and medical assistance. For education, children of returnee migrants get preferential access to education at subsidized fees at schools run by OPF (OPF, n.d.). This was further validated in qualitative data, whereas OPF has programmes and educational institutions such as OPF schools where children of migrants are given preference under a quota system. As such, low-cost education schemes offered for migrants' children also remain available to children of return migrant workers.

Housing schemes available to all migrants are accessible to returnees as well (ibid.). For instance, as noted in qualitative data, there are housing schemes and apartments accessible at concessionary rates for returnees. Additionally, the migration policy also plans to give a 10 per cent quota for overseas migrants in housing schemes in high migration areas. Additionally, there are special quota or incentives to attract investment from overseas Pakistanis for housing projects. In addition to providing housing-related social reintegration support, such efforts also reflect nuances of community-level support or initiatives for returnees.

In terms of health, the GARP programme provides medical assistance for migrants upon their return to home countries (REAG/GARP, n.d.). Additionally, OPF has established several hospitals to address the health needs of migrants, while said GARP programme provide support for the repatriation of remains in case of death of a migrant worker.

With regards to social protection, there is a general old-age pension scheme, which migrants also contribute towards. Additionally, every migrant is insured by State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (MRC, n.d.). Qualitative data further revealed a new policy plan to start a pension scheme for returnee migrants.

Psychosocial reintegration support

Some psychological support, such as through MRCs, established with the support of the ICMPD, are available for returnees (ICMPD, 2020). Specifically, MRCs are a one-stop shop for information and provides counselling services for potential and returnee migrants including psychological counselling, career counselling, as well as advice on rights and protection. But, as revealed in qualitative data, the receptiveness of psychosocial support services is questionable due to cultural taboos against mental health issues. As such, there is a need to raise awareness on the importance of psychological health among returnees. Moreover, there have been discussions to link returnees for psychosocial support with the centres that were already operating in the country. However, qualitative data reveals the gap in policy focus for reintegration support has resulted in a demand-driven nature of psychosocial support in Pakistan.

As evident in literature and confirmed by qualitative evidence, apart from the previously discussed individual-level reintegration support, there is limited community-level support for returning migrants for reintegration.

6.2.3. Other thematic considerations

As evident from qualitative data, with the onset of the pandemic, most reintegration support extended by OPF is through online platforms. The OPF website allows returnees to register and look for support services, and also collects information of returnees, as highlighted from qualitative data as well (OPF, n.d.). Yet a digital divide and a gender divide are evident in Pakistan. For instance, there is limited participation of women in labour migration from Pakistan (ILO, 2018d). Confirming this, qualitative data shows that although there are various skills development programmes, women's enrolment was reduced due to family obligations and inaccessibility to technology, such as joining these virtual sessions. Qualitative data collected in the FGD confirmed that regardless of relative importance of women among migrant worker departures or returnees, gender sensitivity needs to be factored into reintegration support.

6.3. Assessment of gaps, effectiveness and sustainability

6.3.1. Labour market and business support

Returning migrant workers are eligible to access training programmes implemented by TVET authorities across the country (World Bank, 2018). However, as revealed from the qualitative data, the returnee migrant workers' accessibility of these programmes may be limited. Qualitative data also highlighted the need for support in business start-up and career counselling in employment for returnees by the Government of Pakistan.

6.3.2. Demand and supply for reintegration support

Qualitative evidence confirmed the demand-driven nature of reintegration support highlighted by IOM (2015). Qualitative data also highlighted that most reintegration programmes are supply driven, with less emphasis on differential needs of returnees and the importance to identify returnees, their needs and customization of support approaches. Evidence from this study also highlighted returnees' needs for improved accessibility to most of the reintegration programmes.

6.3.3. Data and research

There is a gap in terms of data on departures of migrant workers and their return (Shah et al., 2020). Qualitative data further confirmed the gap in the quality and availability of departure and return data of migrant workers. This data gap leads to limited research and empirical evidence on return migration, which in turn affects the capacity to plan and provide comprehensive reintegration support and successfully reintegrate returnees into their community effectively.

6.3.4. Reintegration focus prior to return

Evidence from the mapping suggests an overemphasis on remittances of current migrants. Qualitative evidence showed this is due to the overemphasis on the historical approach of remittance-based positive outcomes during in-service without emphasis for reintegration-based positive outcomes upon return. Moreover, qualitative data highlighted that the focus on reintegration aspects during pre-departure and in-service stages of migration cycle is still very limited, and there is a need to incorporate reintegration aspects into pre-departure orientation programmes. As such, it is important to improve migrants and families' financial literacy, remittance management and mindfulness that labour migration is temporary and ensure positive outcomes during both in-service and return phases. Additionally, qualitative data showed that returning migrants are relatively young, in their early thirties, which necessitates appropriate attention for reintegration before returning. Similarly, qualitative evidence revealed that migration has affected social mobility. As such, to reap the full potential of positive outcomes of migration, emphasis on return and reintegration needs to start before return.

6.3.5. Community-level support

The previously mentioned mapping exercise also highlights the limited community-level support focusing on the reintegration of returnees. According to the qualitative data, the supply side of community-level reintegration support is limited. The supply side reasons for this include lack of data on returnees to organize community-level support, while on the demand side, the factors include insufficient information on available community-level support.

6.3.6. Access to digital resources

Despite the availability of digital data portals and websites for information dissemination, qualitative data highlighted challenges when returnees access such digital technology-based reintegration services.

6.3.7. Gender sensitivity

The share of women migrant workers among Pakistanis is very low, owing to reasons including social values and bans against women's migration for certain occupations or countries due to their low literacy rate, lack of access to information, low wage rates, high migration costs and the risk of exploitation and abuse (ILO, 2016; Pakistan, BE&OE, 2020).

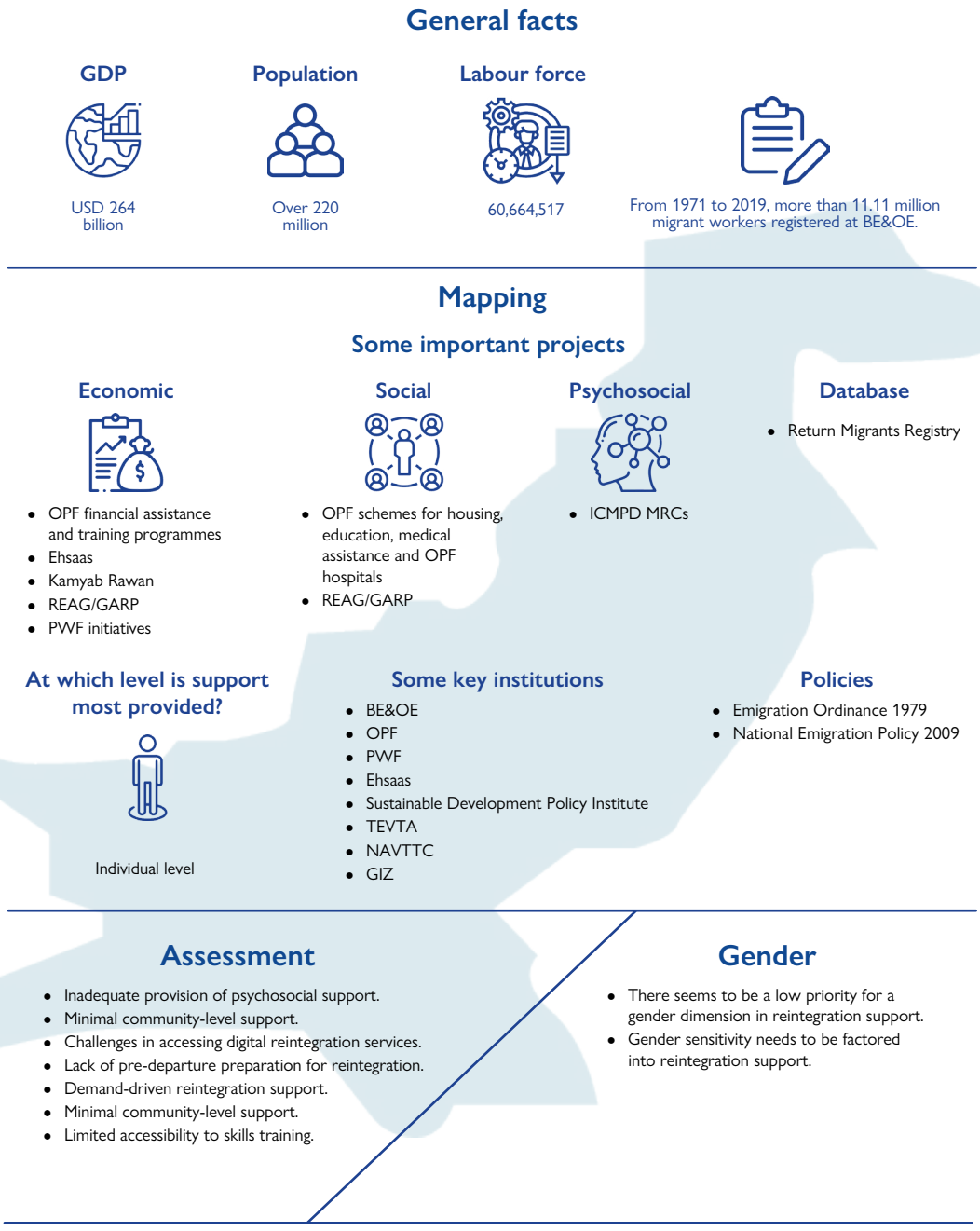
6.4. Recommendations

A few recommendations and strategies to improve effectiveness and sustainability of reintegration services as emerging from literature (World Bank, n.d.; Shah et al., 2020) and qualitative data are as follows:

- Develop a strategy to collect data and maintain an updated and nationally representative database of returnees to better identify returnees' needs, and target and develop reintegration support interventions. Based on such data, device tailored reintegration support for various types of returnees based on their demographic characteristics and reintegration needs. Such data can be used to conduct research on return and reintegration, introduce gender sensitivity into reintegration support, rebalance the demand- and supply-driven support for reintegration, and influence reintegration-related policymaking.
- Increase emphasis on planning for return and reintegration in the pre-departure and in-service orientation trainings. For this, reintegration preparedness programmes covering counselling, financial literacy, capacity-building and technology-related skills can be introduced. Additionally, during the in-service stage, migrants can be directed to necessary training or awareness programmes regarding the employment opportunities and other support services available at the home country. Such support should be integrated into MOUs with CODs and in other G2G agreements.

- Initiate the reintegration support at district level, with the support of local governments, to equip them to take lead in terms of reintegration of returnee migrants in their communities. Similarly, it is important to develop awareness about reintegration support programmes for both returnees and the community and increase emphasis on community-level support for reintegration of returnees. Such awareness campaigns should be rolled out in high migration districts.
- Increase services available for psychosocial support right after return. For example, the services provided by the ICMPD's MRCs should be broadly advertised, and these services can be used as a model for the provision of similar psychosocial and counselling services by NGOs and CSOs. Simultaneously, pamphlets and television advertisements could be used to spread awareness on the importance of using such resources in order to normalize these, and overcome cultural taboos.
- Channel support from private sector organizations such as NGOs and CSOs and involve recruitment agents and trade unions such as the employers' federations to compensate for the low capacity of OPF and implement, support and coordinate a more coherent/ strong reintegration support services. Additionally, the capacity of the staff of OPF could be improved to develop and provide more effective programmes, and the mindset of all stakeholders should alter to view reintegration as a continuous process, not limiting to a specific time frame based on the project cycles. Similarly, it is important for all stakeholders to collaborate for the improvement of returnees' access to labour market and business-related reintegration support beyond the existing skills development, career counselling and start-ups.

Figure 5. **Return and reintegration support in Pakistan**



Source: Author's depictions based on qualitative data.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

7. Sri Lanka

7.1. Labour market

The Sri Lankan labour market, with its 8,467,779 labour force has high informality (60%), low women labour participation (32.1%), high youth unemployment (5.5%) and skills mismatches between labour demand and supply (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2020). To facilitate job searching, the Government of Sri Lanka and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce initiated a public–private partnership called JobsNet in 2004, which provides counselling, job referrals, information on training and packaged human resource services for employers and an online database for jobseekers and employers to connect (Vandenberg, 2008). Similarly, Sri Lanka has invested heavily on establishing a wide network of vocational training colleges to provide work placements for their graduates (ADB and ILO, 2017). The district, national and vocational training centres under the Vocational Training Authority are well integrated and networked with those providing labour market reintegration support to returning migrant workers, and trains approximately 35,000 youth annually (Vocational Training Authority, n.d.).

Sri Lanka also has a 20-year history of providing entrepreneurship training in various forms through various agencies (Vandenberg, 2008). The Competency-based Economies through Formation of Enterprise programme of the German aid agency, GTZ, has provided trainings to empower micro, small and medium enterprises and business start-ups (ibid.). The SIYB programme of ILO trained around 9,200 people in the period 2000–2004, while its entrepreneurship training has trained over 65,000 persons (SIYB Sri Lanka, n.d.). Additionally, institutions like SED, National Enterprise Development Authority, the various chambers of commerce, Sri Lanka Export Development Board, Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, NGOs and microfinance institutions provide various types of business assistance to the public. SED under the Ministry of Youth and Sports has a network of district and divisional officers providing training and guidance for the micro, small and medium enterprises sector. Also, there are several loan programmes providing financial assistance/seed capital for existing or new business start-ups. For instance, Enterprise Sri Lanka and its several loan schemes and special working capital loan scheme – also accessible to returnees – are initiatives taken with the aim to facilitate 100,000 entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka by 2020 (Sri Lanka, Office of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2019).

As per the severance pay mechanism, employers pay a legally mandated lump sum payment to employees at the termination of employment (Vandenberg, 2008:24), while the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1983, entitles workers in enterprises with 15 workers or more to a non-contributed gratuity "after five years of service irrespective of the reason for termination of employment by the employer" (ibid.). However, Sri Lanka lacks unemployment benefits or insurance mechanisms in the labour market (Jayawardena, 2020; Vandenberg, 2008). Nevertheless, there is a pension scheme covering 1.37 million public sector employees, and several contributory pension schemes for the informal sector workers. As reflected by Karunaratne et al. (2020) and confirmed by qualitative evidence, a pension scheme for migrant workers named Migrant Employees' Pension Schemes is under consideration for implementation. Additionally, Sri Lanka has a widespread social protection programme named Samurdhi targeting rural areas and available to all citizens including returnees subject to eligibility. Sri Lanka's labour market also includes various trade unions, which together with federations and chambers, play an important role in lobbying for labour reforms and policy changes in the interest of employers and employees. Nevertheless, migrant workers employed overseas have limited involvement with these trade unions, other than the capacity to become members when employed in Sri Lanka.

7.2. Mapping of reintegration support

7.2.1. Institutional reintegration support

Policy framework

The Sri Lanka NLMP 2008 considers reintegration of returnee migrant workers as a priority area by highlighting the importance of economic empowerment of migrant returnees, local employment for returnees, involving their skills and potential for national and personal development and providing incentives for enterprise creation (ILO, 2015; ILO and Sri Lanka, Ministry of Foreign Employment, 2015). The *Sub Policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers*, introduced in 2015, focuses on social, economic and labour market reintegration and mobilization and empowerment of returnees; physical and psychological well-being of returnees and their families; and effective management of the return and reintegration process (ILO and Sri Lanka, Ministry of Foreign Employment, 2015). As revealed by literature and data, this policy was developed with inputs from a diverse cross-section of stakeholders and international financial support provided by the Government of Switzerland. As per the Sri Lanka NLMP 2008, SLBFE is identified as the main institution responsible for return and reintegration of migrant workers, as well as developing required programmes and mechanisms to facilitate economic, social and psychosocial reintegration of returnee migrants. Within SLBFE, there is a reintegration unit to support implementation of the subpolicy, which ensures coordination of the reintegration programmes and mechanisms at international, national and subnational levels (ILO and Sri Lanka,

Ministry of Foreign Employment, 2015). Qualitative data and administrative data highlighted that all the actions from the subpolicy is added to the corporate plan of SLBFE, which allocated LKR 73.16 million in 2022 for reintegration. In line with the NLMP (2008), several government programmes were implemented for reintegration support such as the now defunct Rata Wiruwo organization aimed at improving migrant welfare during all phases of migration including reintegration (Jayaratne et al., 2014). As updated by qualitative evidence and literature, this programme included community-level initiative and livelihood support programmes for returnees.

Service providers/Stakeholder coordination

Qualitative evidence and literature highlighted that CSOs, NGOs, international organizations such as ILO and IOM, as well as government bodies are in the forefront of implementing various reintegration support services (ibid.). For instance, as noted in qualitative data, ILO is supporting the Government of Sri Lanka for policy revisiting and has identified the needs of skills update of returnees to be included in the reintegration policy.

Memorandums of understanding and government-to-government arrangements

Most of the MOUs/G2G agreements have a limited focus on return and reintegration. A few arrangements with COD support for reintegration include the EPS arrangement with the Republic of Korea and its Happy Return programme. Outside formal labour migration-related MOUs and G2G arrangements, international support for reintegration is harnessed through other bilateral arrangements such as the Government of Japan-funded project on reintegration support for COVID-19 affected returnees and the support from the Government of Switzerland through SDC. Similarly, United Nations institutions, such as ILO, IOM and UN-Women support Sri Lanka's efforts on reintegration. For instance, as was verified from qualitative data, the COVID-19 response plan was developed by the Government of Sri Lanka with support from ILO, IOM and the Government of Japan.

7.2.2. Individual- and community-level reintegration support

Economic and labour market reintegration support

Literature shows that SLBFE, together with the ministry holding the portfolio of foreign employment[6] and other relevant entities, have focused on economic and labour market reintegration support of migrant workers with several housing loan programmes and self-employment loan programmes being introduced by SLBFE in collaboration with Samurdhi Authority, specially targeting returnee migrants (ILO, 2015). However, qualitative data reveals this housing programme has been with somewhat limited impact, as many migrant workers did not pay back to the Samurdhi Authority.

[6] The first ministry holding this portfolio was the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare (2010–2015). From 2015 to 2019, the relevant ministry was called Ministry of Foreign Employment. Currently, the relevant portfolio is held by the State Ministry for Foreign Employment Promotion and Market Diversification (2019 to the present).

Also, the national budget in 2012 made provision to implement programmes to encourage entrepreneurship among returnees by injecting funds as new venture investments, duty-free equipment for small businesses and five-year tax exemptions (ibid.). Moreover, SLBFE has specially focused on migrant workers, who have returned with disabilities afflicted during overseas employment, providing them housing and livelihood options for their economic empowerment, which was further confirmed from qualitative data as well (ibid.).

Qualitative data reflect entrepreneurship/business training support, where small budget allocations are available at the Divisional Secretary Division level, to provide soft loans with low interest rate for microlevel business start-ups. However, only few returnees benefited from this type of programmes due to their limited outreach. Literature and qualitative data confirm providing women migrants with pre-departure family and business developments plans to be utilized upon return (ILO, 2018e), while SLBFE facilitates regular entrepreneurship training, labour market support such as assistance for re-employment and bridging skills gaps, vocational training for children of migrants and recognition of skills through RPL and certification of returnee migrant workers (Chamara, 2022). Qualitative data reflected approximately 116 returnees have pursued the RPL programme carried out with the support of the international organizations and developmental partners. Qualitative evidence confirmed Chamara's data (2022) that the electronic RPL and Skills Passports are efficient ways for returnees to signal their skills across countries for increasing employability. Confirming literature, the qualitative data highlighted that under these upskilling programmes, the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority and Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission assess and certify returnee migrants' skills level (ibid.). Other labour market support includes career guidance, job placement and gap filling in skills. For instance, as revealed by the qualitative data, SDC with the United States Embassy focus on skills training at vocational training institutions, which enables returnees to explore local labour market and enable returnees to consider remigration as an option. Under the Republic of Korea's EPS Happy Return programme, SLBFE matches returnees' skills and experiences to worksites (ILO, 2015).

As evident in administrative records and qualitative evidence, in 2020, SLBFE, with ILO, SED[7] and SMFEPMD, collected Divisional Secretary Division–level data on returnees and allocated funds to train them under the SYOB programme. But as noted in the qualitative data, the mobility restrictions had affected its implementation. Also, qualitative evidence and administrative records indicated that LKR 4.76 million has been allocated by SLBFE for such self-employment or development programmes of returnees in the year 2021, while 76 returnees were selected to receive livelihood or in-kind support to start new business ventures. Similarly, as confirmed by the qualitative data, SDC has funded a programme to provide livelihood support for returnees with initial focus on career guidance and job placement in high migrant-receiving districts. Additionally,

[7] SED is under the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

as triangulated by the literature and qualitative data, the cooperative societies are accessible to returnees, and in 2012, a pilot programme was implemented in Badulla to collectivize returnees for handloom production (ILO, 2015). More recently, the Government of Japan, IOM and ILO have launched a programme on community infrastructure development, livelihood development, financial literacy and skills development (*Daily News*, 2021). Qualitative data added that programme is to be conducted in nine districts covering the nine provinces in Sri Lanka.

Literature shows that CSOs and development partners are involved in community-level livelihood support for returnees (ESCO, n.d.). As revealed in the qualitative data, ESCO and SDC have developed 67 migrant development societies with small clusters of women return migrants in Kurunegala district, which provides inputs on financial management, household cash management and knowledge on products developed by these women. Moreover, as per qualitative data, there are several migrants' societies that collectively utilize their own funds and invest in livelihood options, such as a seed bank for home gardening for its members.

Social reintegration support

Literature shows that SLBFE provides social reintegration support across several initiatives, such as counselling and legal support, supporting for injuries and or disabilities resulting from overseas employment (ILO, 2015). Moreover, Shramika Surekuma targets protection and welfare of migrant workers and their families, starting with a family development plan. Under this programme, pension schemes, concessionary loan schemes, scholarship programme and MOUs/BLAs also were proposed to promote welfare measures of migrant workers (Tissera, 2020). As evidenced in the literature and confirmed in qualitative evidence, a cabinet paper on social protection for returning migrant workers has been submitted for the approval by the cabinet of ministers and is pending approval (Karunaratne et al., 2020). Qualitative data and administrative information from SLBFE confirm the provision of LKR 5,000 cash or in-kind grant for returnee migrant workers' children to purchase their school equipment. As of 11 November 2021, SLBFE had identified 23 children of migrant families and was expected to select a further 50, while a total of LKR 112,832 has been allocated for this initiative.

Similarly, CSOs are involved in cultural and social acceptance of potential and current migrant workers, which in turn helps their later reintegration. Qualitative data revealed how the image of the migrant workers have been uplifted in plantation communities where the entire community attends a farewell religious puja in the local temple to invoke blessings to the departing migrant worker. Similarly, grassroots-level mobilizers are trained to promote regular migration, improve migration perception and identify broad reintegration challenges. Such a community-level support for regular migration minimizes informal migration-related reintegration issues. Similarly, the Safer Labour Migration project by ESCO, supported by SDC, boosts returnees' social involvement and acceptance by the community by sharing their migration experience (ESCO, n.d.). Similarly, as revealed in the qualitative data, community gatherings involve development officers disseminating

reintegration information (ibid.). Meanwhile, community events such as Shramadan, organized by CSOs, contribute to improving the sense of belonging of a returnee with the community and promotes social reintegration.

Underscoring this wide institutional landscape for reintegration support, the qualitative data revealed how SDC adopts a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach by initially introducing reintegration projects to a wide cross-section of stakeholders in many institutions. Additionally, SDC activities are also carried out with the support of international organizations, such as ILO and IOM, as evident in the current study, and international CSO/NGOs such as Helvetas. Similarly, as evident from the qualitative data, ILO is supporting the Government of Sri Lanka to revise the NLMP policy, while SDC and ILO together are supporting institutional capacity-building.

Psychosocial reintegration support

Some psychosocial services conducted in Sri Lanka include awareness programmes on safe migration aimed at returnees, prospective migrants and their immediate family members, information on available financial services and technical training institutions and individual support services and referrals (ILO, 2015). To complement these activities, SLBFE has established the Sahana Piyasa, a dedicated centre for counselling and psychosocial support for the reintegration of migrant workers (ibid.). Qualitative data indicated that officials of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in the COD direct returning migrant workers as required to Sahana Piyasa, and upon their arrival in Sri Lanka, Sahana Piyasa and the welfare division of SLBFE or reintegration unit further assist them. Subsequently, development officers from returnees' home area will monitor and direct them to counsellors in general hospitals if needed.

Additionally, the overall government structure in Sri Lanka also contributes towards providing psychosocial support to returnees (Jayaratne et al., 2014). Qualitative data confirmed that SMFEPMD had deployed around 900 development officers in the field for follow-up activities of returned migrant workers, and those needing further psychosocial support are directed to officials capable of providing counselling/psychosocial support. Complementing the State support structures, as revealed in the qualitative data, CSOs such as VOM and ESCO involve in providing various types of psychosocial support. In the case of VOM, their support for returnees includes livelihood, social and psychosocial support. Similarly, the partner CSOs of SDC focus on providing psychosocial support (ESCO, n.d.). As highlighted in the qualitative data, to ensure quality of psychosocial support provided by CSOs, SDC has enlisted professional counsellors to regularly visit partner mobilizers and provide guidance for psychosocial support. With such training, these mobilizers help by listening to returnees' issues and direct to professionals in the government system as needed. As such, these psychosocial support structures at the CSOs are well integrated with the government hospital network in Sri Lanka. To ensure adequate support and coordination,

prior to implementation, DCS and partner organizations have introduced the project to key stakeholders in the government sector.

7.2.3. Other thematic considerations

Qualitative data underscored the use of technology and digital services for reintegration support in Sri Lanka. As highlighted in literature and underscored in the qualitative data, these include the migrant portal operated by the Centre for Poverty Analysis, which provides the information on access to several government institutions and related services (Centre for Poverty Analysis, n.d.), and the International Trade Union Confederation's migration recruitment advisory portal operated by the trade union Sri Lanka Nidahas Sewaka Sangamaya, which provides information on registered recruitment agents. Through this web portal, returnee/current migrant workers can lodge their complaints or grievances. In fact, if returnee migrants have any grievances, this will provide legal and psychosocial help. Nevertheless, as noted in the qualitative evidence, the effectiveness of these digital services could be impacted by affordability and infrastructure issues in Sri Lanka. Additionally, IPS (2021) notes Sri Lanka lacks a comprehensive mechanism to gather information of the returnees and their reintegration needs. According to qualitative findings, data collection commenced parallel to the pandemic-related repatriation efforts by SMFEPMD from nearly 50,000 returnee migrants in quarantine centres. Data included returnees preferred economic/livelihood reintegration. As confirmed by the qualitative data, these preferences were subjected to a telephone verification before selecting returnees for economic and labour market reintegration support.

7.3. Assessment of gaps, effectiveness and sustainability

7.3.1. Policy implementation

Challenges related to policy implementation highlighted in qualitative data include ownership and coordination of relevant institutions and sufficient financial allocation. The reason behind these issues could be related to institutional readiness and preparedness in the implementation of the policy.

7.3.2. Linking different levels of governance

It may be helpful to establish a stronger link between action plan and/or a policy and translating same into field-level activities for supporting reintegration of returnees. Similarly, there is a need to link some reintegration activities such as the care plan and the subpolicy on return and reintegration. These national-level experiences do not have a mechanism to be translated into the international policy discussion namely, that is, Colombo Process/regional level and influence regional policy on reintegration. Similarly, the decisions taken in the thematic area working group in Colombo Process need to become actionable commitments at the national level.

7.3.3. Ensuring continuity

Most reintegration support needs continuity. For instance, in the State sector, the Ratawiruwo organization was established to improve migrant welfare during all phases of migration cycle, as well as implementing several reintegration was discontinued due to several implementation challenges. At the same time non-State level programmes tend to end at the end of the project cycle.

7.3.4. Enhanced coordination between State and non-State sector

This leads to the issue of divergence of quality and focus of reintegration support provided in the country, where most reintegration support is available in districts that CSO activities rolled out. In addition to limited geographic coverage reintegration, support appears to be more organized and more accessible in areas where CSOs operate, while other areas are lagging.

7.3.5. Economic versus individual-level support

The availability of support mechanisms for economic and labour market reintegration support in Sri Lanka is greater than those available for social and psychosocial support. As per qualitative data, this gap is more prominent in State-sector support measures than in the non-State support measures. Moreover, the State-sector support is more focused on individual-level support and has very limited focus on community-level support.

7.3.6. Demand versus supply-driven support

Qualitative findings revealed that even though suffering from social and psychosocial challenges, returnees are unaware of such issues and unable to relate them to reintegration challenges leading to a lower demand for such services. Similarly, returnees lack awareness on the availability of services and access for same. As such, qualitative evidence highlighted the need for effectiveness and receptiveness of the programmes. This is further compounded by the reluctance of returnees to access psychosocial support. Access to common labour market support, which returnees also can access, have accessibility gaps. As highlighted by Jayaratne et al. (2014) and confirmed by qualitative data, most labour market training programmes have an age limit excluding older returnees.

7.3.7. Reintegration emphasis during pre-departure and in-service

There is lesser emphasis on the return stage compared to the pre-departure and in-service stages of labour migration. At the same time within all three stages, the emphasis on reintegration is limited. Administrative information and qualitative data highlighted that pre-departure training period of 42 days is now reduced to 21 or 14 days depending type of migrant, and the training curriculum on return and reintegration aspects have been reduced.

7.3.8. Capacity and resource constraints

Grassroots-level State officials such as development officers need enhanced training and capacity for reintegration support delivery. This capacity need is limiting development officers from properly connecting with returnees, and successfully providing reintegration support. Moreover, the large network of migration and other development officers at the grassroots level are not properly utilized towards reintegration support. For quality reintegration support, service providing officers need to be trained regularly. Qualitative data highlighted that efforts for online training for development officers is challenging due to limitations in devices and connectivity. Qualitative evidence highlighted good practices adopted by SDC community partners. Moreover, there are limitations in financial resources available for reintegration support.

7.3.9. Gender sensitivity

In terms of access to reintegration services, limited enrolment by women migrant returnees due to family obligations and technological divide was evident in qualitative data. Yet in terms of delivery of service, qualitative data highlighted that men are underserved. Specifically, women have a higher chance to receive support due to the FBR process and the associated steps, while males do not have a corresponding support structure. Yet, when officials are male, females are reluctant to disclose their true experience, leading to suboptimal reintegration support. Moreover, as evident in the literature and qualitative data, males do not have access to shelters run by the Sri Lankan embassies in CODs, while the Sahana Piyasa in Sri Lanka is limited to women.

7.3.10. Data, impact evaluation and sustainability

Literature and qualitative data highlighted the absence of an integrated mechanism for information about returnees and their skills to provide relevant reintegration support (IPS, 2021). Similarly, the absence of data on reintegration support measures and their beneficiaries do not allow for systematic evaluation of the impact or effectiveness of reintegration support provided. Specifically, qualitative data revealed that reintegration support via loans were not sustainable for returnees who were already in debt bondage.

7.4. Recommendations

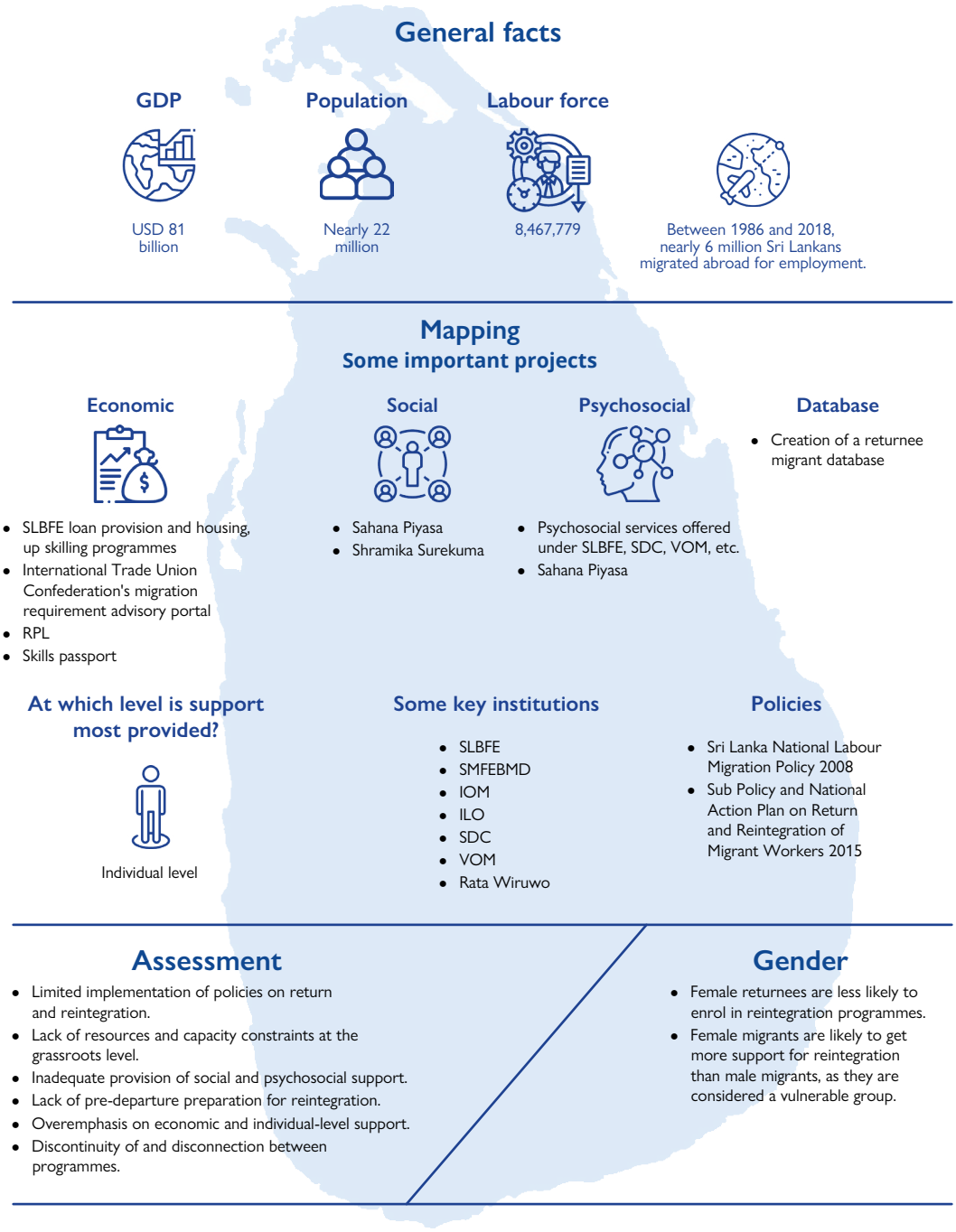
The following are recommended strategies to improve effectiveness and sustainability of reintegration services, based on the analysis of literature and qualitative data:

- Mainstream return and reintegration to sectoral development strategies to absorb returnees and utilize their skills and experiences. Here, it is important to adopt proactive measures such as establishing a direct channel to link returnees with related sectors before their return. For example, Sri Lanka has an ongoing care deficit and a shortage of

skilled labour in the care sector (Rajapaksa et al., 2021). As such, for example, returning migrant domestic workers with related skills can be channelled care sectors in Sri Lanka. Similarly, given the concerns on unemployment and underemployment in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka, DCS, 2021; Sri Lanka, DCS, 2020), it is important to match labour market training programmes to existing market trends and provide quality assurance and channels for job placement of beneficiaries to minimize remigration due to difficulty in finding employment in Sri Lanka. Similarly, potential returnees with entrepreneurial aspirations should be exposed to investment opportunities that can utilize their modern skills and exposure from overseas employment towards the development of the country.

- Adopt a whole-of-government approach by revisiting existing reintegration policies and mainstreaming them into other related overall policies. For instance, qualitative data highlighted that pre-migration indebtedness contributes to trafficking and forced labour situations abroad, while upon return, further indebtedness (that is, to microfinance institutions and informal lenders) contributes to vulnerability for forced labour and suicide upon return. Hence, it is important to have holistic strategies at grassroots level, with the joint efforts of various stakeholders, such as CSOs, trade unions, NGOs and international organizations, such as ILO and IOM to limited borrowing for unproductive activities.
- Incorporate migrant workers' families into social and psychosocial reintegration support. It is important to ensure adequate reintegration support of children returning with migrant workers, especially in terms of their education opportunities, as well as rebuild and strengthen affected relationships among returnees and left-behind family members (such as parent–child and husband–wife).
- Maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date database of returnee migrant workers' demographic information for reintegration aspirations, as well as reintegration support provided to beneficiaries. Such data can help improve existing supply-driven approach of reintegration support by integrating returnees' needs at the design stage of support mechanisms. Similarly, such a database can improve targeting and customization of reintegration support, as well as their impact evaluation and related fine-tuning.
- Convert project-based short-term reintegration support into long-term efforts by the Government of Sri Lanka, identifying and developing an overall long-term reintegration agenda for Sri Lanka and development partners focusing on mutually beneficial elements within this agenda. Similarly, it is recommended to scale up effective reintegration support projects that are well integrated into the local labour market and State-level support structures, with the coordination of wide range of stakeholders including international organizations, NGOs, CSOs, trade unions and private sector organizations.

Figure 6. **Return and reintegration support in Sri Lanka**



Source: Author's depictions based on qualitative data.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

8. Reintegration scores

8.1. Introduction

Reintegration is generally considered a multidimensional process enabling individuals to reinstate the economic labour market, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and achieve inclusion in civic life (IOM, 2021d). The foregone chapters depict a country-level mapping and assessment of reintegration support based on literature and qualitative data collected from relevant stakeholders. This chapter complements the foregone analysis at a regional level, albeit from the point of view of migrant workers based on their perceptions and experiences through the quantitative data collected in ORS. The main analysis is based on the Reintegration Sustainability Score calculation developed by Samuel Hall/IOM (2017). Together with the foregone qualitative analysis, this quantitative component helps to better understand, further validate and triangulate the key findings. However, ORS data is from a non-random sample of migrant workers with reintegration experience. As such, while the survey findings may not be representative of all returnee migrant workers of South Asian origin, the quantitative data adds value to the mapping and assessment exercise and serves as a starting point to initiate building some preliminary regional evidence on reintegration.

8.2. Data collection and summary statistics

The ORS consisted of approximately 614 total attempts at completing the survey.[8] Online data collection was challenging due to multiple reasons. As emerged throughout the foregone qualitative analysis, across all countries, return migrants have very limited access to technology, connectivity and appropriate devices to access the online survey. To remedy this, local teams were deployed in each country to either visit or call and collect information for the ORS using available contact details of returnees and migrant workers. Due to the self-selection into the online version and the purposive sampling for in-person and telephone interviews, it is more suitable to consider the information collected through the survey as a means of verifying and supplementing the information obtained through the qualitative components of the study, rather than as a stand-alone measure of reintegration of migrant workers in the region. Of the total attempts, 563 were completed by current migrants in CODs (93), while 470 were returnees

[8] This number consists of those who completed the survey and those who were excluded based on the screening criteria.

in countries of origin. There were 51 respondents who were not allowed to continue, as the screening criteria required returnees to have returned at some point within the last five years and remain in the country of origin for at least six months continuously. For current migrants, the screening criteria was to have spent an accumulated six months overseas in all trips, while previous return experience had to be within the last five years.

As seen in Panel 2 in Figure 7, the CODs suggested that over half of the migrants have worked or are currently working in countries in the Middle Eastern region. This is expected, as this region serves as a major destination for workers from South Asia. Malaysia (11.43%) and the Maldives (5.44%) also act as important CODs for South Asian migrant workers. Other notable destinations include Canada, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Italy.

The larger proportion of male migrant workers is a common feature throughout the South Asian region, and this gender disparity is more prominent in some countries than others. In terms of marital status, most migrants are married. This was followed by those who had never married. The aims of migration of married or engaged workers may differ from those who have never married, as working away from the country may be a means of better providing for their families. On the other hand, there is also a major impact on the families that are left behind, especially if migrants have young children. This is evident through the number of children as well. Nearly 60 per cent of migrant workers in this sample have at least one child (see Panel 6 in Figure 7). As for those who are never married, widowed or divorced workers, foreign employment can be a means of earning higher income to support themselves that may be difficult in the home country. The age profile suggests that the majority of migrant workers were in the prime working age and youth category respectively. While some respondents were older than 60 years of age, most had returned with the aim of reintegration in their country of origin before the age of 60.

The distribution of reasons for return to the country of origin is shown in Panel 1 on Figure 8 indicates that the most frequently mentioned reason was the COVID-19 pandemic and related disruptions.[9] Many individuals stated multiple reasons for return, indicating that the pandemic situation was compounded by family-related issues, other problems in the host country, unemployment and salary-related issues. Another common reason for return was due to the end of the worker's contract, while a number of migrants also returned for holidays or special occasions. Those who returned after fulfilling their migration goals or for other personal reasons consisted of a smaller proportion of the sample.

[9] There was a notable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the findings of ORS. In particular, greater emphasis was placed on economic and labour market related issues.

The distribution of occupations seen in Panel 7 in Figure 7 indicates that many of the migrant workers were those engaged in elementary occupations, which includes domestic work and other forms of low-skilled occupations carried out by South Asian migrant workers. Another common form of work was services and sales-related occupations, and this was followed by the category of professionals. Technical and associate professionals, clerical and support workers and those in managerial positions also represented a fair segment of the respondents.

Reflective of this occupational distribution, the most common level of educational attainment was secondary education (see Panel 8 in Figure 7). There were also some individuals with primary or lower educational attainments who are likely to perform low-skilled occupations. Migrants and returnees with some amount of post-secondary education consisted of the next largest category. Most had an undergraduate or graduate-level education or had undergone some vocational training. Therefore, these individuals were likely to engage in skilled work, professional roles or managerial positions.

In terms of the skills and knowledge gained during the period of migration, Panel 2 in Figure 8 shows that returnees and current migrant workers had opportunities to gain new livelihood-related experiences, foreign language skills and advance their level of education while working abroad. Nevertheless, as shown in the bottom bar in this sample, a significant number of respondents also stated that they did not acquire additional skills or knowledge.

Panel 9 in Figure 7 suggests that although majority of workers preferred to remigrate following their most recent return due to either a desire or a need, a large portion of returnees preferred to remain in the country of origin. Since a desire to remigrate rather than reintegrate could be indicative of poor reintegration, there maybe more scope for reintegration support provision. The respondents stated that limited support was received for labour market reintegration in their countries of origin, and as seen in Panel 10 in Figure 7, only 22.02 per cent received any support, and this was extended predominantly through their personal networks such as friends, relatives and family (see Panel 3 in Figure 8).

Moreover, as indicated in Panel 11 in Figure 7, most returnees and current migrants expressed a desire to receive greater support once they have returned to the country of origin. Among those who wished to reintegrate into the domestic labour market, almost 31 per cent showed a preference to receive support in starting their own business, while others required employment support. A minor portion required retirement support, and 24.33 per cent requested support to migrate. Those wishing to find a job upon return expressed an interest in receiving a variety of support measures, which can be seen in Panel 4 in Figure 8. The most frequently requested were assistance in job profiling, finding a job in the area of expertise and additional training. Recognition

and validation of previous education and qualifications was another form of support that was preferred. Support mechanisms such as labour market programme services and posting online job applications were not highly demanded.

For those wishing to commence their own business, Panel 5 in Figure 8 indicates that the greatest interest was shown in terms of receiving financing and investment support, as well as business advice. Some returnees/migrants also expressed a desire to receive training on business management, assistance in obtaining credit and accessing specific services. This suggests that although many returnees/migrants appear to be motivated for entrepreneurial activities, they face two major constraints for commencing a business in their country of origin. These are the limited savings for reintegration due to lack of long-term planning for reintegration and insufficient wages, while the other is the lack of capacity and expertise in business dealings. The amount of financial resources may also be insufficient given costs such as living expenses in the home country and debt obligations to fund the migration process.

The preferred sectors for business are shown in Panel 12 in Figure 7. Accordingly, returnees/migrants appear to favour wholesale and retail trade, petty trade and agriculture-related businesses. Construction, hotels and restaurants and manufacturing are the next most preferred sectors. The interest in the former sectors may be due to the absence of specialized entry-level skills and relatively lower capital required. It is possible that the latter sectors are preferred by returnees who possess skills and work experience in the same sectors or have access to greater capital.

8.3. Analysis of reintegration scores

The reintegration score of the returnees and current migrant workers of the South Asian region have been calculated for economic, social and psychosocial dimensions, as well as an overall or a CRS. Accordingly, a score that is closer to 0 would indicate a poor level of reintegration, while one closer to 1 would indicate a good level of reintegration. The majority of respondents were returnees (470), while current migrants accounted for a minor portion of the sample (93). In the case of current migrants, their experience refers to their last reintegration experience. Therefore, for analytical purposes, it is more appropriate to consider the dimension and composite scores on a collective basis. However, the scores by each group are also provided for reference (see Table 1), while the discussion is based on the combined sample.

Table 1. **Dimension and composite reintegration scores for South Asian migrant workers**

Migrant	Reintegration score	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Returnees	Economic score	470	0.552	0.143	0.050	0.930
	Social score	470	0.648	0.151	0.158	1.000
	Psychosocial score	470	0.642	0.128	0.175	0.945
	Composite score	470	0.614	0.102	0.261	0.875
Current migrants	Economic score	93	0.512	0.148	0.143	0.825
	Social score	93	0.630	0.180	0.094	0.100
	Psychosocial score	93	0.586	0.130	0.258	0.845
	Composite score	93	0.572	0.109	0.183	0.792
All migrants	Economic score	563	0.545	0.144	0.050	0.930
	Social score	563	0.645	0.156	0.094	1.000
	Psychosocial score	563	0.633	0.130	0.175	0.945
	Composite score	563	0.607	0.105	0.183	0.875

Source: Authors' calculations based on ORS data.

For the full sample of respondents to the ORS, the lowest average reintegration score was recorded within the economic and labour market dimension, which was 0.545. Despite being relatively lower than the other dimensions, the economic and labour market reintegration score was in the mid-range of the reintegration score spectrum. This indicates that these returnees in South Asia are somewhat well reintegrated into their home countries in this aspect. It is interesting to recap that in the foregone mapping analysis, economic and labour market reintegration services were given more prominence in most countries. Despite such prominence, the lowest reintegration scores being related to economic and labour market dimension is counter-intuitive. Nevertheless, the relatively lower economic and labour market reintegration scores could be associated with two explanations: one being the underreporting of reintegration related issues within the social and psychosocial dimensions owing to the social norms within the region; and the other being the timing of the survey, when South Asia as a region is affected by the current economic downturn in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 563 total respondents, over 50 per cent returned to their country of origin following the onset of the global pandemic. Moreover, the survey was carried out from late 2021 to early 2022, at which time the economies of the region had not fully recovered from the impact of the pandemic. In this case, respondents would be more focused on the economic conditions as opposed to other dimensions, and thus may have responded more harshly to economic and labour market aspects of their reintegration experience. For the full sample, the average social reintegration score was 0.645, which was slightly higher than the psychosocial score of 0.633. Thus, as per ORS data, migrant workers

indicate that they require the greatest reintegration support in terms of the economic and labour market dimension, followed by the psychosocial and social dimensions, respectively. One reason for this may be due to cultural factors that assigns less priority to psychosocial needs.

Confirming the dimensional reintegration scores, the CRS also stands at the mid-range at 0.607, reflecting a moderate level of reintegration of migrant workers in the South Asian region. These mid-range reintegration scores across all three dimensions, as well as the composite score highlight that returnees in South Asia are reintegrated to a moderate level. As such, it would be beneficial to both improve existing programmes by identifying deficiencies and also to focus on providing more sophisticated support that cater to the economic, social and psychosocial needs of returnees at all levels. A greater understanding of the indicators within each dimension of reintegration is also necessary in planning better-targeted reintegration programmes, since the needs of returnees differ in relation to their current situation, expectations and goals.

Moreover, the reintegration support required by individuals is likely to differ in terms of their demographic and other characteristics. Considering gender dynamics, Table 2 shows that the CRSs of male migrant workers on average indicate a higher reintegration score (0.614) than that of female migrant workers (0.570). This finding confirms the qualitative findings related to reintegration challenges faced by women and the necessity to devise reintegration support structures that are gender sensitive.

Table 2. **Composite reintegration score by sex**

Sex	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Male	477	0.614	0.101	0.261	0.875
Female	86	0.570	0.118	0.183	0.810

Source: Authors' calculations based on ORS data.

The age-related dynamics shown in Panel 1 in Figure 9 suggest that the age at the time of return of a migrant worker appears to be negatively related to the CRS, reflecting the level of reintegration of older individuals, which tends to be somewhat lower than that of younger individuals in the region. This may be associated with the greater interest of younger returnees for labour market reintegration given the longer time spans available to them for engaging in employment and obtaining higher potential gains. This finding is important for customizing reintegration support by age of returnees. Panel 2 in Figure 9 suggests that the level of education has an impact on reintegration. Returnees/migrants with higher educational qualifications appear to be somewhat better reintegrated than those with lower educational attainment. This is confirmed by the

average CRS at each level of education given in Table 3. This finding could be associated with a number of factors, such as higher levels of income and better access to resources, networks and opportunities for those with greater educational attainment in terms of economic, social and psychosocial dimensions.

Table 3. **Composite reintegration score by education**

	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
No education	17	0.564	0.130	0.264	0.768
Primary education	54	0.561	0.109	0.183	0.757
Secondary education	226	0.599	0.090	0.261	0.860
Vocational training/diploma	61	0.609	0.111	0.340	0.761
Undergraduate	96	0.626	0.105	0.359	0.848
Graduate	75	0.641	0.113	0.332	0.875
Postgraduate	34	0.621	0.108	0.374	0.816

Source: Authors' calculations based on ORS data.

As seen in Panel 3 in Figure 9, the level of reintegration does not seem to be affected by the length of stay abroad. Although some studies indicate that lengthy periods in CODs can decrease migrants' ability to reintegrate, others maintain that it is the migration experiences rather than the duration that has the greatest impact on reintegration (Koser and Kuschminder, 2015). In this case, it is possible that migrants regardless of the duration of their stay in COD have similar access to reintegration support. On the other hand, Panel 4 in Figure 9 suggests that the length of stay in the country of origin once the migrant worker has returned has a slightly positive impact on the level of reintegration.[10]

In considering the skills and education gained during migration, Table 4 suggests that those who gained a higher level of education or livelihood skills during their employment in a COD were better reintegrated once they returned. Those who gained only foreign language skills were less well reintegrated, while the lowest level of reintegration was among those who stated that they did not acquire any new skills or advance their level of education. This finding shows that the attainment of skills and education in the COD is useful for reintegration once migrant workers return to their countries of origin as well. Particularly in terms of labour market reintegration, these skills and knowledge would enable workers to access better employment or income-earning opportunities.

[10] The length of stay in the country of origin is within zero to five years since the survey screening criteria required the respondents to have worked abroad within the past five years.

Table 4. **Composite reintegration score by skills and education gained during migration**

	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
I did not acquire further skills.	165	0.583	0.093	0.264	0.875
I learned new livelihood-related skills.	209	0.621	0.116	0.183	0.860
I progressed with my education.	52	0.620	0.112	0.341	0.810
I improved my foreign language skills.	155	0.612	0.092	0.261	0.792

Source: Authors' calculations based on ORS data.

8.4. Findings

ORS stipulates that the level of reintegration of migrant workers in the South Asian region was at a moderate level, and greater support was needed for return migrant workers to reintegrate into their home countries in a more satisfactory manner. This is particularly the case with regards to economic and labour market reintegration, which indicated a relatively lower reintegration score than social and psychosocial dimensions. Economic and labour market reintegration of returnees was measured in terms of indicators, such as the satisfaction of migrants with their current economic situation, food insecurity, debt and borrowing patterns, ownership of assets and employment conditions. Accordingly, the dimension score showed that many returnees experienced some difficulties in meeting their basic needs upon return, accessing employment and training, and faced difficulties managing finances as they were given little to no support other than by some family members or acquaintances. Many were somewhat dissatisfied with their standard of living and wished to remigrate if the circumstances allowed so. Dissatisfaction regarding economic and labour market conditions for reintegration was a theme brought out in the qualitative data by returnees from Sri Lanka as well. It was stated that there were difficulties in finding employment opportunities and of meeting their expenses, especially during a period of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where there was very little consideration given to the returnees.

The social reintegration score for returnees and current migrants was the highest among the three dimensions, but it also remained within the moderately reintegrated level. This dimension captured aspects such as access to housing, education, health and various public services. Although, fully fledged, widespread social reintegration programmes may currently be absent in many areas of the South Asian region, it should be noted that many social services that are provided to the general population through governments or other organizations. These programmes tend to be

accessible to returning migrant workers as well, which allows them to maintain a basic level of access to such necessities, even though the level of satisfaction regarding the quality and quantity of the services provided may differ from migrant to migrant.

Psychosocial reintegration indicated a score somewhat higher than the economic and labour market dimension and lower than the social dimension consists of indicators, such as the returnee's participation in social activities, the sense belonging and strength of the community, experiences of discrimination, feelings of distress and lack of security, as well as their intention to remigrate. As previously discussed, respondents may have underreported their level of psychosocial reintegration issues, especially when answering questions directly referring to negative social experiences and one's mental health. Despite this, there is still a case to be made for greater psychosocial support, as many respondents indicated limited participation in social activities and little support from those beyond one's immediate family and close friends, which was confirmed by the qualitative research as well.

Furthermore, considering the CRS, the gender and age dynamics indicated that women and older returnees show a lower level of reintegration within their home countries than men or younger returnees. This was further evident from qualitative data, where respondents asserted the fact that women migrant returnees have less accessibility to most of the reintegration support due to the male-dominant nature in most of the countries and the low levels of literacy/education, which necessitate some specially targeted services, such as education and demand creation for reintegration.

On the other hand, for older returnees, re-adapting to their homeland can be much more challenging than it would be for younger workers who are likely to be more adaptable to change. As highlighted through the qualitative research, this can also be due to older returnees being excluded from most of the reintegration services. In planning sustainable reintegration support mechanisms, such groups in vulnerable situations should be recognized so that their specific needs can be taken into account.

8.5. Recommendations

While it should be acknowledged that migrant workers in South Asia currently experience economic and labour market, social and psychosocial reintegration to some extent, the ORS, similar to the qualitative components of the study, points to the need for more effective and efficient mechanisms to promote sustainable reintegration of returned migrant workers. At the same time, the findings show that reintegration support needs to be customized and targeted

based on returnees' characteristics. Given that the moderate reintegration scores indicate the availability of a basic level of reintegration support in the region, further improvements need to be well targeted and customized, addressing the various dimensions of reintegration delivered across the individual to the structural levels. As evident from the analysis of ORS data, such targeting and fine-tuning should take place along the dimensions of age at return, gender, education and skill level of returnee. This is especially critical during times of crisis, where migrants heavily rely on governments and by extension their diplomatic corps and relevant institutions to facilitate fast and reliable return and reintegration related services.

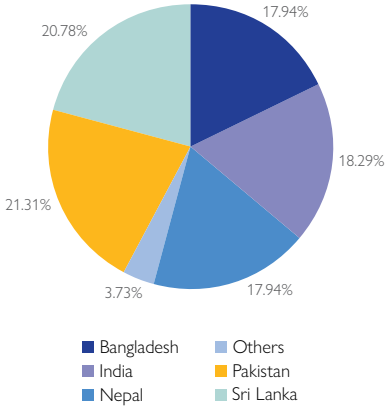
As many returning migrants in the ORS sample found that support related to the economic and labour market dimension of reintegration was insufficient, it is first necessary to clearly understand the specific economic and labour market challenges faced by returning migrants, as well as the returnees who are most vulnerable to such issues. For instance, given that many returning migrant workers experienced difficulty in integrating into the job markets of their country of origin or found it difficult to initiate a small business, providing further services and incentives to meet such needs, including providing opportunities for peer networking, recognizing existing skills, providing business skills training, and simplifying access to seed capital can be useful. In situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, various programmes can be carried out through virtual platforms. However, as the digital divide is a barrier for access, measures should be put in place to either provide greater digital access and literacy or pursue alternative communication channels, such as phone calls or smaller, socially distanced gatherings.

In terms of social reintegration, it is important to engage with the communities and their social and political structures for promoting better access to essential social services. Even though some amount of social support is currently available to the population at large, reintegration support can focus on reducing the inequality in access to adequate and high-quality health, education, housing, drinking water and other necessities, and providing special considerations for households with migrants when necessary. In the case of psychosocial support, creating more community-wide awareness to destigmatize migrant work is one step that can reduce discriminatory practices and create a sense of belonging. Further, providing greater access to counselling and other services to provide returnees a sense of psychological relief and safety can also be useful in promoting better reintegration.

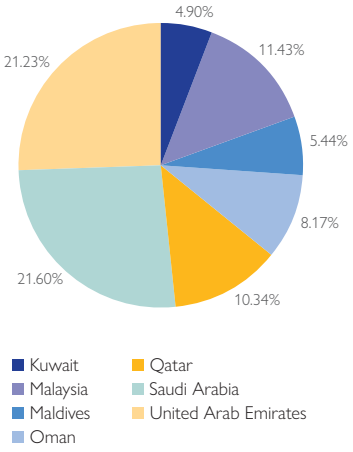
Finally, although this chapter views the South Asian region as a whole, it should be acknowledged that it is a diverse region with varying economic, social and psychosocial contexts. Analysis of country-wide disaggregated data was beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, future work in Reintegration Sustainability Score calculation in South Asia could benefit with country-wide disaggregation to understand the situation in terms of sustainable reintegration and thereby devise country-specific reintegration strategies.

Figure 7. **Demographic characteristics of respondents and reintegration support**

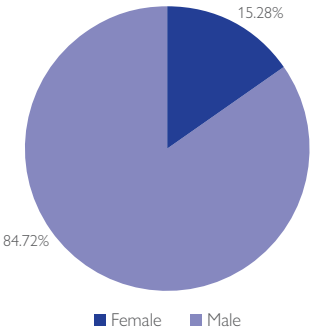
Panel 1. Country of origin



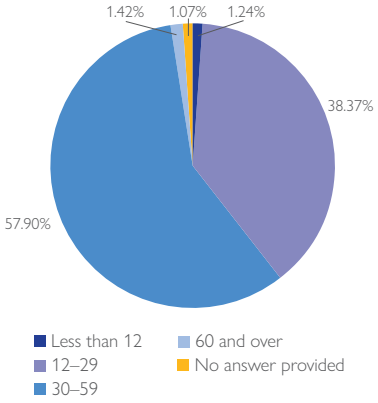
Panel 2. Country of destination



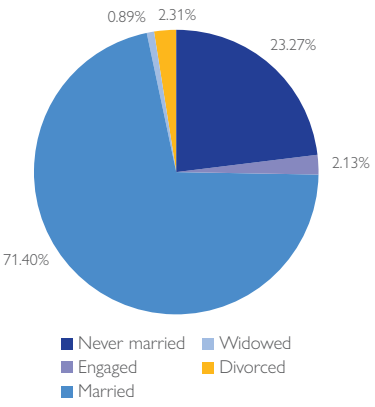
Panel 3. Gender of respondents



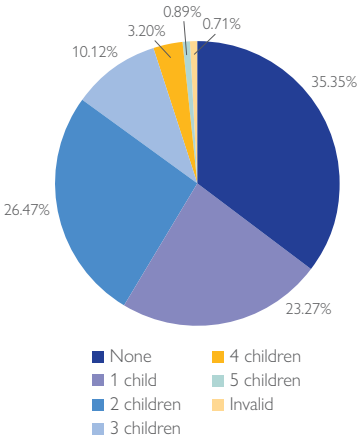
Panel 4. Age group of respondents



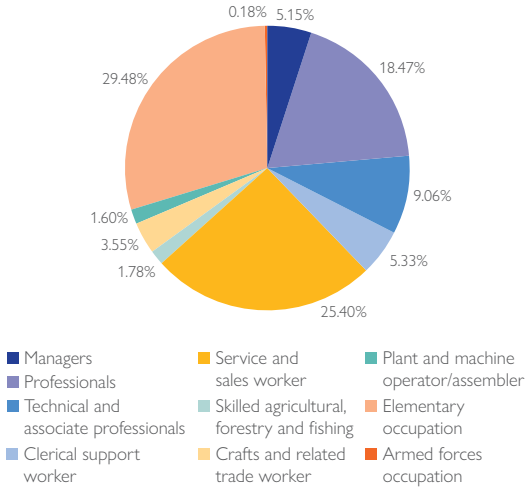
Panel 5. Marital status of respondents



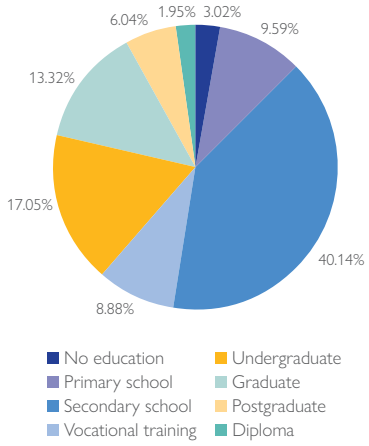
Panel 6. Number of children of respondents



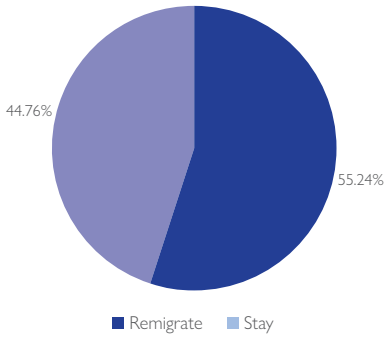
Panel 7. Occupational classification



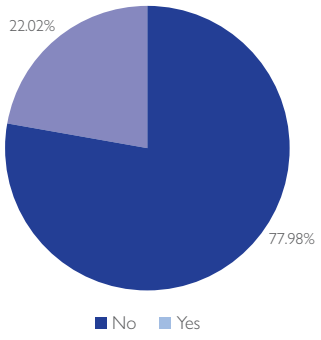
Panel 8. Highest educational qualification



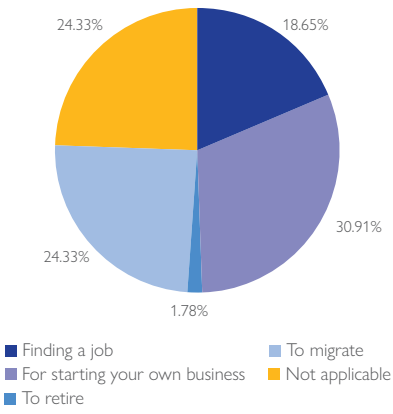
Panel 9. Desire to remigrate



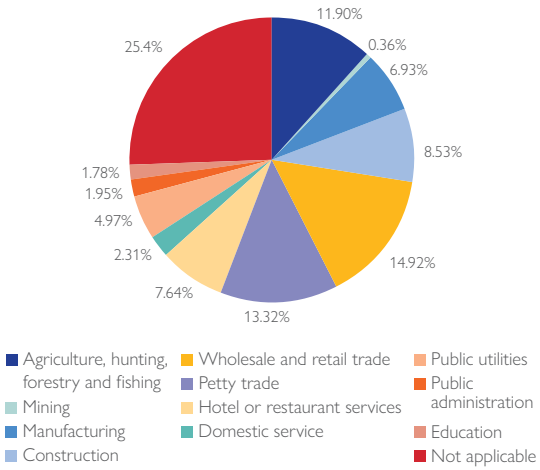
Panel 10. Reintegration support provided



Panel 11. Type of support required

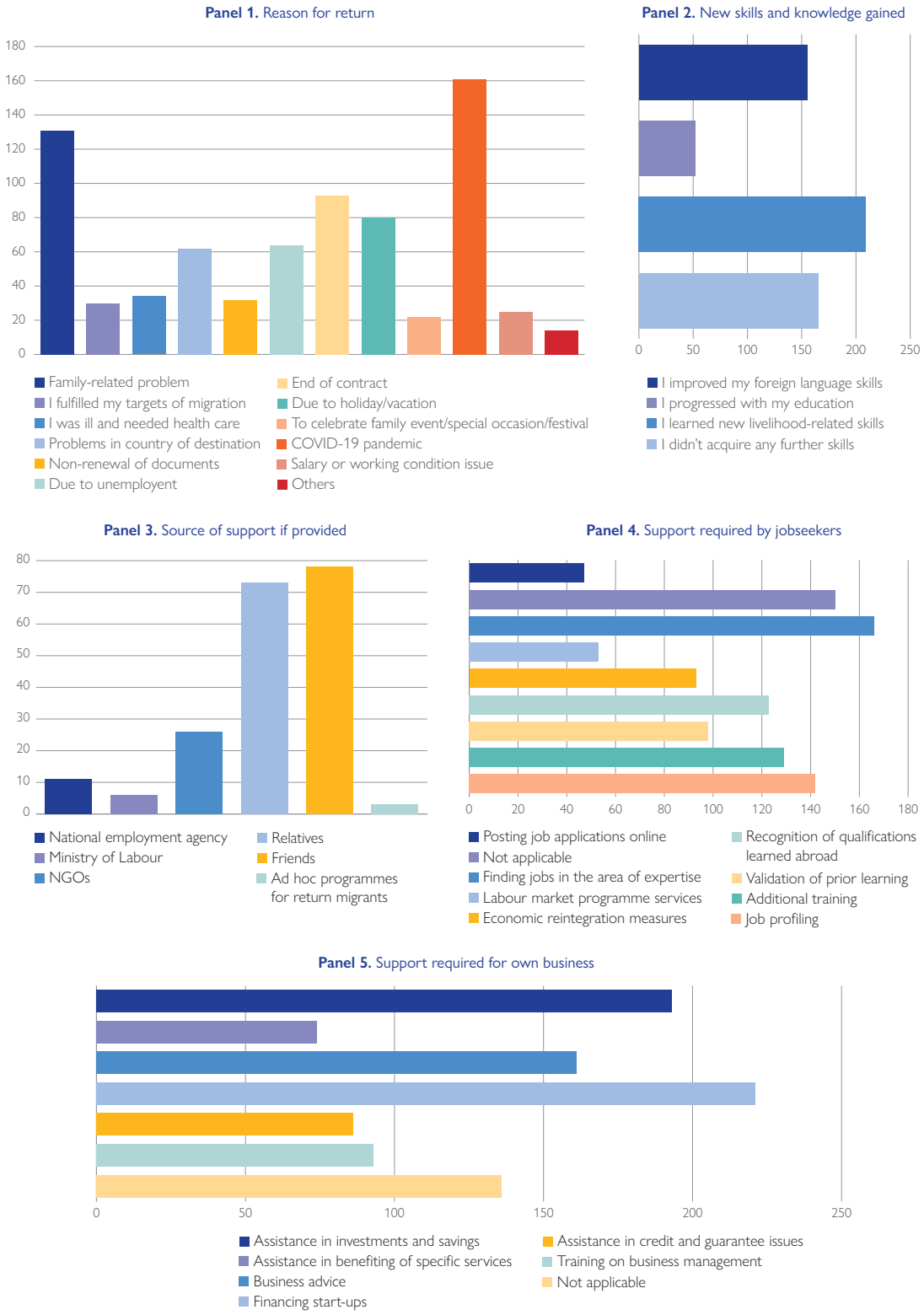


Panel 12. Preferred sector for business



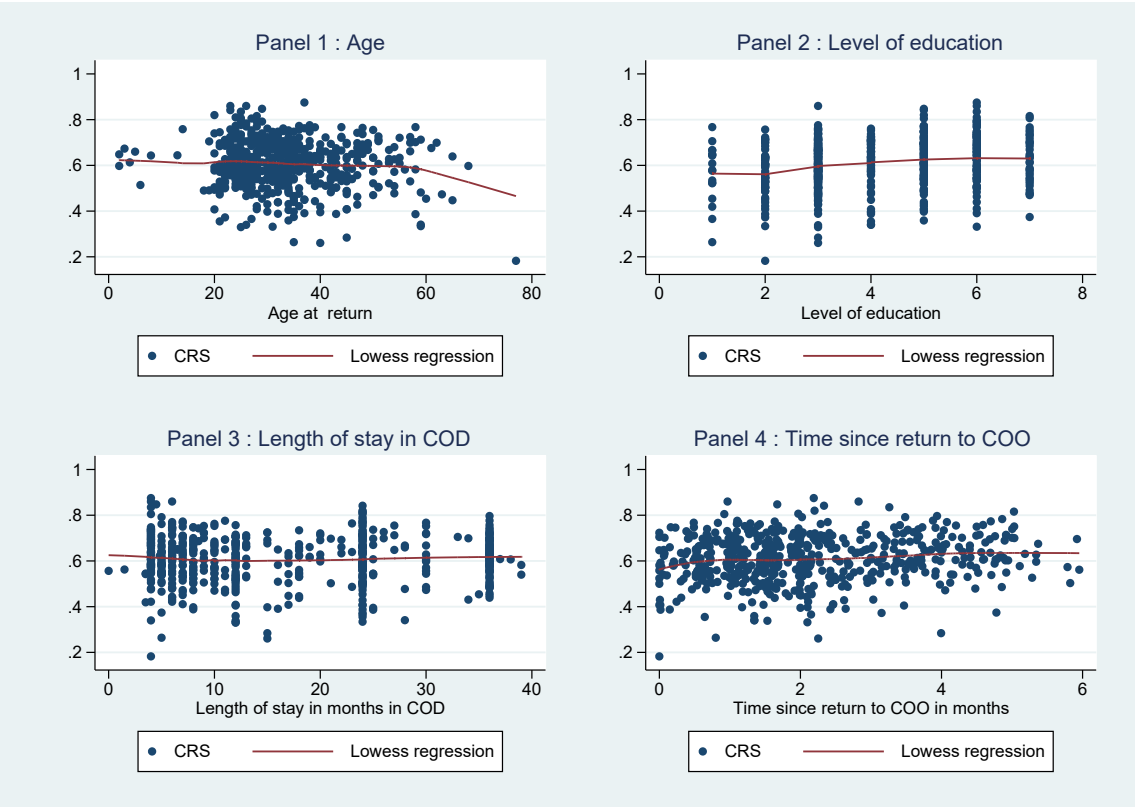
Source: Authors' calculations based on ORS data.

Figure 8. **Characteristics of respondents and reintegration support**



Source: Authors' calculations based on ORS data.

Figure 9. **Composite reintegration scores analysis**



Source: Authors' calculations based on ORS data.

9. Regional summary and recommendations

9.1. Regional overview

The previous sections of this report presented work carried out with the aim to take stock and assess the effectiveness of existing reintegration measures by comprehensively mapping the same in specific South Asian Colombo Process member States – Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The study is based on an extensive desk review of literature and information on reintegration in the region, as well as the analysis of qualitative and quantitative primary data collected. The primary data was collected via 57 KIIs, six FGDs and a survey of 563 migrants with reintegration experience spanning all five countries identified. The analysis of qualitative and quantitative primary data and desk review involved a Concurrent Mixed Method approach, with a variety of qualitative and quantitative methodologies corresponding to the various types of data collected as detailed in part 2 of this report. The Concurrent Mixed Method approach adds breadth and depth to the analysis resulting in a comprehensive study, where limitations of each type of analysis – qualitative and quantitative alone – is compensated by the other.

The mapping of currently available and planned reintegration support mechanisms for returnee migrant workers (irrespective of their migration status in the COD), their families and communities was carried out along the dimensions of social, psychosocial, economic and labour market reintegration support mechanisms, with special attention to gender responsiveness, in achieving sustainable reintegration across these countries. As such, in mapping the reintegration support, attention was paid to labour market support mechanisms and policy coherence related to the entire labour force (that includes both returnees and non-migrants). Such overall labour market support mechanisms included active and passive labour market support measures, such as access to financing, unemployment insurance and assistance, career counselling, community work programmes and enterprise creation. This mapping examined the availability of reintegration support delivered directly to individuals and at the community level. Moreover, the study mapped the institutional and policy framework in each country for reintegration support, which constitutes the structural support for reintegration in each country. The institutional and policy architecture for reintegration support in the region is provided at various levels including the national/central government level and at the subnational level including provincial, State government, district and local government levels. Similarly, the reintegration landscape in the South Asian region

consists of a diverse group of stakeholders, not limited to government, civil society, United Nations organizations, other international organizations and private service providers. This study also assessed the effectiveness of existing mechanism and their gaps along the same gendered economic, labour market, social and psychosocial dimensions at the individual, community and structural levels. This assessment also identified good practices and lessons that are valuable for developing a tailored reintegration support framework and a model for the region, as well as candidate countries for piloting such a framework and model.

9.2. Regional mapping and assessment

9.2.1. Economic and labour market support

Triangulated evidence of the reintegration efforts of the five South Asian countries assessed and analysed in this study show that support is disproportionately concentrated on economic and labour market reintegration, yet their mid-range of Reintegration Sustainability Score highlights the existing gaps. Assistance for labour market reintegration and bridging skill gaps in the region are addressed through skills training for returnees and RPL mechanisms conducted by the network of TVET establishments, to name a few. Similarly, existing economic initiatives across South Asia cover many aspects of labour market and economic reintegration support, which contribute to entrepreneurship, better quality of life for returnees, loans and financial services. Some notable efforts include PKB in Bangladesh, which works to expand the investment opportunities for returning migrants; the support provided by government entities such as NORKA in Kerala and SLBFE in Sri Lanka; the Chief Minister Youth Entrepreneurship programme operating at a provincial level in Nepal; as well as Pakistan's digital bank account for Pakistani migrants. While it is a positive thing that many countries have taken some steps to provide and improve upon economic and labour market services for returnees, many of such measures are project based, which reduce their scope to be sustainable in the long term. As highlighted throughout the report, there are information dissemination gaps, as well as challenges for returnees to access reintegration support service, which may be heightened due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. As such, the combined findings from the quantitative and qualitative approaches highlight the importance of customized, well-targeted and accessible economic and labour market reintegration support.

9.2.2. Social and psychosocial support

Social reintegration support in the region includes health, housing, children's education, legal aid networking and collectivization opportunities, while psychosocial support is mainly counselling. As demonstrated by the qualitative research, there is a considerable need for social and psychosocial interventions, which is likely to continue over time given the reduced focus and investment on the provision of these latter services. However, these tend to not be as prioritized as economic concerns in the region.

Moreover, Reintegration Sustainability Score analysis for South Asian migrants/returnees indicated that social and psychosocial reintegration is an overall moderate level, which is relatively higher than economic and labour market reintegration. When considering both the qualitative and quantitative findings concurrently within the cultural context in the region, a nuanced interpretation emerges, where underreporting and suppressed demand of social and psychosocial issues camouflage the actual need for social and psychosocial reintegration support. Similarly, services that are available to the public through governments or other organizations can be accessed by returning migrant workers as well, allowing them to achieve a basic level of social reintegration. Such diverging findings from quantitative and qualitative data indicate that provision or delivery of reintegration support alone does not ensure their effectiveness. These nuances have to be tactfully addressed in future activities related to reintegration such as developing a framework and a model for reintegration support in the region as well as when piloting same in selected countries.

In this context, there has been a growing momentum towards establishing such support measures, especially through collaborations between government and non-government entities. The RAISE project in Bangladesh and SaMi project in Nepal are examples of project-based efforts that provide reintegration support including access to services and information on essential services, such as health, education, housing and legal aid. Social protection programmes and schemes have also been provided to migrants/returnees, such as through the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana scheme in India and Shramika Surekuma in Sri Lanka. Migrant networks such as BNSK and Non-Resident Nepali Association are also important actors in facilitating social reintegration support.

As mentioned previously, the provision of psychosocial support is limited across the board. By tapping into existing public resources, projects such as the Prottasha project in Bangladesh has been able to build the capacity of project staff and provide psychosocial support to returnees. On the other hand, Pakistan has taken steps to establish migrant resource centres that provide such services to current or returnee migrants with the support of an international partner. A similar function is performed by the Sahana Piyasa Welfare Centre in Sri Lanka. Comparatively, Nepal and India lag further behind with some support measures including the SaMi project in Nepal and TSS in Mumbai.

9.2.3. Institutional and policy framework (Structural level)

At the structural level, countries like Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have made significant progress in factoring reintegration into their policies/acts. For instance, the *Sub Policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers*, an initiative taken by the Government of Sri Lanka, specifically focuses on all dimensions of reintegration including the labour market. Yet, the sustainability in implementation may be enhanced. Also, the National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis, which is to be submitted to the National Assembly in Pakistan

soon, is another upcoming policy initiative taken that covers wider aspects of reintegration. The Government of Nepal also has three layers of regulations pertaining to reintegration broadly discussed in section 5 (Nepal). However, evidence suggest that most of these policies have had limited implementation, given the high priority placed on labour migration outflows rather than return.

Central governments take on an active role in reintegration efforts in most cases, except for India, where such efforts are taken on by State governments, and Bangladesh, where CSOs and NGOs play an important role. Given the constraints with resources and capabilities, the reach and exhaustiveness of State-backed programmes may not always be as far reaching as hoped. This gap in service provision at the institutional level is filled by international organizations and development partners. In many cases, such as in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal, returnee migrant workers can access wider, general labour market support as well.

Coordination at all levels within the countries also seems to be an area that can be improved. In Bangladesh for instance, the coordinated reintegration programmes at the national level may be further strengthened; while in India, coordination may be enhanced among stakeholders at the policy and grassroots levels. Countries such as Nepal maintain greater community-level support mechanisms with less national outreach, and the opposite appears true in the case of Pakistan. All five countries in question would also benefit greatly from improved reintegration-related information provision at pre-departure trainings.

9.2.4. Individual and community level

Most of the reintegration programmes and services at the individual level are implemented based on the economic and financial needs of returnee migrants, such as providing financial assistance, occupation-specific training, core skills upgrading and business development support or trainings. Evidence further suggests that many of these programmes involve several stakeholders including government authorities, CSOs, NGOs and international organizations. However, apart from some exceptions, limited focus is given on social and psychosocial support at the individual level in most countries considered in this study. For instance, in Sri Lanka, government institutions such as SLBFE provides a wider range of social and psychosocial reintegration support services for returnees. Despite this, the ORS findings for the South Asian region suggested that the reach of such programmes remain limited, and that most returnees/migrants in South Asia relied on support provided by family and friends. When considering the community-level support, some interventions have been made in countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka in terms of collectivizing returnee migrants and providing them community-level economic and labour market or psychosocial assistance in various ways, with the support of CSOs/NGOs, such as BNSK, Pourakhi and Ratawiruwo.

9.2.5. Data

While there may be records of labour outmigration across the countries studied, data on returnees tended to be limited. Efforts for data collection on returnees prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was seen only in Nepal through its Foreign Employment Information Management System initiative. Such issues affect the targeting and customization of reintegration support, as well as the ability to accurately assess the impact of the return and reintegration of migrants to their communities. However, with the large-scale returns and repatriation during the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been new efforts for data collection on returnees. In Bangladesh, the medium for this is the REMiMIS database; in India, it is the SWADES database; and portals were launched by OEC in Pakistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka. While it is commendable that these databases exist, they are not yet fully exhaustive, especially in the case of Pakistan and India, as these databases include voluntary and self-reported information. Moreover, it would be helpful if these efforts would continue in a post-pandemic setting.

9.2.6. Gender

Gender disparities regarding access and protection to and from these services are seen throughout the countries analysed. This may be expected due to the existing gender inequality in the social, economic and labour market structures, which lead to gendered migration experience and outcomes, and subsequent different needs for reintegration assistance. In Sri Lanka, women are less likely to enrol in reintegration programmes than their male counterparts mainly due to family obligations. However, interestingly, there is also greater opportunities for women to receive support for reintegration such as the ability to access shelters and welfare centres due to being perceived as vulnerable. In Nepal, women migrant workers could be heavily stigmatized upon their return from overseas employment and may thereby hesitant to seek support; while in Bangladesh, there is insufficient gender sensitivity, especially in programmes implemented by CSOs. The support in India does not have specific gender dimensions, and there was limited information regarding the gender dimension of support in Pakistan, which may be due to the low number of women migrants.

Moreover, the qualitative data highlighted that women faced barriers in accessing reintegration support or services due to absence of targeted and custom-tailored support. Therefore, women require some specially targeted services, education and demand creation for reintegration services. This is further consistent with the findings of the quantitative data analysis, where the average CRS of women migrant workers was lower than that of males. Given this context, some CSOs like BNSK in Bangladesh have specifically designed economic and labour market and psychosocial reintegration programmes for returnee women migrants.

9.2.7. Dissemination and access

Many different reintegration services and support mechanisms exist within the region. However, their reach and accessibility could be enhanced. Some main reasons for these are the technological, financial and resource constraints observed across the region, which limit the ability of governments and other organizations to conceptualize, plan and provide far-reaching, long-term support. This is compounded by the fact that returnees often are not fully aware of the support that is available to them.

9.2.8. Country of destination support

The mapping and assessment of this study reveals that there is very limited focus on reintegration in most of the MOUs, G2G or country-to-country agreements with CODs. Hence, despite their potential to involve CODs towards preparing migrants during the in-service period towards integration upon return, most agreements are focused on facilitating recruitment/employment of migrant workers. A few arrangements with reintegration support from COD include the EPS arrangement with the Republic of Korea and its Happy Return programme. Apart from the regular labour migration related MOUs and G2G arrangements, some countries receive international support for reintegration via bilateral agreements such as Sri Lanka receiving support from the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Japan. Findings of the ORS also indicate that the skills and qualifications gained by migrant workers in the CODs have an impact on their ability to reintegrate.

9.2.9. Returnee-focused programming

This mapping and assessment highlight the importance of identifying returnees as a specific group of individuals with specific needs, which is absent in many countries, since migrants tend to be considered a part of the general population immediately following their return. Lessons can be learned from the State of Kerala, India, which implements a strong reintegration component in their State-level policies and programmes. In order to provide useful reintegration support, it is key that measures are designed, considering that returnee migrants face specific challenges, and thus have specific needs that make general support mechanisms less effective for them.

9.2.10. Holistic approach to reintegration throughout the labour migration cycle

In order to ensure that reintegration measures are properly implemented, it is important to address the end goal of reintegration at all stages of the labour migration cycle. The countries in this study had very limited focus on reintegration at the pre-departure and in-service stage of the labour migration cycle. This means that many migrants are not fully aware about the potential difficulties they may face in reintegrating back into their home country, nor about the services, support and opportunities they may be able to access to remedy them. Additionally, during the in-service stage, coordinated support of labour attachés in CODs to assist migrants prior to their return home would better prepare them to reintegrate in their countries of origin.

9.2.11. Technology and digital services

This study also revealed that there is limited use of technology and digital services in the provision and delivery of reintegration support, which was emphasized by the difficulty in recruiting returnees to participate in the online survey component of this study. One reason for this is due to the lack of infrastructure and technology, which is further compounded by the limited digital literacy on the part of returnee migrants. In the case of Nepal, Facebook was used as a means of providing reintegration-related information since most people had access to the platform. In Pakistan too, while digital services were provided online by OPF, there were issues with access due to the illiteracy of the migrant workers. In Sri Lanka, issues such as returnees living in areas without telecom signals is also a barrier to accessing such services. On the other hand, governments in countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal have begun information and service provision for both potential migrants and returnees through web portals and mobile applications. Yet, the equitable accessibility of such service is unclear due to the existing digital divide.

9.2.12. Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches

There is also a considerable need for countries to adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. This requires reintegration in all three dimensions – economic and labour market, social and psychosocial – to be mainstreamed into a country's development goals, while engaging with all relevant stakeholders including governments, local communities, civil society, development partners, other stakeholders and migrants themselves, in an effort to help return migrant workers assimilate back into all aspects of life in their home country can be facilitated (IOM, 2021e). In terms of economic and labour market aspects, quantitative data shows that migrant workers have not received sufficient support for reintegrating into the labour market in their countries of origin, and they have found it difficult to start small businesses. Such efforts would require institutional support, as well as a commitment to reintegration across different ministries. Without a comprehensive whole-of-government approach, there may be a risk of reintegration efforts to become scattered, inefficient and sometimes overlapping.

9.3. Tabular summaries

Bangladesh

Mapping

Programmes/Measures	Implementing/Funding bodies
PKB rehabilitation loans	Probashi Kallyan migrant welfare bank
Prottasha Programme for Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance	Led by the Government of Bangladesh, funded by the European Union, implemented by IOM in partnership with BRAC
Joint programme addressing the medium to long-term reintegration needs and strengthening social protection support mechanisms for the social inclusion of Bangladeshi migrants	Collaboration between IOM, ILO, UN-Women, government authorities, CSOs and private sector organizations – in the pipeline under Global Compact for Migration project implementation as at June 2021
RAISE Project	Funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Government of Bangladesh
AVR	IOM
AVRR	
Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra	
Health/Medical assistance	UN-Women
Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers in Bangladesh project	SDC
Policy framework	
Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016	
Wage Earners' Welfare Fund Rules 2002 and Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act 2018	
Seventh Five-Year Plan (2016–2020)	
Institutional framework	
National Steering Committee	
Labour Migration Technical Working Group	
Counter Trafficking Technical Working Group	
BRAC	
UN-Women	
IOM	
SDC	

Assessment

Strengths	Weaknesses
Wholistic nature of the Prottasha Programme	Needs a coordinated national-level reintegration plan
Creation of the ReMiMIS database	Inadequate provision of social and psychosocial support
Existence of the Nari returnee network	Poor gender sensitivity
	Lack of comprehensive database on returnees
	Programmes are not effective in the long term
	Poor targeting of returnees' needs

India

Mapping

Programmes/Measures										Implementing/Funding bodies
Santhwana programme	■			■						NORKA NORKA Roots
NORKA Department Project for Return Emigrants	■									NORKA
Pravasi Bhadratha – PEARL	■	■								NORKA Roots NORKA
Pravasi Bhadratha – MEGA	■									Kerala State Industrial Development Cooperation NORKA Roots NORKA
SWADES	■		■							Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of External Affairs
Centre for Indian Migrant Studies-Kerala State Backward Classes Development Corporation-Migrant Forum in Asia Reintegration Project	■									CIMS Kerala State Backward Classes Development Corporation Migrant Forum in Asia
Non-Resident Keralites' Welfare Board's Welfare Schemes				■	■					Non-Resident Keralites' Welfare Board
Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana				■		■				Ministry of External Affairs Aatmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping
Online counselling programme conducted by Kerala State Government				■			■			Kerala State Government
Group counselling provided for distress returnees in Kerala					■			■		Church groups in Kerala
Second Chance Education Programme	■			■	■					UN-Women
Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan – Massive employment-cum-rural public work campaign	■	■								Central Government of India
Pravasi Scholarship Scheme				■						NORKA Roots
"Atma Nirbhar Uttar Pradesh Rozgar Abhiyan" – Uttar Pradesh initiative for returned internal migrants due to COVID-19	■									State Government of Uttar Pradesh
Policy framework										
NORKA Rehabilitation Policy of 2018	■		■							
Non-Resident Keralites Welfare Act of 2008	■		■	■	■	■				
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005			■							
Institutional framework										
Non-Resident Keralites' Welfare Board	■			■	■					
Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs and its field agency of NORKA Roots	■			■						
CIMS in Kerala	■									
Emigrant Welfare Forum in Telangana	■									
Tamil Nadu Domestic Workers Union and Tamil Nadu Domestic Workers Welfare Trust				■	■					
Tata Trust	■			■	■					

Assessment

Strengths	Weaknesses
Creation of the SWADES database	Lack of recognition for international migrant returnees' needs
Economic and social support provided by NORKA in Kerala State	Mismatch between reintegration support and capacity to benefit
Social support provided by Non-Resident Keralites Welfare Board in Kerala State	Inadequate provision of social and psychosocial support
Support provided to internal migrants, such as e-Shram portal to register the internal migrants	Lack of comprehensive data on returnees
	Poor awareness on reintegration support available to returnees
	Absence of a mechanism for returnees' collective voice

Nepal

Mapping

Programmes/Measures										Implementing/Funding bodies
RPL										FEB and National Skills Testing Board
Loan scheme										FEB and Nepal Rashtra Bank
Felicitation of Returnee Entrepreneurs										MOLESS
Migrant Welfare Fund										FEB
SaMi Project										SDC
Psychosocial support services										Pourakhi, Helvetas through SaMi, Prabhasi Nepali Coordination Committee
Suhba Yatra										CARE Austria, CARE Nepal
Policy framework										
Constitution of Nepal 2015										
Foreign Employment Act										
Local Governance Operation Act of 2017										
Institutional framework										
Pourakhi										
Making Remittance Work with Women										UN-Women and IFAD
FEB										
National Skills Testing Board										
MOLESS										
Nepal Rastra Bank										

Assessment

Strengths	Weaknesses
Creation of the Migrant Welfare Fund	Lack of comprehensive data on returnee migrants
SAMI project	Poor awareness on reintegration support available to returnees
	Inefficiencies caused by institutional constraints
	Limited reintegration support across the board

Pakistan

Mapping

Programmes/Measures										Implementing/Funding bodies
Programme initiatives under OPF	■		■	■						OPF, BE&OE, SMEDA, Board of Investment, TEVTA, FBR, microfinance banks, trade unions, etc.
Return Migrants' registry under OEC	■	■	■							OEC, BE&OE, OPF, NAVTTC, TEVTA, SMEDA, Benazir Income Support Programme, Ehsaas Programme, etc.
Psychosocial/counselling support							■			MRCs, ICMPD
GARP programme	■		■	■		■				Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
GIZ programme	■									GIZ, Government of Pakistan
Policy framework										
Emigration Ordinance 1979			■			■				
National Emigration Policy 2009			■			■				
National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis (currently being drafted)			■			■				
Institutional framework										
OPF	■		■	■		■				
BE&OE	■		■							
PWF	■			■						
Ehsaas programme	■									
Sustainable Development Policy Institute	■									
TEVTA	■		■							
NAVTTC	■		■							
SMEDA	■									
Kamyab Jawan programme	■									

Assessment

Strengths	Weaknesses
Economic and social support provided by OPF	Lack of comprehensive data on returnee migrants
Creation of the Return Migrants' Registry	Inadequate provision of social and psychosocial support
	Challenges in accessing digital reintegration services
	Lack of pre-departure preparation for reintegration
	Minimal community-level support
	Limited accessibility to skills training
	Demand-driven reintegration support

Sri Lanka

Mapping										
Programmes/Measures	Economic			Social			Psychosocial			Implementing/Funding bodies
	Individual	Community	Structural	Individual	Community	Structural	Individual	Community	Structural	
Diriya Piyasa Housing Programme	■									SLBFE
Self-employment loan programmes	■									SLBFE, Samurdhi Authority
Upskilling programmes	■									SLBFE, National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority, Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
Community-level livelihood support programmes (such as migrant development centres)		■								SDC, ESCO
Community infrastructure development programme funded by the Government of Japan		■								Government of Japan, ILO, IOM
Shramika Surekuma				■	■					SMFEPMD, SLBFE
Sahana Piyasa				■			■			SLBFE
International Trade Union Confederation's – migration recruitment advisory portal	■									Sri Lanka Nidhas Sewaka Sangamaya (Trade union)
Psychosocial services (such as addressing the psychosocial needs of returnees by directing them to psychological officers)							■	■		SLBFE, Development Officers, CSOs (e.g. ESCO, VOM)
Policy framework										
Sri Lanka National Labour Migration Policy 2008	■									
Sub Policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers 2015	■			■	■	■	■	■	■	
Institutional framework										
SLBFE	■		■							
SMFEPMD	■		■							
IOM	■		■							
SDC	■		■							
ILO	■		■							
VOM	■			■			■			

Assessment	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Creation of a returnee migrants database	Lack of comprehensive data on returnee migrants
Existence of a considerable number of reintegration services spanning economic, social and psychosocial reintegration	Limited implementation of subpolicies on return and reintegration
Economic, social and psychosocial support provided by SLBFE together with SMFEPMD	Lack of resources and capacity constraints at the grassroots level
	Lack of pre-departure preparation for reintegration
	Overemphasis on economic and individual-level support
	Discontinuity of and disconnection between programmes
	Gender disparity in accessing and benefiting from services

Legend:

- Economic support
- Social support
- Psychosocial support
- Individual level
- Community level
- Structural level

Source: Author's depictions based on research data.

9.4. Regional recommendations

This study set within the broader activities of the Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia programme hopes to support "sustainable reintegration" based on a holistic approach that begins at the pre-departure stage and progresses on to post-migration. It includes economic and labour market, social and psychosocial reintegration support delivered across individual, community and structural levels, placing high priority on labour market reintegration and gendered perspectives of reintegration and making remigration a matter of choice. As identified in the country chapters and previously summarized, the South Asian region consists of strengths, challenges, good practices and lessons in terms of experience of providing reintegration support to return migrant workers. Based on the foregone mapping and assessment, the following seven recommendations emerge to improve the sustainable reintegration of return migrant workers.

(a) Develop a policy framework, institutional structure and agenda for reintegration

For effective reintegration support delivery, it is important for each country to have a comprehensive reintegration policy framework, a supportive institutional structure with a nodal (main) institution to spearhead reintegration activities, and a well-mapped-out overall reintegration support agenda. It is important to provide avenues in these policy and institutional setups to develop lasting links for reintegration with other institutions, such as to the health institutes for psychosocial support, the ministry in charge of women's activities to link with women's organizations, and the ministry in charge of labour to link with the labour market support mechanisms. Moreover, it is important to develop a long-term reintegration agenda for each country by identifying the policy priorities, within the framework of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis for reintegration. All reintegration activities should be consistent with such an agenda to ensure that any piecemeal project-based reintegration support falls into a coherent agenda with a structure for sustainability and integration with other components of the agenda. Here, stakeholders should be flexible to develop reintegration support mechanisms consistent with the overall long-term agenda and implement the same in a sustainable manner with scope for continuation beyond the project cycle; this can be done by factoring in core sustainability aspects, such as capacity-building and integrating into existing systems. Also, the tasks/responsibilities of each institution at the local/State level should be well defined to implement the reintegration support mechanisms in a sustainable manner.

(b) Mainstream return and reintegration into sectoral development policies and develop proactive measures for labour market integration of returnees

For sustainability, it is important to mainstream return and reintegration of migrant workers into sectoral development policies. Initially a few potential sectors, such as the hospitality, agriculture, trade and investment, tourism and domestic care, can be identified for such mainstreaming and integrating return migrant workers to better utilize their knowledge, skills, competencies and

experiences in the local labour market. For mainstreaming, overlaps in terms of goals, aims, priorities for stakeholders and activities of such sectors and reintegration needs to be identified and merged. For labour market integration, improved coordination between the national employment/reintegration service providers (including RPL services and career counselling) and community-level measures would be beneficial. Additionally, skills upgrading should be incorporated into existing labour market support services and programmes for returnees to update their skills and enter the local job market, based on local labour market demands. Training programmes should be catered to match existing labour market trends, along with certain quality assurance to ensure that return migrant workers would not be compelled to remigrate.

(c) Local- and State-level governments and non-State actors to play an active and integrated role

For the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, local- and State-level governments should play an active role in supporting, monitoring and governing the reintegration support for return migrant workers. The central governments can initiate reintegration support at the subnational level (State/province/district-level) and pave the way for local governments to take a leading role in targeting and customization of support. Such an approach would adequately cater to the needs of areas with high concentration of return migrant workers, and allow respective local governments for improving their capacity to better tailor support mechanisms. Therefore, it is important to improve the capacity of subnational and local-level field officers and establish local-level migration coordination committees at grassroots level with the involvement of existing institutions to ensure better delivery of reintegration support for returnees.

Similarly, countries should ensure wider stakeholder involvement (i.e. government authorities, private sector organizations, recruitment/employment agencies, trade unions, media, NGOs, CSOs and international organizations, such as IOM, ILO, UN-Women and World Bank) and better coordination among each other in providing reintegration support for returnees. For instance, governments can take a leading role in identifying the needs of returnees and setting goals for reintegration, so that they can engage with the previously mentioned stakeholders in a more cohesive manner through a policy framework and a reintegration agenda. Increasing collaborations between other stakeholders previously outlined especially across community, local, national and international levels so that they can provide their own expertise for reintegration support is important. Further, key actors at the local level, such as employers, trade unions and CSOs, can be identified and engaged to improve reintegration support for returnees. Here, the lessons can be drawn from migrants' integration/assimilation programmes/strategies implemented at State or local government levels in the regions of CODs such as the following: (a) Barcelona's strategy to attract migrants by positioning it as one of the most attractive destination for migrants; (b) Dublin's Your Dublin, Your Voice initiative, which involves listening to the needs of migrants; an' (c) Hamburg's efforts to track integration progress through newly developed indicators (World Bank, 2018).

(d) Rebalance focus across dimensions and levels of reintegration and phases of migration

Balance focus across the labour market, economic, social and psychosocial dimensions: Although economic and labour market support appears to be prioritized, the study findings indicate a need for more targeted and scaled-up economic and labour market reintegration interventions. In terms of social reintegration, the level of support extended can be improved upon by identifying and implementing programmes addressing the specific needs of returnees, beyond the services accessible to the general population. Given the poor uptake and stigma associated with psychological support structures in most of the countries, it is important to incorporate this dimension into reintegration support in a supply-driven modality allocating adequate resources, infrastructure and capacity-building efforts. Simultaneously, it is critical to make such support mechanisms widely available with minimal administrative requirements, while ensuring the privacy of returnee migrant workers receiving such psychosocial assistance.

Enhance reintegration support at the community level: Countries should focus on initiating reintegration support targeted at the community level, including collective investment schemes and livelihood support programmes, such as joint farms and community cooperatives. Local governments can take the lead role in collectivizing the return migrants and direct them for such initiatives with the support of NGOs, CSOs or international organizations. A good example can be drawn from interventions made by BNSK, which entails the collective involvement of returnee women migrants in running food courts in Bangladesh.

Reintegration services should be part of pre-departure and in-service phases: Knowledge-building and education on reintegration services should be made available at the start of the migration cycle such as during pre-departure orientation programmes. Such programmes should include the information relevant to migrants (that is, financial literacy/remittance management), as well as to their family and household since their understanding of reintegration challenges is important in supporting the migrants once they return. During these programmes, returnees and their families should be made aware that effective reintegration takes time and require commitment until the end.

Countries can also provide services that support labour market reintegration for migrants during the in-service stage. For instance, lessons can be drawn from the Philippines, where the Philippine Embassy in Qatar provided weekend computer classes to their migrants to increase their employability back in the Philippines once they returned (World Bank, 2018).

(e) Develop inclusive reintegration support

It is important to tailor the content of reintegration programs or services according to their diverse migration experience and outcomes, as well as reintegration needs. Gender concerns

is one such area that should be considered for inclusive reintegration support provision. This is especially necessary in cases of unsuccessful migration journeys, where returnee women are at increased risk of sexual, psychological and other forms of gender-based violence by abusive partners, family members and communities. In such cases, access to justice (such as protection orders), medical and psychosocial assistance, shelters and rehabilitation programmes should be made available for them. Furthermore, in contexts where female migration is looked down upon, it would be necessary for service providers to actively approach women returnees; while in contexts where women are overburdened with care responsibilities, it would be necessary to implement more flexible reintegration programmes. An example can be drawn from economic and labour market and psychosocial reintegration support provided by BNSK in Bangladesh targeting returnee women migrants. Reintegration support should also be designed with special considerations for older returnees who maybe be more prone to exclusion from reintegration services. Thus, it is important to design the programmes in a way that older returnees can also access and benefit from.

(f) Identify the potentials for international cooperation and support

Since the migration cycle has implications on both origin and destination countries, incorporating reintegration concerns into agreements with CODs can be a useful strategy to encourage safe and sustainable migration. Such collaborations can emulate the Republic of Korea's EPS/Happy Return programme. Additionally, governments of CODs can identify potential organizations across countries of origin and CODs to provide both financial and technical support for the reintegration assistance at individual, community and structural levels to better deliver the reintegration-related information and support services to migrants throughout the migration cycle in a sustainable manner. Here, countries of origin should take active measures to address the returnees' grievances related to issues in the COD such as non-payment of wages and labour dispute, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Returnees should be made aware about the importance of claiming their dues when overseas and support mechanisms to address these grievances should be more proactive. It is also important to collate disaggregated information on unpaid dues for each COD and collectively reach out to CODs. Also, there is a need to ensure portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits, as well as facilitate legal services for migrant workers to assist them in resolving issues such as claiming unpaid wages after they have returned to their countries of origin.

Furthermore, national experiences need to be translated into the policy discussion of the Colombo Process, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and other regional-level forums to eventually develop a regional policy on reintegration. Decisions should be taken in the thematic area working group in Colombo Process, and they need to become actionable commitments at the national level.

(g) Develop a comprehensive database of returnee migrant workers

As one of the major issues across all countries considered is the lack of comprehensive data on return migrants, countries need to either improve their existing data collection efforts or introduce new measures to regularly capture information of returnees that is relevant for improving and targeting reintegration support. To better design and customize the programmes on reintegration, information should include age, gender, marital status, educational attainment level, income level, skills gained abroad, COD and sector employed, return locality and intentions to remigrate or not. Such a data collection effort should include development of appropriate database architecture and built-in mechanisms to disseminate such information for analysis by relevant policymakers and researchers, while ensuring the privacy of returnees. At the same time, such efforts need mechanism to update the said architecture and modalities of dissemination as per the future trends. To effectively benefit from such data, a cohort of staff needs to be given relevant capacity development opportunities.

Finally, when combined, the aforementioned mapping, assessment and recommendations provide information, knowledge and tools needed to facilitate the broader aims of the Governance of Labour Migration in South and South-East Asia programme towards developing a regional framework and model for reintegration, which in turn could be customized to local needs and context. These findings can be shaped into a set of sustainable and integrated solutions for gendered economic, social and psychosocial reintegration of returnees provided at the individual, community and structural levels.

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