

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



Sunil  
Melissa **KUMAR FERNANDEZ**



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Project Management **LSE Enterprise**

**RESEARCH PARTNERS**

KABUL **Ajmal Nimruzi** | Qara Group  
DHAKA **Nasir Uddin** | University of Chittagong  
CHENNAI **K. Sudhir** | People's Architecture Commonweal  
KATHMANDU **Bandita Sijapati and Sambriddhi Kharel** | Social Sciences Baha  
LAHORE **Rashid Memon** | Lahore University of Management Sciences



Project commissioned by the  
**UK Department for International Development's**  
**South Asia Research Hub**  
New Delhi, India

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Acknowledgements	v
List of Acronyms	vii
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	xi
List of Photographs	xiii
A Note on the Spread and Use of Empirical Data in the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup>	xv

## **Executive Summary** **1**

## **1 Introduction** **23**

1.1 Introduction	23
1.2 Setting the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup> research agenda	23
1.3 Conceptualising the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus	26
Researching the urbanisation-migration nexus through construction: A note on	
1.4 methods	27
1.5 A Five city study: Issues of generalisation versus specificity	28
1.6 Definitions of some of the terms used in the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup>	29
1.7 Structure of the report	30

## **2 Literature review: Locating transient migrant contract construction labour in the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in south Asia** **33**

2.1 Introduction	33
2.2 Urbanisation	34
2.3 Migration	38
2.4 Construction	43
2.5 Internal migration and construction: Introductory observations	46
2.6 Construction and contract construction labour	48
2.7 Construction: Internal and international distinctions	49
2.8 Urbanisation, construction and migration: Concluding thoughts	51

## **3 Methodology: Researching transient migrant contract construction labour in five cities in south Asia** **55**

3.1 Choice of Methodology	55
3.2 Choice of research sites	59
3.3 Methodological challenges	60
3.4 Researching transient migrant contract construction labour: Concluding thoughts	62

<b>4</b>	<b>The conceptual canvas: Positioning transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale construction in five cities in south Asia</b>	<b>65</b>
4.1	Introduction	65
4.2	Conceptualising transient migrant contract construction labour	65
4.3	Deconstructing the conceptual canvas: Key forms of internal migration	68
4.4	Deconstructing the conceptual canvas: Large-scale construction and transient migrant contract construction labour	76
4.5	Conceptualising transient migrant contract construction labour: Concluding thoughts	84
<b>5</b>	<b>Construction, employment conditions and migrant contractual arrangements in five cities in south Asia</b>	<b>87</b>
5.1	Introduction	87
5.2	Nature of investment	89
5.3	Actors	90
5.4	Migrant workers employment in construction	92
5.5	Skills and qualifications in large-scale construction in the five cities	97
5.6	Wages and working conditions in large-scale construction in the five cities	98
5.7	Employment conditions: Living and occupational safety and health	105
5.8	Legal and regulatory frameworks	111
5.9	Construction, employment conditions and migrant contractual arrangements: Concluding thoughts	113
<b>6</b>	<b>Migrant pathways and labour in large-scale construction projects in five cities in south Asia</b>	<b>119</b>
6.1	Introduction	119
6.2	Transient migrant contract construction workers: Recording who they are	119
6.3	Ethnicity, social stratification and transient migrant contract construction workers	129
6.4	Age, education and marital status of transient migrant contract construction workers	134
6.5	Gender and transient migrant contract construction labour	138
6.6	Why do transient contract construction workers migrate?	144
6.7	Relationship to host city	151
6.8	Migrant political subjectivities	152
6.9	Dreams and aspirations	153
6.10	The gap between savings and aspirations is a difficult one to bridge	159
6.6	Migrant pathways and labour in large-scale construction: Concluding thoughts	160
<b>7</b>	<b>Policy issues, challenges and suggestions relating to transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale construction in five cities in south Asia</b>	<b>163</b>
7.1	Introduction	163
7.2	Key findings and challenges for policy	163
7.3	Secondary data limitations and constraints	165

7.4	The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and its ‘Decent Work Agenda’	166
7.5	UN-Habitat and its ‘Shelter Deprivations’	167
7.6	A policy ‘for’ transient migrants in construction: ‘not’ a migration policy	167
7.7	Transient migrant contract construction labour: Policy areas	171
7.8	Transient migrant contract construction labour: Policy issues, challenges and suggestions	171
7.9	Policy issues and migrant contract construction labour: Concluding thoughts	187

## **8 Concluding thoughts on the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five cities in south Asia** **191**

8.1	Reflections on the origins of the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup>	191
8.2	The complexity of construction	192
8.3	The contribution of transient migrant contract construction labour to the urban built environment: A need for recognition	194
8.4	Informality and welfare: Transient migrant contract construction labour	194
8.5	Challenges in researching the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup>	195
8.6	Policy challenges and civil society constraints	196
8.7	The challenge of information collection and dissemination	198
8.8	A forward thinking agenda	198

## **References** **203**

## **Appendices** **215**

A	Mapping Exercise	215
B	Letter to city PI relating to mapping exercise	217
C	Mapping sheet	219
D	Questionnaire and interview schedule (sample)	221

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

A number of individuals have made a contribution to this multi-city (multi-country) research project. In acknowledging them, we hope that we have not inadvertently missed anyone.

Our sincere and profound thanks go to the 500 transient migrant contract construction workers from the five cities who gave generously of their time in answering our questions. Their narratives are very important to us; we have tried to faithfully represent their stories.

We are grateful to the UK International Department for International Development's South Asia Research Hub (SARH) in New Delhi, India for commissioning this project, especially because it covered relatively new ground. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement that Nupur Barua (PhD), Deputy Head of SARH, provided at all times and in a manner that meant a great deal to the research team at the London School of Economics and Political Science as well as our country (city) research partners. We also acknowledge the input of Anirban Ganguly on the quantitative aspects of the research project in its initial stages whilst Anuradha Rajan provided both timely and superb support on behalf of the SARH office.

We would like to commend the efforts of our research partners who not only managed the fieldwork but overcame the numerous barriers they faced in accessing transient migrant contract construction workers and some of the labour contractors they interviewed. The initial literature review was undertaken by: Matt Birkinshaw<sup>1</sup> (India and Afghanistan), Feyzi Ismail, PhD<sup>2</sup> (Nepal), Taneesha Mohan<sup>3</sup>, PhD (Bangladesh) and Zoha Waseem<sup>4</sup> (Pakistan). Panayiota Kastritis<sup>5</sup> provided excellent research support from early 2015, particularly the analysis of quantitative data (primary and secondary). Rachita Mishra contributed to the formatting of some of the tables and charts.

The members of the project's 'Steering Group' – Professor Athar Hussain (Asia Research Centre and Director of the India Observatory), Alpa Shah, PhD (Anthropology, LSE), Mara Malagodi, PhD (Law, LSE), Ayona Datta, PhD (Geography, University of Leeds) and Naysan Adlparvar, PhD (Independent Researcher with Afghanistan expertise) – provided much needed insight. Jeannine McMahon, Elitsa Garnizova Jeannie and Evelina Kaminskaite from LSE Enterprise made a contribution in managing the contractual elements of the project.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our respective families for the support they provided over the course of this research. Particular thanks to Sarabajaya Kumar, PhD, for her meticulous editing of the chapters at various milestones and in particular the final draft. Roshan Chatterjee-Kumar ensured that the references were properly ordered and that none were omitted.

The views expressed in this report are ours and our research partners and not that of DFID or SARH. As the PI, Sunil Kumar bears responsibility for any errors and omissions.

Sunil Kumar, PhD and Melissa Fernandez, PhD  
London, March 2016

<sup>1</sup> Doctoral candidate, Department of Geography, LSE.

<sup>2</sup> School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

<sup>3</sup> PhD from Department of Geography, LSE.

<sup>4</sup> Doctoral Candidate, Social Science and Public Policy, War Studies, Kings College, London.

<sup>5</sup> MSc Social Policy and Development, Department of Social Policy, LSE.

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CMRL	Chennai Metro Rail
DFID	UK Government's Department for International Development
DWA	Decent Work Agenda (ILO)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
NCEUS	National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, India
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health, term used by the ILO
SARH	South Asia Research Hub, New Delhi, India (DFID)
TNBOCW	Tamil Nadu Building and Other Construction Workers Rules
U <sup>C</sup> Mn <sup>SA</sup>	Urbanisation-Construction-Migration 'Nexus': South Asia
U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup>	Urbanisation-Construction-Migration Nexus 'Project': South Asia
UNDESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UH-Habitat	UN Habitat, Nairobi, Kenya
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WB	World Bank
R4D	Research for Development, DFID's electronic research output portal

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Total Population, Total Urban Population and % Urban (mid-year in 1,000s) - Selected years	24
1.2	Definition of terms used in this report – Construction	29
1.3	Definition of terms used in the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup> – Transient migrant contract construction labour	29
1.4	Definition of terms used in the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup> – Developer, contractor and labour contractor	30
2.1	Urban and Rural Population, 1000s, urban population (%) and average annual change (%): 1990, 2014 and 2050	36
2.2	Comparison of migration related variable in 4 country datasets	39
4.1	Migration Type, Notation, Notation Explanation and Commentary	66
4.2	Local Construction Labour and Impact of Construction (urban, peri-urban, rural and per-rural).	67
5.1	Construction industry by country: economy, employment and share of total population.	87
5.2	Proportion of on-going residential construction projects by city (mapped in 2014)	89
5.3	Price Range of Smallest to Largest Residential Units in large-scale construction projects in Chennai (Mapping, 2014)	91
5.4	Projects and Migrant Workers in Chennai, India (Mapping exercise 2014)	93
5.5	Average/mean wages of construction workers surveyed per city	99
5.6	Daily Wages for a 8 Hour Working Day by Skill and Sex for: Local construction labour; Long-term Resident Migrant Workers and Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers worker – Civil Contracts and Infrastructure, Chennai 2014.	101
5.7	Daily wages in Migrant’s Place of Origin by sector in 2014 (India)	102
5.8	Male and Female Unskilled Construction Workers Daily Wages for an 8 Hour Working Day for: Local construction labour; Long-term Resident Migrant Workers and Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers worker – Civil Construction and Infrastructure, Chennai 2014.	104
5.9	Amenities available in Labour camps of projects, Chennai, %	107
6.1	Regional origin of out-migrants in Afghanistan (NRVA 2011-12, Central Statistics Organization, 2014) and region by in-migration in U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup> Kabul.	120
6.2	Trend in Migration Rates in Urban Areas, 1981–2008 (migrants per 100 persons), India	124
6.3	Distribution of Migrants in India by Streams of Migration (%)	124
6.4	Migration into the Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) - 2001	124
6.5	State-wise Distribution of respondents by employment relationship and categories of residence, U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup> Chennai, India	125
6.6	Distribution of transient migrant construction labour in Kathmandu by Region	127
6.7	Distribution of respondents by ethnicity and religious sect, Kabul, Afghanistan	130
6.8	Distribution of respondents by social stratification, Chennai, India	131
6.9	Social Groups of 150 construction migrants in Kathmandu, Nepal	131
6.10	Social Groups distributed among the 63 responses in the Kathmandu U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup> study	
6.11	Distribution of transient migrant contract construction workers by caste, Lahore, Pakistan	133

6.12	Percentage of total population by broad age group, 'both sexes' (per 100 total population)	134
6.13	Percentage of 'male' population by broad age group (per 100 male total population)	134
6.14	Distribution of respondents by sex	139
6.15	Marital status of migrant construction workers (number)	143
6.16	Marital status of migrant construction workers (%)	143
6.17	Selected variables including marriage across ethnicity	143
6.18	Reasons for migration, Chennai, India	147
6.19	Landed and Landless across States of Origin (Count), Chennai	150
7.1	Policy Issue 1 – Recognising transient migrant contract labour as a sub-set of internal migrant construction workers	173
7.2	Policy Issue 2 – Wages, working conditions and social protection	174
7.3	Policy Issue 2A – Minimum wages and overtime payment	176
7.4	Policy Issue 2B – Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)	178
7.5	Policy Issue 3A – Housing	180
7.6	Policy Issue 3B – Water and Sanitation	182
7.7	Policy Issue 4 – Gender and Construction	183
7.8	Policy Issue 5 – Access to Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers	185
7.9	Policy Issue 6 – Exclusion from State Welfare Provision	185
7.10	Policy Issue 7 – Collective Action	186
7.11	Policy Issue 8 – Underrepresentation of transient migrant contract construction workers in official surveys.	187
7.12	Policy Issue 9 – Datasets Containing Information on Migration	187

## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	A Schematic Venn Diagram of the Literature and Research on Urbanisation, Construction and Migration	33
2.2	Relationship of proportion urban to GNI per capita	37
3.1	Mapping of large-scale construction projects in Chennai, India: Illustrative of the U <sup>C</sup> Mnp <sup>SA</sup> mapping exercise in 2014	56
4.1	The Conceptual Canvas for the Urbanisation-Construction-Migration Nexus	68
4.2	The urban, peri-urban, rural and peri-rural canvas forming the boundary of the nation state	69
4.3	Peri-urban and peri-rural economic, social, cultural and geo-political livelihoods spaces	69
4.4	Urban and rural economic, social, cultural, environmental and geo-political livelihoods spaces	70
4.5	The merging of the urban and rural peripheries	71
4.6	Urban-rural, Urban-urban and international migration for construction (south-south & south-north)	71
4.7	Longstanding rural-rural migration – individual, family, group and contract labour	73
4.8	Rural to peri-urban or peri-rural contract labour migration for work in brick kilns and, stone and sand quarries	74
4.9	Longstanding independent rural-urban migration work not guaranteed	74
4.10	Rural-urban migration for construction – mainly independent (also includes migrants under gang masters)	75
4.11	Introducing large-scale construction in urban areas - residential, commercial, industrial and infrastructure	76
4.12	Potential sources of labour for large-scale construction projects in urban areas	77
4.13	Local labour, by and large, not employed in large-scale construction projects in urban areas	78
4.14	Independent migrant construction labour, by and large, excluded from large-scale construction projects in urban areas	79
4.15	Rural to urban contract construction labour recruited by labour contractors for work in large-scale construction projects in urban areas	81
4.16	Deployment of transient migrant contract construction labour to other large-scale construction projects within the same or to other urban areas – as well as the seasonal and circular migration of this labour.	82
4.17	Opportunities for those transient migrant contract construction labour, who would like to settle in the urban, becoming increasingly difficult	83
4.18	Impact of large-scale construction projects in urban areas on urban, peri-urban, peri-rural and rural landscapes.	84
5.1	Different Funding Sources of Construction Sites, Dhaka	89
5.2	Construction Projects by Type, Kathmandu Municipality	89
5.3	Construction Projects by Type, Chennai	90
5.4	Onsite and Offsite Labour Camps of Projects, Chennai, %	106
5.5	Count of respondents with access to welfare services across categories of residence, Chennai, India	107

6.1	Province of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Kabul	121
6.2	District of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Kabul	121
6.3	Divisions of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Bangladesh (%)	122
6.4	District of origin of migrant construction workers in large-scale construction in Dhaka (%)	123
6.5	Places of origin of rural-urban migrant construction workers (independent and dependent)	126
6.6	Districts of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Nepal	127
6.7	Migration flows into Lahore by regions of the Punjab	128
6.8	District Map of the Punjab, Pakistan	128
6.9	Area of Origin and Language in four large-scale construction projects, Lahore, Pakistan (number)	129
6.10	Distribution of migrant construction workers, Kabul, Afghanistan (Frequency)	130
6.11	Median and mean age of Construction workers	134
6.12	Median and mean age of Construction workers	135
6.13	Compositional share of migrant workers by educational attainment (%)	136
6.14	Compositional share of migrant workers by educational attainment (stacked %)	137
6.15	Compositional share of migrant workers by educational attainment (stacked %)	137
6.16	Compositional share of migrant construction workers by sex	139
6.17	Marital status of migrant construction workers in the five cities (%)	142
6.18	Reasons for migration to current residence (%)	145
6.19	Seasonal out-migrants by economic sector (%)	146
6.20	Number of respondents reporting reasons for migration, Kabul	146
6.21	Count of reasons for migrating, Chennai, India	147
6.22	Work Related Reasons, Chennai, India	147
6.23	Mineral-Bearing Districts of India	148
6.24	Monetisation Related Reasons, Chennai, India	149
6.25	Debt by state of origin, Chennai, India	149
6.26	Monetisation Related (Count), Chennai, India	150
6.27	Preference for current work in construction by gender (%), Chennai, India	157
6.28	Migrant workers future plans vis-à-vis of residing in Chennai (%)	159
6.29	Reasons for remittance across different Indian, states	159

## LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

ES.1	Kabul, Afghanistan	1
ES.2	Kabul, Afghanistan	2
ES.3	Ferozepur Road Flyover and Rotary, Lahore, Pakistan	7
ES.4	Interstate migrants in Chennai, India	9
ES.4	Working conditions in a flyover infrastructure project in Dhaka, Bangladesh (2014)	12
ES.6	Communal cooking, Kabul, Afghanistan	12
ES.7	Labour camp constructed of tin which becomes unbearably hot in summer, Dhaka, Bangladesh	13
ES.8	Improved housing for senior employees – housing does not have to be poor, Kathmandu, Nepal	13
ES.9	Rudimentary bathing facility in a labour camp in a government housing project, Chennai, India	14
ES.10	Improved toilet and bathing facilities in a large-scale construction project, Kabul, Afghanistan	14
ES.11	Female ‘unskilled’ construction worker mixing aggregate for concrete while the male concrete mixer ‘operator’ rests, Kathmandu, Nepal	14
1.1	Large-scale residential project with labour camp, Chennai, India	25
1.2	Large-scale residential project Dhaka, Bangladesh	25
1.3	Dual carriageway infrastructure project, Lahore, Pakistan (July 2014)	26
5.1	Appasamy Offsite Labour Camp, Semmencheri, Chennai, India	106
5.2	Kathmandu, Nepal ‘Safety First’ signage in the Melamchi Water Supply project	110
5.3	Kathmandu, Nepal Workers precariously working on scaffolding in a residential project	110
7.1	Kathmandu, Nepal	176
7.2	Transient migrant contract construction worker engaged in a large-scale infrastructure project with no safety equipment, Lahore, Pakistan	177
7.3	Some large construction companies take health and safety seriously, Chennai, India	177
7.4	Temporary kitchen in a partially constructed building, Dhaka, Bangladesh	178
7.5	Typical labour camp, Lahore, Pakistan	179
7.6	Typical labour camp, Kathmandu, Nepal	179
7.7	Typical labour camp, Chennai, India	179
7.8	Advertisement by a Labour-Shed Contractor, Chennai, India	180
7.9	Temporary bathing enclosures but no sanitation facilities, Chennai, India	181
7.10	Temporary bathing enclosures but no sanitation facilities, Chennai, India	181
7.11	Unskilled female construction workers mixing concrete, Kathmandu, Nepal	182
7.12	Unskilled female construction workers mixing concrete on a large-scale government housing project – the role of the male is to check its standard, Chennai, India	182

7.13	Temporary corrugated tin sheets act as walls, making labour camps 'invisible', Dhaka, Bangladesh	184
7.14	Temporary corrugated tin sheets act as walls, making labour camps 'invisible', Chennai, India	184
7.15	This labour camp could be easily mistaken for a 'squatter' settlement, thus rendering it invisible, Chennai, India	184
7.16	The labour camps of these infrastructure workers are off-site and hence invisible, Dhaka, Bangladesh	185

## A note on the spread and use of empirical data in the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup>

The empirical data that the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> has generated is, unavoidably varied, for a number of reasons. These are set out below and in no particular order.

- The geo-political climate, security and religious festivals in each city impacted differently on the pace at which empirical data could be collected.
- The scale and type of large-scale urban civil and infrastructure projects in each of the cities varied and thus produced empirical data at different levels of detail.
- Both the extent and the level of state provided social welfare varied by country.
- The scale and location of large scale civil and infrastructure projects in each of the cities had a bearing on the distance and thus the time involved in making visits to the construction sites and labour camps to interview respondents.
- Each city research team varied according to expertise, experience and the number of researchers they could employ. Dhaka and Chennai had the largest teams; the Chennai and Pakistan case studies were overseen by PI's who had more exposure to construction and labour respectively.
- There is an extensive literature on urbanisation and migration in India, in comparison to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. The literature on Afghanistan is very limited.
- Secondary data was more difficult to come by in Afghanistan than the other four countries.

As a result of these variations, this research report draws on some city case studies, more than others, in addressing the range of issues covered. This is unavoidable. That said, there are a number of common features amongst the five cities that are worthwhile reiterating.

- In all five cities, large-scale urban civil and infrastructure construction projects are being undertaken.
- Residential projects comprise the majority of these large-scale construction projects. In Chennai, Dhaka and Nepal, these take the form of high-rise buildings. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is more investment in 'serviced' plots of land supplied with basic level of water, sanitation, electricity and road infrastructure.
- In all five cities, the use of migrant contract construction labour, recruited by labour-contractors, are present in large-scale construction. In Chennai, this was all respondents, almost all in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, and a significant majority in Afghanistan.
- None of the workers (with the notable exception of one project in Kathmandu, Nepal) had any form of a written contract.
- Large-scale construction projects were 'closed' labour markets. Access to this labour market was mostly via the labour contractor; less so other networks, although these were also important.
- Violations in minimum wages, the non-payment for overtime work, and the adoption of occupational health and safety working practices were present everywhere, albeit in varying degrees.
- Living conditions and the provision of water and sanitation were pitiable.
- Although all the countries had legislation pertaining to wages, overtime, working conditions and directions on housing and basic service provision, the lack of enforcement was ubiquitous.
- With the exception of Chennai, India, civil society actors with a mandate for construction labour were sorely lacking. That said, even the construction workers union in Chennai has been unable to make inroads into the gated labour camps, housing transient migrant contract construction labour.

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Executive  
Summary**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION: THE URBANISATION-CONSTRUCTION-MIGRATION NEXUS PROJECT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

This report is the outcome of a research project<sup>1</sup> on the *urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five cities in South Asia (U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup>)*:<sup>2</sup> Kabul (Afghanistan), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Chennai (India), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Lahore (Pakistan).<sup>3</sup>



The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> makes a contribution to the urbanisation and migration literature by linking the emergent power of *urban* consumption and investment (referred to here as ‘new forces’ as a proxy for urbanisation), with the demand for rural migrant ‘contract’ construction labour (referred to here as a ‘resurgent’<sup>4</sup> form of internal rural to urban migration, expressed by the term ‘transient’ migrants); facilitated by two types of large-scale urban construction projects - ‘civil’ (residential, commercial, industrial and institutional) – and ‘infrastructure’. The overarching research question is:

**How do investments in large-scale urban construction and the demand for labour generated, give rise to varied forms of migration?**

The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> conceptualises the contemporary ‘new forces’ of urbanisation and the ‘renewed’ use of ‘contract’ migrants from the rural hinterland in large-scale construction projects as ‘dialectic’, so as to lend clarity to both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors in real time.



**PHOTOGRAPH ES1 | Kabul, Afghanistan**

The ‘pull factors’ associated with opportunities for employment in large-scale construction are created by the ‘new’ forces of urbanisation and are captured in: the rapidly increasing consumption power of better-off urban residents investing in, among others, housing and commercial ventures; foreign direct investment of capital into high-tech manufacturing and by default the construction



**PHOTOGRAPH ES2 | Kabul,  
Afghanistan**

of factories in SEZs; and infrastructure, to foster economic growth and enhance competitiveness. Knowledge of the availability of work in construction, prior to migration, is the real-time ‘pull factor’ for transient migrant contract construction labourers. It is important to note that migration is thus undertaken to ‘join’ a workforce (as opposed to traditional forms of independent migration that were predominantly in ‘search’ of work). Although there are no official statistics on the extent of ‘transient’ migrant construction labour in large-scale construction projects, the use of such labour is certain to increase, as it provides a stream of captive migrant workers (Photograph ES1). Some of the key ‘push factors’, amongst others, are the increasingly untenable rural livelihoods being pursued and the elusiveness of alternative income earning opportunities. Earnings from construction to meet daily expenses and service debt, for the

improvement of housing and (or) investment in business, at their places of origin become increasingly significant. At the same time, by working in large-scale urban construction, these ‘transient’ migrant workers’ are confronted with several trade-offs: living in low quality often ‘gated’ labour camps with very poor services; being indebted to labour-contractors through pay advances and the withholding of wages during periods of absence; accepting lower-wages in comparison with local labour; and forgoing opportunities for collective action. Surprisingly, there is relatively little research<sup>5</sup> and none that provides a benchmark with which to compare in the five south Asian cities.

The recruitment and deployment of transient migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction needs to be located and understood in this context. Furthermore, construction projects in urban areas, by and large, mirror the agricultural cycle – labour are able to go home to their place of origin and return to work in construction when they have met their livelihood and social obligations. Construction is thus a natural a fit for seasonal and circular rural to urban migration in comparison to employment in other sectors in the informal.

It is important to note that neither the use of migrant contract labour nor their recruitment by labour-contractors is a new phenomenon: such recruitment processes have existed during the harvesting season in the agricultural sector, the production of building materials (bricks and stone quarries), rural road construction, and occasionally in urban small and medium construction projects. What *is relatively new* (since the late 1980s, early 1990s) is the use of migrant contract labour in large-scale urban construction, especially the practice of housing them in ‘gated’ labour camps, making this labour force both ‘invisible’ and ‘hard to reach’, by state and non-state actors alike. The practice of housing these workers in ‘gated’ labour camps with variable restrictions on their daily freedom to move in and out of these labour camps raises a range of complex challenges both for policy makers and civil society activists seeking to address deprivation in the economic, social and political spheres NCEUS (2007).<sup>6</sup> It also has implications for workers organising collectively.

Tangentially, but nevertheless as important, is the impact that large-scale urban construction has on rural and urban landscapes, albeit in different ways. Unfettered investments in urban real estate and infrastructure and its accompanying industrial appetite for resources, is accelerating processes of enclosure and ‘dispossession’<sup>7</sup> in the urban-periphery, as well as rural hinterlands, several hundred kilometres away. Although this research has not explored this dimension in any detail, interviewees discuss these issues as impacting their places of origin and their subsequent decisions to migrate. Urban large-scale construction projects are not only surreptitiously enclosing a range of commons in

the urban periphery but also displacing local agricultural livelihoods. Irrespective of the form that these large-scale construction projects take (high-density and high-rise residential projects in Chennai and Dhaka, residential plots with infrastructure in Kabul and Lahore, or infrastructure project in all the five cities), this process is occurring at various speeds.

## **LOCATING TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR – THE EXISTING LITERATURE AND THE U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup>**

The literature is largely silent on the dialectical relationship between urbanisation (framed in terms of the consumption power visible in large-scale construction projects) and internal migration (arising from the recruitment of transient contract construction labour at their domestic place of origin). The handful of literature that explores migration for construction, focuses on: internal migration for road construction (for example, Picherit, 2014), long-term resident migrant construction workers (for example, Parry, 2014) and independent construction workers (for an exception see Dalmia 2012; Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015). Within the latter two groups of construction workers, attention is both paid to those who access work through contractors, family and other networks and on their own, as well as daily casual construction labour markets (for example, Ahsan, 1997; Chowdhury, 2013; Harris, Rosser and Kumar, 1996). These studies do not include research on their living conditions, since the migrants studied are assumed to make their own housing arrangements. Thus, the issues relating to this category of migrants are naturally bounded, insofar as large-scale construction in urban areas is concerned. These studies explore issues such as: fair wages and overtime; working conditions; and workers' entitlements (ways of redressing violations and exploitations and insurance). The fact that transient migrant contract construction workers work and live in the construction sites that they are employed in, makes their situation very different in terms of agency, policy and practice.

Construction labour is the bedrock of the urban built environment; and despite increased regard being paid to investments in urban infrastructure, insufficient attention is paid to construction labour, in particular migrant labour, which produce it<sup>8</sup> and they remain neglected in research and policy.

Some findings of the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> are new; others reinforce the findings of independent studies relating to urbanisation, construction and migration. This section provides a broad review of the literature on urbanisation and migration insofar as it is relevant for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project. A more nuanced review of the literature is undertaken in Chapter 2.

### **Urbanisation and migration**

In the 1960s, one strand of literature sought to explain economic growth and urbanisation in terms of the absorption of 'surplus' rural labour into urban manufacturing – the dual-economy model.<sup>9</sup> This is not particularly helpful in explaining the presence of transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale construction projects because this labour is not really 'surplus'. They seek alternative work during slack agricultural periods as a means of coping with poverty and vulnerability as well as to accumulate. Neither is civil and infrastructure construction projects manufacturing; hence there is no transfer of surplus labour, as envisioned in the dual economy model.

The literature exploring migration in terms of push and pull factors<sup>10</sup> has some resonance with the prevalence of transient migrant labour, in large-scale construction in south Asia. Two observations are pertinent here. Although a range of push factors are still at work, they vary between the five countries and in some instances are even more nuanced than the literature suggests. As noted earlier, the 'pull factors' in the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> are more specific – migration to 'join' work, compared to the

generalisation of pull factors in the literature (such as improved employment opportunities and better access to physical and social infrastructure), where migration is undertaken to ‘search’ for work. The indications are that large-scale construction in urban areas is here to stay and expand; the pull factor is likely to become a greater force and is discussed in relation to the policy implications later.

Dissatisfaction with the dual economy model prompted alternative explanations in the 1970s, namely, migration because of the wage differentials between rural and urban areas (Todaro, 1976, 1991).<sup>11</sup> Despite poor housing conditions, limited access to physical and social infrastructure and the lack of guaranteed work, this literature argued that migration was a rational choice based on expectations rather than the certainty of finding work. Internal rural-urban migration was thus couched in terms of the opportunity cost of not migrating. While rural-urban wage differentials do exist (although the gap is narrowing)<sup>12</sup> and independent<sup>13</sup> rural-urban migration (both in search of work, as well to take up work opportunities, resulting from networked connections) continues, the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> finds that that, in many instances, the recruitment deployment and housing of transient migrant labour by large-scale construction projects in urban areas, is reducing employment opportunities in such projects for local and long-term resident construction workers.

It is important to note that transient migrant contract labourers are *not responsible* for taking away employment opportunities in construction from local or resident migrant construction workers. Rather, the reduction of employment opportunities for the latter is the result of labour employment practices adopted by large-scale urban construction projects. If local and resident migrant labourers were willing to work and live in the conditions that transient migrant labourers do, they would be accepted on large-scale construction projects. The trade-offs faced by local and resident migrant labour are, on the one hand, between accepting the working and living conditions in large-scale projects that ‘offer regular’ work or, on the other hand, looking for work that pays higher wages, having the freedom to choose where to reside, and accepting the fact that working with petty-contractors in small-scale construction projects ‘may not provide regular work’. In Chennai, a group of independent resident migrant workers that were included in the study chose the latter. In Kabul, there was some evidence of the use of migrant construction workers resident in the city.<sup>14</sup>

### Migration and construction

Development economists have long argued for the need to recognise that urbanisation has a positive impact on economic growth (for example, see Harris, 1990).<sup>15</sup> However, the inability of manufacturing to absorb surplus rural labour (central to the dual-economy model) saw a burgeoning literature which sought to explain the development and growth of what is commonly referred to as the ‘informal economy’,<sup>16</sup> workers in construction being one among them. Given the predominance of independent rural-urban migration streams, studies of migrant labour in construction have explored their employment including recruitment and working conditions, their role in petty construction projects and the sale of their labour on a casual basis, in ‘day’ or ‘spot’ construction labour markets.<sup>17</sup> At the time, the main argument proffered was that the informal economy existed as a ‘reserve army of wage labour’ at the beck and call of capital. Furthermore, the reserve army of wage labour was maintained as it enabled capital to avoid spending on welfare benefits that were normally associated with permanent employment. The prevalence of ‘transient’ migrant contract construction labour in the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research is testimony to the relevance of this thinking several decades later.

The broader sustainable development discourse of the 1980s gave rise to the development and use of the ‘sustainable livelihoods’ framework.<sup>18</sup> It identified migration as one among other important

livelihood options available to, and used by, the poor to negotiate vulnerability and poverty;<sup>19</sup> something to be encouraged and supported.<sup>20</sup> Migration is central to the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project; employment opportunities in large-scale construction allow contract migrant labourers to deploy a key asset: their labour. The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> found that the composition of transient migrant streams into large-scale construction is changing. For instance, in Lahore, Seraikis were found to have replaced ethnic Pashtuns and in Chennai, the presence of ‘backward’ and a few ‘forward’ castes among the respondents was new. In Kabul, where patterns of migration are more complex, given the extent of internally displaced persons (IDPs), it was surprising that about half the respondents were not resident in, or IDPs from Kabul.

Employment relationships between employers and employees (unskilled and skilled blue-collar trades) in construction as a whole are informal; large-scale projects are no different.<sup>21</sup> Labour contractors do not necessarily recruit all of the workers in a project. Recruits are able to bring in other workers (usually friends, neighbours or family), as long as they accept the working and living conditions. This was found to be the case, albeit in varying degrees, in all the cities in the five countries in south Asia.

With the one notable exception of one large internationally funded infrastructure project in Kathmandu, our research teams found there were no formal contractual arrangements in place and that wages were paid in cash. Transient migrants in large-scale construction were most disadvantaged in bringing wage violations to the notice of groups representing construction labour (where they exist), both because of their isolation in labour-camps, as well as their fear of losing favour with their labour-contractor employers. The political will to address violations in ‘minimum wage’ payments was, as far as we were able to ascertain, absent in all the five cities. Even in prominent government commissioned projects, such as the Chennai Metro Rail project, respondents alleged minimum wage violations. It may also be the case that it is not simply the lack of political will but also the implicit and often corrupt ‘construction-state’ nexus at work.<sup>22</sup> It is striking that proposals for investment in infrastructure hardly mention issues relating to labour (see, footnote 7).

In conclusion, the literature is largely silent on the dialectical relationship between large-scale urban construction and the recruitment of transient contract migrant construction labour.<sup>23</sup> Some findings of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> are new; others reinforce the findings of independent studies on urbanisation, construction or migration.

## METHODOLOGY

Given the dearth of systematic secondary data on large-scale construction activity in the five cities, a mapping exercise (see map of Chennai projects on page 6) was conducted. It was framed by two key questions.

1. What are the forms and sources of investment in large-scale urban construction?
2. Where is this construction being undertaken (in the centre or at the periphery) and what regulatory frameworks define it?

### Mapping large scale construction projects

The mapping exercise generated information that hitherto had not been collated<sup>24</sup>; and provided a universe from which to purposively select projects, from which to draw potential migrant construction worker interviewees.

In total, approximately 1,000 projects were mapped between June and November 2014. From that sample, 25 were purposively selected according to construction type and size, as well as research

accessibility.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that although attempts were made to select projects that were representative of a range of construction types, access to migrant workers determined the final selection.

In order to capture the socio-economic status of these transient contract construction workers, their working and living conditions, migration pathways, recruitment processes and aspirations, we interviewed respondents at their project sites, where they also lived. This is not only a relatively new entry point but was the only entry point. A research design that involved interviews with transient migrant contract construction workers at their place of work posed four key challenges. Firstly, access to migrant labour proved to be widely problematic because developers were suspicious of workers speaking with ‘outsiders’. Secondly, identifying the best time to interview respondents was not easy as it depended both on access issues as well as availability of respondents, within a given research site, including weekends.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the distance and spread of research site locations in each city proved to be an additional challenge. Thus, fieldwork strategies used by research teams in each city included innovative ways of overcoming these, as well as other, (un)anticipated challenges.

Secondly, interviewing all construction workers in all trades within any given construction project is not possible in a research project conducted at a single point in time. A wide range of skills are used at various stages of construction and workers move on to other projects after making their particular contribution. Thirdly, the study of transient contract construction labour, resident in labour camps, is particularly challenging given the temporal nature of their stay; in comparison, it is possible to interview city-born and resident migrant construction workers at several points in time.

The only way to capture the socio-economic status of ‘transient’ contract migrant labour in construction, their working and living conditions, migration pathways, recruitment processes and aspirations was to interview them at individual project sites. However, whilst initial and follow-up access was certainly difficult, due to the need to research migrant contract construction labour across five cities at ‘*their place[s] of work*’, responses were elicited from a total of approximately 500 migrant workers, and it is these that are drawn on, to address the main research questions.

Of note here is that the policy challenges faced by internal rural-urban transient migrant contract construction labour are different to those experienced by international labour construction migrants. In both instances, they experience: wage exploitation; health and safety violations; and poor living (including sanitary) conditions. Furthermore, nation-states are less able to absolve themselves of their responsibility to their ‘citizens’ abroad. In comparison, the state is largely absent in honouring its responsibility to internal rural-urban construction migrants – a situation exacerbated by their invisibility in both research and policy.

The issues identified in this report should be of interest to a range of actors involved in (or with an interest in) the study of labour markets, as they relate to urbanisation and migration, as well as to those with an interest in policy. This includes: (i) national governments; (ii) regional associations of nation states; (iii) bi-lateral organisations, such as the UK Department of International Development (DFID) and their country offices; (iv) UN organisations, such as the International Labour Organisation and UN-Habitat; (v) international, national and local non-governmental organisations; (vi) trade-unions, membership based organisations and activists; (vii) the construction sector itself; and (viii) researchers and scholars.

## LOCATING TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR IN LARGE-SCALE URBAN CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN SOUTH ASIA - A CONCEPTUAL CANVAS

The U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> explores the processes underpinning the presence of transient migrant construction labour in large-scale construction through the following inter-related concepts: (i) the ‘urban commons of construction employment opportunities’ that draws on the notion of access in relation to rural commons; (ii) the ‘enclosure’ of such opportunities, vis-à-vis local construction labour; (iii) the use of transient contract construction labour as a workforce with constrained mobility;<sup>27</sup> and (iv) the ‘dispossession’ of peri-urban agricultural land and other commons peripheral to cities. This last point was explored to a limited extent in Chennai and Lahore, as it was of particular interest to the research partners, even though it was not part of this project’s research agenda. These terms are used quite extensively to explain processes underpinning poverty and migration in the rural global South. The U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> appropriates, adapts and applies these terms to the urban, in order to explain the processes underpinning the presence of transient migrant construction labour in large-scale construction.



**PHOTOGRAPH ES.3 | Ferozpur Road Flyover and Rotary, Lahore, Pakistan**

The argument advanced for the use of these concepts is that large-scale construction should, theoretically, open up employment opportunities for local, resident migrant and independent seasonal or circular migrant labour: namely the ‘urban commons’ of construction employment opportunities. The preference of large-scale construction projects for ‘transient’ migrant contract construction labour housed in ‘gated labour camps’ on or off site, produces ‘enclosures’ of work opportunities; local and resident migrants are by and large excluded. Entry into such enclosures takes place when migrant labourers, already in these enclosures, bring in additional labour through their networks;

in doing so, becoming a resident in the gated labour camps form part of the verbal contract. This condition acts to exclude local and resident migrant labour. Large-scale construction project enclosures are not always physical as is the case in residential, commercial and industrial projects; infrastructure projects do not have visible enclosures but they employ the same criteria - requiring construction labour to reside in off-site labour camps. Moreover, alongside cultural norms that pre-determine working roles for men and women, a reluctance to take on responsibilities for the safety of female workers was found to impact on women, by excluding them.<sup>28</sup>

The concept of ‘enclosure’ is used here as a metaphor for the limited presence of local construction labour in large-scale urban construction projects, as well as the material division imposed by walls or fences in most large-scale civil - residential, commercial and industrial - construction projects. However, this is not the case in most transport or water supply infrastructure projects. In both cases, ‘labour camps’ housing transient migrant construction prevail – some more visible than others.

This conceptualisation of the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> enables one to situate the practices of exclusion along three fronts: the livelihood - economic - exclusion of local and long-term resident migrant construction workers; the physical and socio-economic exclusions experienced by transient construction labour,

largely as a result of them being housed in labour camps; and the socio-cultural, personal and occupational exclusions female transient contract construction workers are subjected to.

The mapping exercise and the ‘voices’ of the respondents prompted the adaptation and use of the concepts of *commons*, *enclosure*, and *dispossession* to interlink the various facets of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project. In sum, there are clear benefits from using a grounded methodological approach to conceptualise transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale urban construction projects. An expanded explanation of the conceptual framework is presented in chapter 4.

## KEY PRIMARY FINDINGS

- **Seasonality of migration was a common thread running through all the transient contract construction worker interviews.** However, it was much more nuanced than solely being determined by the agricultural cycle. Seasonal return migration is influenced by a range of factors at their place of origin and includes: the cost-benefit of employment opportunities in existing or new projects; and the labour-contractor – transient contract worker relationship.
- **‘Gated labour camps’ housing transient contract labour (on or off site) renders them ‘invisible’ and ‘difficult to reach’.** This poses complex challenges for state and non-state actors. For the state, the challenges relate to both the enforcement of existing labour and wage regulations as well as housing and services. In addition, government policies that recognises and supports the links that transient migrants have with their places of origin, as well as overcoming some of the constraints that separation brings, are of equal importance. Non-state actors, especially those with an interest in urban labour, are confronted with the question of how best to gain access to this invisible, difficult-to-reach and transient pool of contract construction labour. The lack of data about the scale and specificities of transient labour migrants hinders both state and non-state actors.
- **Transient migrant contract construction labour is heavily dependent on labour-contractor patrons, whether for cash advances or work opportunities.** Despite the range of exclusions and exploitations this migrant labour force faces, they value the ‘regular’ and ‘guaranteed’ work that large-scale construction offers, for the duration of, or the particular phase of, the project for which they have been employed. They also value the opportunity to be redeployed by their labour-contractors to other projects in the same or other urban areas. State and non-state interventions will need to be cognisant of this. Ill-thought through attempts to enhance wages beyond minimum wage stipulations could lead to other exclusions, and efforts to improve housing and services could lead to such costs transferred to workers.
- **Transient contract migrant labourers do not have much opportunity to integrate with host communities if they wish to do so.** This results from their living in labour camps with restrictions about when they are allowed to leave. In addition, they themselves do not see the benefit of making contact with host communities, due to the temporary and transient nature of their stay.
- **Transient migrant labourers find it difficult to collectively organise.** They fear retaliation from labour-contractors and the short-term nature of their stay means they also find it difficult to form a sense of community. They also lack of knowledge regarding their rights.
- **As long as large-scale construction remains a substantial part of this new form of urbanism, the recruitment and employment of contract migrant labour will remain and grow.** Construction is vulnerable to boom and bust cycles, especially in real estate. However, estimates of investment in infrastructure in Asia<sup>29</sup> will continue to result in the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects and thus the continued use of migrant labour.

Some of the more specific findings of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project, such as reasons for migration, and the use and recruitment of transient migrant labour, are broadly similar across the five cities (and countries). Others differ, for instance, in relation to gender. More importantly, the five countries vary

in terms of their: (i) social, economic and institutional arrangements and development; (ii) governance structures and political systems; (iii) positioning vis-à-vis the global economic system which, among other things, influences labour market opportunities and thus the power of consumption; and (iv) scale and extent of large-scale construction; investment sources and range of actors involved. These variations will have a bearing on the relative potential for governments and civil society not only to find innovative ways of enforcing existing regulations but also to consider and implement new initiatives, aimed at addressing the relationship between their urbanisation, construction and internal migration realities.

### KEY POLICY CHALLENGES

The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> identifies several areas of policy concern for country governments, civil society, DFID, the UN's UN-Habitat and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Policy suggestions need to be tuned to the realities on the ground. For instance, improvements in wages or living conditions can result in the emergence of other vulnerabilities, such as rupturing of migrant workers' relationships with their labour contractors. Furthermore, policy interventions should aim to be non-threatening to developers and labour contractors. The policy suggestions offered here are therefore tempered to these realities.

Political will is critical for issues relating to contract migrant construction workers. Without this, it is difficult for the issues to even find their way onto the policy agenda, let alone policy formulation and implementation. National governments must commit themselves to recognising the significance of migration for construction in general and the link between contract labour and large-scale construction in particular. Those who do not view the trade-offs between 'guaranteed' and 'regular' work on the one hand, and poor working and living conditions on the other, as a problem only serve to maintain the status quo.

The remainder of this section highlights the policy issues that the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> has identified, the challenges in addressing them, and provides some broad suggestions.

#### Policy issue 1

### TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR AS A SUB-SET OF MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR



**PHOTOGRAPH ES.4** | Interstate migrants in Chennai, India

The main reason why 'transient migrant contract construction labour' should be treated as a sub-set of migrant construction workers is that deprivations relating to: wages, working conditions, housing and services, occur at a given construction site. This is not the case for those migrant workers who move independently of labour contractors. Irrespective of how they find work (direct recruitment or through networks of contractors or labour contractors, after they have migrated), independent migrant workers are responsible for finding their own accommodation, and accessing physical and social services, outside the boundaries of construction sites.

Thus, in comparison to independent migrant and local construction workers, although transient migrant contract construction labour tends to benefit from unwritten 'guarantees of regular work' for the periods they are required, they are worse off on many other fronts. These relate to: housing, access to water, sanitation and state welfare provision, where it exists. Policy related documents tend to ignore the housing and basic services dimension and focus primarily on wages and working

conditions. Since issues relating to wages, overtime, occupational health and safety, housing and basic services are not separate in the lived experiences of transient migrant contract construction workers; neither should they be separated in policy discourse.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to get transient migrant contract construction labour to be recognised, as a sub-set of construction workers in general, and migrant construction workers in particular?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	The 'client' of a given large-scale construction project is one entry point. Clients are: private sector; governments, bilateral and multi-lateral development organisations and banks are, often, also clients. The latter, especially multi-lateral development organisations and banks are an easier entry point.

Thus, in addition to developing policies for internal migrants in general, a policy sub-set for transient migrant construction labour is required, as: this form of migration will increase in the future; and the challenges that these migrants face are different from those experienced by those migrating independently in 'search' of work.

## Policy issue 2 **MINIMUM WAGES, OVERTIME PAYMENT & OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

The 'invisible' and 'hard-to-reach' situation of transient contract construction labour, limits the efficacy of existing approaches by non-state actors, in improving their working and living conditions. This includes: the 'Decent Work Agenda' of the International Labour Organisation; the notion of shelter deprivations promulgated by UN-Habitat; and the critical work of 'collective organising' by civil-society actors. Unlike international construction migrants, transient migrant contract construction workers are able to switch employers relatively easily. However, depending on their relations with the labour contractor, transient migrants, in comparison with local labour, may find it more difficult to do so.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How should issues of wages, working conditions and social protection be addressed, given the specificity of the circumstances of transient migrant contract construction workers, in large-scale construction?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	<p>Policy thinking can begin with 'information flows' addressing questions, such as the following. (i) Who has migrated, where have they migrated to, and where do they migrate to next? Step migration - information on step migration is vital to both the family and the state, if, for instance a serious work accident or death befalls a transient contract construction migrant, this information needs to be recorded.</p> <p>(ii) Wage exploitation (including overtime or lack of pay), health and safety and other excesses, hidden from view. Whilst transient contract construction workers have restrictions placed on how often they can leave their labour camps, a large number of them possess mobile telephones. The development of software applications (apps) that enable them to record and register the information flows identified above, needs to be given serious consideration.</p> <p>The use of social media could also assist in highlighting the issues faced by these workers. It is important to promote the message that whilst international construction migrants working in mega-city construction projects certainly deserve the international attention they receive, about their exploitation and ill-treatment, similar attention needs to be given to domestic, migrant construction workers. They receive comparatively little attention, despite the fact that their numbers far exceed those working in international construction. Interest is only sparked when a major incident, usually resulting in death, occurs.</p>

## Policy Issue 2a MINIMUM WAGES AND OVERTIME PAYMENT

The key reasons given by clients and contractors of large-scale construction projects for housing transient migrant contract construction workers in ‘gated labour camps’, are that migrants face challenges in finding housing at their places of destination; and that it is provided free of cost. Although it may be difficult to disagree with this reasoning, the act of recruiting transient migrant contract construction workers, instead of local and long-term resident migrant construction workers, is that workers residing in gated labour camps serve the interests of construction capital; apart from wage differentials between the two sets of migrants, housing them on site removes any risks associated with the timely presence of labour and provides a readily available supply of workers, whose working days can be easily extended to include overtime. Often they are not paid the additional wage that overtime work stipulates. Although the question of whether workers have, and should have, the freedom to decide whether or not to work overtime is an important one, the violation of minimum wage legislation and overtime payment directives is perhaps a more pressing issue, especially if they occur in large-scale construction projects, where governments are clients.

In governmental large-scale construction projects, subcontracting construction to private contractors has resulted in the government offloading its responsibility as de jure employers of construction workers. Thus, although governments are clients, they absolve themselves of their responsibilities with respect to labour, by passing it on to the contractors concerned. If progress is made in ensuring that minimum wage and overtime requirements are met in large-scale infrastructure projects (as these tend to be ones where the government is the client and financing often involves development banks) hundreds of currently employed construction workers will benefit. Moreover, as large-scale infrastructure projects will continue to be part of the urban built environment landscape for some considerable time, thousands more workers will benefit in future.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to ensure that transient migrant contract construction workers are paid the stipulated minimum wage and overtime.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Given that transient migrant construction workers live in labour camps with restrictions on their movements, a way has to be found for them to report violations in relation to minimum wages and overtime. One suggestion is the use of mobile telephony through which any violations can be reported. There is the risk here of increasing the vulnerability of workers vis-à-vis their relationship with contractors and labour contractors. Thus, this suggestion has to be buttressed with initiatives of bringing contractors and labour contractors on board.

## Policy Issue 2b OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Work in construction is often referred to as a 3D – dirty, dangerous and demeaning (demanding and difficult are also terms used in place of demeaning) – Photographs ES0.2 and ES 0.3. However, construction, like any other work should have ‘dignity’.

Ensuring occupational safety and health (OSH) for transient migrant contract construction workers needs to take into account the informal practices used in hiring them and their mobility – which is both seasonal, as well as circular.



**PHOTOGRAPH ES.5** | Working conditions in a flyover infrastructure project in Dhaka, Bangladesh (2014)

As hard hats and boots are safety equipment worn by individual workers, it is difficult to envisage transient migrant contract workers freely investing in them, given that there is no regular flow of work. At the same time, it is also difficult to envisage all employers – labour contractors – investing in such safety equipment for their labour, as they themselves are not assured of work.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to ensure that transient migrant contract construction workers are equipped with the necessary safety equipment – especially hard hats and boots.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Steel capped boots are the most problematic and their provision should form part of the contract with the client, who should be held accountable, or responsible, if they are not provided. The provisions of harnesses are not as problematic, as they are easily transferable between workers. Hard hats of the correct size can also be shared, as long as they are cleaned before being passed on to the next worker.

**Policy Issue 3 HOUSING, WATER AND SANITATION**



**PHOTOGRAPH ES.6** | Communal cooking, Kabul, Afghanistan

Labour camps in all the five cities are characterised by woefully inadequate provision in relation to housing, water and sanitation, and cooking facilities. Electricity provision is less of an issue, as it is often needed before construction actually begins. Thus the provision of electricity for use by construction workers on-site only requires extension of the initial provision. Inadequate sanitation provision is problematic, and especially for women and accompanying children. The findings support the need to separate the challenges relating to housing from water and sanitation.

### Policy Issue 3a HOUSING

Many of the labour camps in the five cities are constructed using corrugated tin sheets or other temporary materials. Tin becomes both extremely and unbearably hot in the south Asian summers.



Photo © Melissa Fernandez

**PHOTOGRAPH ES.7** | *Labour camp constructed of tin which becomes unbearably hot in summer, Dhaka, Bangladesh*



Kathmandu | Nepal

Photo © Sunil Kumar

**PHOTOGRAPH ES.8** | *Improved housing for senior employees – housing does not have to be poor, Kathmandu, Nepal*

<b>Policy challenge</b>	The challenge here is twofold. First, labour camps are temporary and exist only for the duration of the construction project. Moreover, in real estate projects, labour is often moved into unfinished parts of the building, frequently violating existing legislation that prohibits such practice. Second, the provision of housing and services are not in actual fact 'free' as might be either assumed or argued; costs for housing are often deducted from wages.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Existing laws and regulations need to be reframed in relation to contemporary practices of labour recruitment and deployment. Exploring the ability of new technologies to deliver improved portable housing is a good starting point. In addition, consideration needs to be given as to who would bear the cost of improved housing.

### Policy Issue 3b WATER AND SANITATION

Water and sanitation are different in their flows: the former goes 'in' the latter is taken 'out'. This means that the provision of water is less complex than that of sanitation. Transient migrants, by themselves, are not in a position to hold employers to account for poor services and non-state actors are confronted by the constraints that 'hard-to-reach' labour camps present. That said, employers often recognise the importance of water and several do make some attempts to provide it, although the water quality is altogether another matter. At times, minimal provision for bathing is made (Photograph ES 0.7)..

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of sanitation; the public health links between poor sanitation and ill health are not adequately understood by a significant proportion of the population. As noted, sanitation involves the removal of waste. In real estate projects, sanitation is one of the last components to be completed; sanitation is not part of infrastructure projects. Employers do not seem to be particularly intent on providing adequate sanitation facilities. This is on two grounds: the cost of such provision vis-à-vis project duration; and assumptions that 'open defecation' practices are common and accepted among transient migrants.



**PHOTOGRAPH ES.9** | Rudimentary bathing facility in a labour camp in a government housing project, Chennai, India



**PHOTOGRAPH ES.10** | Improved toilet and bathing facilities in a large-scale construction project, Kabul, Afghanistan

On the rare occasion, where sanitation is provided (Photograph ES 0.8), maintenance is often a critical issue, as the facilities depend on the use of water, which in turn is in short supply. That said, it is interesting to note that site-offices for white-collar employees have both adequate water and sanitation provision.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to ensure the provision of improved sanitation? Water is less of a challenge.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	The provision of portable sanitation facilities by external actors for a fee is worthy of exploration, as it would address both provision and maintenance, culminating in improved health outcomes.

#### Policy Issue 4 Gender and Construction

Recruitment, working and living conditions have a gendered dimension that negatively impacts on women, especially those with children. Construction, as a gendered space, was not present on construction sites in either Lahore or Kabul, as women were not employed as construction workers.



**PHOTOGRAPH ES.11** | Female 'unskilled' construction worker mixing aggregate for concrete while the male concrete mixer 'operator' rests, Kathmandu, Nepal

<b>Policy challenge</b>	The policy challenges in relation to sexism, including explicit discrimination and harassment faced by female construction workers, at every stage of the construction process, are both cultural and occupational in nature. They include the: (a) lack of training for both men and women regarding the work, and its gender-specific pressures; (b) traditional masculine networks of ‘word of mouth’ recruitment strategies that disadvantage women; (c) sanitary and health concerns that pertain to women; (d) guarantees of their personal physical security and rights, in a male dominated environment; (d) enhancement of their skills and thus wages; (e) guarantees of equal pay; (f) guarantees of maternity leave/pay/rights (the right to return to work, for example); (g) access to education and training; and (h) improved job retention and possibilities for promotion.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	<p>Educating men and women about how eliminating gender pay gaps and valuing women improves both competitiveness and enhances the social and cultural relations of people working within the industry, especially at construction sites. Valuing women in construction will benefit all members of the household and community. Men, women and children will be better-off economically, socially and culturally.</p> <p>In particular: women should be made aware of the workplace culture and their rights, and at the same time all workers - particularly recruiters and managers - should be trained in equal opportunities and gender-specific issues and pressures. Where family migration is present, accommodation should be suitable for all members of a household and include any additional requisite space; security in both private and public spaces must be ensured, with adequate lighting and formal or informal security mechanisms; training and educational opportunities should be made available to suit their working and parenting schedules (e.g., night-time); part-time work and flexible hours should be offered as incentives; traditional masculine ‘image’ and male figures used to advertise construction work (including health and safety) should be given more consideration and images of construction made gender neutral.</p> <p>Companies that improve standards by investing in equality of opportunity at all levels, through the development training courses and improvement of image-making, could be ranked and (or) rewarded by prizes, publicity and (or) ‘league tables’ that value such achievements. Non-state actors, working on the frontline with migrant workers and their children, should incorporate gender-positive images of women working in construction. Some of these suggestions overlap with other policy sections because they cannot be treated in isolation. For example, suggestions on the use of mobile communications and improved housing and sanitation facilities.</p>

## Policy Issue 5 ACCESSING TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Labour camps render transient contract construction migrants ‘invisible’ because they live in on-site or off-site labour camps, which are often enclosed by walls made of temporary building materials and are dispersed across the city. Even those labour camps that are not ‘hidden’ from site become ‘invisible’ as they are often mistaken for ‘squatter’ settlements that may either be evicted or regularised. Labour camps are also ‘hard-to-reach’ because they are off-site and require the bypassing of security personnel.

Civil society organisations, especially those with an interest in labour welfare, are at a particular disadvantage in accessing these workers, as they are seen as a threat by developers and contractors alike. In comparison, those civil society actors or organisations involved in education or health are

perceived to be less threatening and find gaining access to transient migrant contract construction workers comparatively easy.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How best to access transient migrant contract construction labour?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Support for non-threatening forms of access and service provision needs to be considered. The extension of health and education (where applicable) is not only important in itself; it can also act as a conduit for useful information.

## Policy Issue 6 EXCLUSION FROM STATE WELFARE PROVISION

In comparison to independent migrants, transient migrants are more likely to experience greater exclusion from state welfare provision, because of the temporary nature of their stay. Often, health and education are provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and such provision is not seen as a threat – unlike interventions that are to do with the working and living conditions of transient migrant contract construction workers, but a service that is beneficial to the employer without associated costs.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How best to ensure that, access to state welfare provision where it exists, does not disadvantage the immediate or extended households of transient migrant contract construction labour, as a result of their migration?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	State welfare provision, where it exists or is being planned, must take into account the mobility of migrants; in particular the employer induced constraints on the mobility of transient contract construction labour, and the long distances they travel.

## Policy Issue 7 COLLECTIVE ACTION CONSTRAINTS

Collective bargaining has long been the bedrock of trade unions. Given that the livelihoods of the vast majority of urban dwellers in the global south are in the informal economy, social movements underpin collective action more often than collective bargaining, as unionisation is more problematic. Thus, demands for the need for improved housing and basic services are directed at the state through territorially based social movements. This is the case, even for those whose livelihoods are based on informal contracts, such as local and long-term resident migrant construction workers.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	Firstly, the length of their employment, which is temporary, reduces the perceived need to organise. Secondly, the lack of community feeling, especially where groups do not share the same language, is another barrier to associating. Thirdly, and most importantly, the labourers fear upsetting their relationships with their labour contractors, as this may have an impact on both their current and any future employment opportunities.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Attempts at collective organising have focused solely on workers. In the case of transient contract migrants, labour-contractors need to be included in conversations. Interventions should convey the message that labour contractors are not the focus of collective organisation; developers and clients are. This would have to involve initiatives at places of origin (as this is the source of recruitment) and be followed up at their destinations.

**Policy Issue 8****UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN OFFICIAL SURVEYS**

Residence at the workplace results in the underrepresentation of transient migrant workers in a range of official socio-economic surveys, which are conducted in residential locations unconnected to those of work (apart from home-based enterprises).

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How best to include transient migrant contract construction workers in official surveys?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Transient migrants should be included in such surveys. Partnerships with non-state actors providing non-threatening social welfare, health and education services are worthy of further exploration.

**Policy Issue 9****DATASETS CONTAINING INFORMATION ON MIGRATION**

Datasets containing migration information vary hugely between countries, both in terms of the extent to which they include questions about construction related migration, and the level of detail they contain, in terms of the reasons for migration.

<b>Policy challenge</b>	At the national level, the challenge relates to capturing migration flows, as well as second level answers to the reasons for migration. At the south Asia regional level, the challenge is one of the harmonisation of official surveys that contain information on migration.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	<p>A serious attempt needs to be made at the national level to incorporate questions that provide information on migration flows – especially seasonal and circular migration – a point stressed by UNESCO (2013), among others. Furthermore and with specific reference to the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> the broad answers that a respondent can give as to the reasons for migration – such as marriage, follow the family or join work – do not detail what economic activities out-migrants may become involved in, or what work they are joining. The same applies to ‘construction’, which is also a very broad category of employment.</p> <p>Attempts should be made to harmonise questions relating to internal migration, across the region wherever possible. Such attempts will depend on national surveys initially recognising the importance of migration and construction.</p> <p>In the short to medium term, consideration should be given to including more disaggregated questions relating to the reasons for migration. Questions on migration for construction should be given particular attention.</p>

**ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES**

Although these findings, policy challenges and suggestions derive from the focus of this study - namely the situation of transient contract migrants in large-scale construction projects - the drivers of migration and the impact that large-scale construction has on contemporary urbanism, should not be ignored. Policy should thus include consideration of:

- a) the specific drivers of migration – meeting daily expenses, repayment of debt, investment in business or improvements to housing at the places of origin. An in-depth and more nuanced review of interventions at ‘places of origin’ is required.

- b) current practices of allowing unfettered investment in large-scale construction (especially residential) and the serious impact this has in relation to a number of fronts: the dispossession of peri-urban livelihoods and commons; environmental outcomes; and the stress on resources, especially water.

### Sharing of information and practice at the regional level

- Information sharing between South Asian nations on the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus does not exist – this would be a good starting point. Attempts should be made to forge links between the Ministries of urban development and labour, for example.
- Links could also be forged between non-state organisations working on labour issues in general and construction labour in particular.

### Information collection and dissemination

Currently, DFID commissioned research outputs are made publicly available via the Research for Development (R4D) portal. Two additional options are worth considering.

- DFID's country offices could create or support a portal (with the necessary caveats pertaining to research quality), which contains information about, and web-links to, research outputs not funded by DFID, but related to internal migration in general and construction in particular. Linking up with UNDPs Solution Exchange is worthy of further exploration.
- DFID could also commission its own quantitative data collection on migration and construction in countries in which it has an interest.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Researching the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five south Asian cities has generated numerous questions for further research. Some of these are as follows.

- Why some households opt to migrate (or send individuals) to work in large-scale construction and others do not.
- How labour contractors recruit at places of origin: choice of migrants and negotiations.
- How relationships between developers as well as civil contractors and labour contractors develop and are maintained.
- What impact the mechanisation of large-scale construction, such as the use of mechanical diggers for foundation trenches or hoists to move building materials, is likely to have on unskilled labour in construction.
- How the  $U^C M_n^{SA}$  plays out in secondary cities and towns.

## END NOTES

- 1 24 March 2014 to 31 October 2015. We would like to acknowledge the critical insights and support provided by Dr Nupur Barua throughout the project. Anirban Ganguli provided useful initial input into the quantitative aspects of this project. Anuradha Rajan, Assistant Programme Officer, was very efficient in dealing with the paper work. We would like to thank DFID's South Asia Research Hub for funding this project, as it is a very under-researched area.
- 2 The acronym U<sup>C</sup>M uses the notation C underscore in superscript (<sup>C</sup>) to emphasise the link it plays between the forces of contemporary urbanisation and transient migration. The 'n' that follows the acronym U<sup>C</sup>M denotes 'nexus' whereas the use of the letter 'p' stands for project. The acronym SA in superscript (<sup>SA</sup>) denotes South Asia. The Urbanisation-Construction-Migration Nexus in Five Cities in South Asia is referred to in the literature sometimes as U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> and sometimes as U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> depending on whether the term 'project' is required or not in the acronym.
- 3 See Chapter 4 – Methodology for more details.
- 4 The term 'resurgent' is used here deliberately. Migration flows on the basis of an oral 'contract' between labour contractors and migrants is not new; it has and continues to exist in rural-rural migration flows for work in agriculture as well as in brick kilns and quarries (stone and sand, for instance). Notwithstanding the debate on whether 'contract' labour is bonded or not (see Brass, 2000; Breman, 1999a; 1999b for the debate), the predominant use of transient migrant 'contract' construction workers in large-scale construction in all the five cities studied is 'relatively new' both in terms of scale and the magnitude of workers housing in labour camps on-site as well as off-site.
- 5 As this report is being written, new research has been published on how migration for work in urban construction impacts on poverty in the place of origins of migrants; see J. Adhikari and P. Deshingkar (2015).
- 6 NCEUS (2007). 'Report on Conditions of Work and Promotions of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector' [National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector], India: New Delhi
- 7 D. Harvey (2003). *The New Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also, D. Harvey (2004). 'The 'new' imperialism: accumulation by dispossession', *Socialist Register*, 40: 63-87; A. Vasudevan, C. McFarlane and A. Jeffrey (2008). 'Spaces of enclosure', *Geoforum*, 39(5):1641–1646; Sevilla-Buitrago (2015). 'Capitalist Formations of Enclosure', *Antipode*, 47(4): 999-1020. A. Ong and Roy, A. (2011). *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, Sussex: Blackwell; for rural land dispossession, see: M. Levin (2013). 'The Politics of Dispossession: Theorizing India's Land Wars', *Politics and Society*, 41(3): 351-394.
- 8 Gol (2011). *High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) for estimating the investment requirement for urban infrastructure services*, New Delhi: Government of India. Also see, I. J. Ahluwalia, R. Kanbur and P. K. Mohanty (2014). *Urbanisation in India - Challenges, Opportunities and the Way Forward* London: Sage.
- 9 J. C. H. Fei and G. Ranis (1963). 'Innovation, capital accumulation, and economic development', *The American Economic Review*, 53(3): 283-313. More recently, it has been argued that the rural and urban are not two distinct sectors; they are better understood in terms of their linkage – see, for example, C. Tacoli (Ed.) (2006). *The Earthscan Reader in Rural-Urban Linkages*, London, Earthscan.
- 10 E. S. Lee (1966). 'A Theory of Migration', *Demography* 3(1): 47-57.
- 11 M. Todaro (1976). *Internal Migration in Developing Countries*, Geneva: ILO; M. Todaro (1991). *Economic Development in the Third World*, London: Orient Longman.
- 12 S. Wiggins and S. Keats (2014). Rural wages in Asia. London, Overseas Development Institute. [Source](#), (Retrieved on 10 January 2015).
- 13 The term 'independent' migration refers to migration that does not involve labour contractors. It is not to be associated with the presence or absence of networks.
- 14 One must remember that Kabul is somewhat unique in that the city is host to several thousands of Internally Displaced People (IDP) who would not count as migrants in the official sense of the term.
- 15 See, for example, N. Harris (1986). *The end of the Third World: the Newly Industrialising Countries and the decline of an ideology*, IB Tauris, Penguin, Viking: London and New York; N. Harris (1990). Urbanisation and economic development, ODA-commissioned paper for French Government conference of international aid

donors, Lille, Nov. 1989, published in *Les Villes: Moteurs du developpement economique des pays du Tiers Monde*, Ville de Lille, Vo.2; N. Harris (1992). *The urban contribution to national economic growth in Nepal*, Royal Government of Nepal (mimeo), UNDP/World Bank, 1991/DPU Working Paper 60, DPU, London.

- <sup>16</sup> C. O. N. Moser (1978). 'Informal Sector or Petty Commodity Production - Dualism or Dependence in Urban-Development', *World Development*, 6(9-10): 1041-1064; J. Harriss, K.P. Kannan and G. Rodgers (1990). *Urban labour market structure and job access in India: a study of Coimbatore*. Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.
- <sup>17</sup> N. Harris, C. Rosser and S. Kumar (1996). *Jobs for the Poor: A Case Study in Cuttack*. London, UCL Press.
- <sup>18</sup> A. Carney and D. Carney (1999). *Sustainable Livelihoods: Lessons from early Experience*, London, Department for International Development; D. Carney (1998). *Implementing the sustainable rural livelihoods approach, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: What Contribution Can we Make?*, London: Department for International Development: 3-23; D. Carney (2002). *Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches: Progress and Possibilities for Change*, London, Department for International Development; R. Chambers and G. Conway (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century. IDS Discussion Paper 296*, Sussex: Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- <sup>19</sup> For instance, see: A. de Haan (1999). 'Livelihoods and poverty: The role of migration - a critical review of the migration literature', *Journal of Development Studies*, 36(2): 1-47; A. de Haan (2002). 'Migration and Livelihoods in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of Bihar', India, *Journal of Development Studies*, 38(5): 115-142; A. de Haan and B. Rogaly (2002). 'Introduction: Migrant Workers and Their Role in Rural Change', *Journal of Development Studies*, 38(5): 1-14; A. de Haan (1997). 'Rural-urban migration and poverty - The case of India', *IDS Bulletin*, 28(2): 35-47; F. Ellis (1998). 'Household strategies and rural livelihood diversification', *Journal of Development Studies*, 35(1): 1-38; F. Ellis (2003). *A livelihoods approach to migration and poverty reduction*, Norwich: Overseas Development Group, University of East Anglia; C.O.N. Moser (2007). 'Asset Accumulation Policy and Poverty Reduction'. In C. O. N. Moser (Ed.). *Reducing Global Poverty: The Case for Asset Accumulation*, Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press: 83-103. Some have applied the concept of assets to urbanisation – see for example, J. Friedmann (2007). 'The wealth of cities: Towards an assets-based development of newly urbanizing regions', *Development and Change*, 38(6): 987-998.
- <sup>20</sup> See, for example, A. de Haan (2000). *Migrants, livelihoods, and rights: the relevance of migration in development policies. Social Development Working Paper 4*, London: Social Development Department, UK Department for International Development; DFID (2007). *Moving out of Poverty: Making Migration Work Better for Poor People*. London, Department for International Development.
- <sup>21</sup> In one project visited in Chennai (a large Indian developer based in Mumbai), we witnessed workers recording the beginning and end of shift by punching a time card at the site office. It is clear that developers and (or) contractors have information on the number of labourers working on a project at any point in time and over the construction period but are reluctant to disclose this information.
- <sup>22</sup> See: Weinstein, L. (2008). 'Mumbai's Development Mafias: Globalization, Organized Crime and Land Development', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32(1): 22-39; Green, P. (2005). 'Disaster by Design: Corruption, Construction and Catastrophe', *British Journal of Criminology*, 45: 528-546.
- <sup>23</sup> There have been studies that have explored migration and development – for Bangladesh, see R. Afsar (2003). *Internal migration and the development nexus: the case of Bangladesh. Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia: 6*, Dhaka: DFID and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMR); T. Siddiqui (2003). *Migration as a livelihood strategy of the poor: the Bangladesh case, Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia: 5*, Dhaka: DFID and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMR).
- <sup>24</sup> These baseline studies are in themselves informative and will be made available as standalone documents.
- <sup>25</sup> See Chapter 4, Methodology, for more details.
- <sup>26</sup> Since workers worked and lived on site, the working day seamlessly merged into the rest of the day. Outside of the working day, respondents were involved, for example in cooking, washing clothes or sometimes too tired to be interviewed. Weekends were no different.

- <sup>27</sup> J. Lerche (2011). The unfree labour category and unfree labour estimates: A continuum within low end labour relations, Working Paper No. 10, *Manchester Papers in Political Economy*, Manchester: University of Manchester. [Source](#) (Retrieved on 24 October, 2015).
- <sup>28</sup> The Chennai Metro Rail project is a prime example. During our inception mission visit to Dhaka, Bangladesh, a project manager, when asked if women would be considered for employment, the burden of ensuring their security was given as a reason for not employing them. This must be placed in the context of residing in on-site labour camps where control over workers reporting for work is exercised.
- <sup>29</sup> For instance, the ADB estimates that “between 2010 and 2020, Asia needs to invest about \$8 trillion in national infrastructure and about \$290 billion in regional infrastructure to connect its economies to each other and the world.” See, ADB (2009). *Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia*, Manila: Asia Development Bank. [Source](#) (Retrieved on 24 October, 2015).

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**1** **Introduction**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 1

THE URBANISATION-CONSTRUCTION-MIGRATION NEXUS IN SOUTH ASIA (U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup>)<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the contribution that the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five cities in south Asia makes, to an understanding of how the contemporary built environment is intricately linked with consumption, on the one hand and the demand for ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ on the other. In so doing, it provides a different angle from which the links between urbanisation and migration can be explored. The phrase ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ is used to differentiate between internal independent migrant construction workers (individual, family or as a group) and dependent migrant labourers recruited by labour contractors. The term ‘contract’ refers to the relationship between the labour-contractor and the construction migrant worker, where the worker is contracted to undertake work assigned to them, over a certain period of time. It does not refer to a formal written contract.

Migrant contract construction labour is ‘transient’ for three reasons: (i) the seasonal nature of agriculture at their places of origin means that they are available for work at different points of the year; (ii) they are highly mobile, in that they move from one construction site to another, upon completion of the tasks assigned to them; and (iii) the opportunities for them to settle at their places of destination by occupying land are much more limited, in comparison with their migrant worker peers, who arrived several decades ago. Limited housing options are largely the result of urban policies that seek to ‘beautify’ cities in the global South by ensuring that the poor do not squat in the city and those who do are often relocated to the city periphery. Two options are available to ‘transient’ migrants seeking to reside in the city: one is to attempt to ‘squat’ tens of kilometres from the city centre; and the other is to rent a room in one of the many settlements where the city poor are currently located.

The remainder of this introductory chapter explains how the idea for the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> emerged and is followed by a brief outline of the south Asian contextual setting. An explanation of the terms used in this report is provided prior to concluding with an outline of its structure.

1.2 SETTING THE U<sup>C</sup>MNP<sup>SA</sup> RESEARCH AGENDA

The Urbanisation-Construction-Migration Nexus in Five Cities in South Asia research deploys construction as a lens to explore contemporary urbanisation-migration linkages. Three observations are of note here. Firstly, migration for work in construction is not new – seasonal and circular migrants, even those without specific construction skills, have offered their labour as unskilled workers for decades. However, while independent rural to urban migrants have, by and large, migrated in ‘search’ of work, most of the construction workers in U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> research have been ‘procured’ by ‘labour contractors’ to ‘take-up’ work. Secondly, the link between urbanisation and construction is also not new. The urban built environment (indeed any built environment for that matter) involves construction, which, in turn, is dependent on both unskilled to skilled construction labour. Thirdly, construction<sup>2</sup> is place specific; at any given point in time, there are several construction projects underway and new ones begin. Moreover, construction is a complex process where a range of specialisms (for instance, civil, structural, mechanical, electrical) and related skills are required at certain points. Thus, researching construction workers at a particular point in time can only ever include those who are present at any given stage in the construction project. For example, those

involved in the foundation stage of a building that involves digging, are unlikely to be present when masons are at work bricklaying. In sum, unlike many other production processes, construction sites and labour are constantly on the move – the latter more frequently than the former.

This report is based on empirical evidence emerging from recently conducted fieldwork in five cities in south Asia – Kabul (Afghanistan), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Chennai (India), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Lahore (Pakistan).<sup>3</sup> The aim was to: (a) provide new data and analysis of the linkages (nexus) between urbanisation and migration in the five case-study cities, by focusing on the migrant labour dynamics underpinning large-scale construction projects in urban areas; and (b) contribute to academic and policy debates on these topics by arguing that construction lies at a vital intersection between urbanisation and migration, and therefore illuminates some of the most crucial aspects of that nexus in the context of national and global growth.

### 1.2.1 Urbanisation

According to UN projections, rates of urbanisation are predicted to double Asia’s urban population between 2000 and 2030, rising from 48 per cent to 54 per cent (Kundu, 2001). This is not, however, a uniform process across South Asia (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 | Total Population, Total Urban Population and % Urban (mid-year in 1,000s) - Selected years**

Country	Year				
	1975	1990	2000	2015	2030
<b>Afghanistan</b>					
Total Pop (1,000s)	12,552	11,731	20 595	32 007	43 500
Total Urban Pop (1,000)	1,705	2,149	4 383	8 547	14 788
% Urban	14	18	21	27	34
<b>Bangladesh</b>					
Total Pop (1,000s)	72,265	107,386	132 383	160 411	185 064
Total Urban Pop (1,000)	7,108	21,275	31 230	54 984	83 160
% Urban	10	20	24	34	45
<b>India</b>					
Total Pop (1,000s)	622,232	868,891	1 042 262	1 282 390	1 476 378
Total Urban Pop (1,000)	132,732	221,979	288 365	419 939	583 038
% Urban	21	26	28	33	39
<b>Nepal</b>					
Total Pop (1,000s)	12,871	18,111	23 184	28 441	32 853
Total Urban Pop (1,000)	622	1,604	3 114	5 294	8 235
% Urban	5	9	13	19	25
<b>Pakistan</b>					
Total Pop (1,000s)	68,155	111,091	143 832	188 144	231 744
Total Urban Pop (1,000)	17,953	33,967	47 687	72 921	107 880
% Urban	26	31	33	39	47

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2014). *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, custom data acquired via website* - <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/DataQuery/>

Asia as a whole and South Asia in particular is confronted with issues relating to poverty and hunger, access to basic services, gender disparities, social exclusion, conflict and climate change<sup>4</sup>. This presents policy makers, international development organisations and civil society actors with diverse and complex development challenges. Notwithstanding the differences in the economic, social and political settings within Asia, and the country specific drivers that give rise to these challenges, there

are certain similarities in how issues of poverty, exclusion, gender, housing, basic services, labour markets and governance are being addressed. One such similarity is that policies and programmes, by and large, seem to address these challenges in isolation. The U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> proposes a more ‘joined up’ analysis of these diverse challenges by focusing on the link between urbanisation, construction and migration.

The U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> does not revisit the debates surrounding the definition of ‘urban’ or the comparative measurement of ‘levels of urbanisation’ (for example, Satterthwaite, 2007). Although issues of definition are important in comparing, for example, changes in urban or rural poverty across the region, it is not that significant for the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> insofar as urbanisation is used as a proxy for the growing consumption power of middle and upper classes that now consume real estate, in addition to commodities such as automobiles, white goods and textiles. According to the UN Population Division, in 2015, Pakistan leads the urban hierarchy in percentage terms, followed by India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal. However, in terms of absolute numbers, India by virtue of the size of its overall population has the largest urban population followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal. This clearly influences the scale and intensity of large-scale construction in urban areas.

### 1.2.2 Construction

Construction, in this report, is defined as investments in: (i) large-scale residential, commercial and industrial projects (both in urban centres and the peripheries) by a growing middle class, with their increasing consumption power (with wealth emanating from a range of sources); and (ii) infrastructure (both public and private, or a combination of the two, in relation to water, energy, sewerage, telecommunications, roads and transportation services) – see Photographs 1.1 and 1.2.



**PHOTOGRAPH 1.1** | *Large-scale residential project with labour camp, Chennai, India*



**PHOTOGRAPH 1.2** | *Large-scale residential project Dhaka, Bangladesh*

Since the 1990s, city, state and national governments have made, and continue to make, large investments in infrastructure (Photograph 1.3). There is a gap in knowledge about the sourcing of internal migrant labour for large-scale construction. Existing studies of labour in construction tend to focus more on working conditions (in brick kilns, stone quarries or smaller construction sites, for instance) and not so much on how the new forces of urban wealth and investment are spurring demand for migrant labour construction workers; and how they, in turn, navigate and negotiate the new realities they find themselves in.

There is a gap in knowledge about the sourcing of internal migrant labour for large-scale construction. Existing studies of labour in construction tend to focus more on working conditions (in brick kilns, stone quarries or smaller construction sites, for instance) and not so much on how the new forces of urban wealth and investment are spurring demand for migrant labour construction workers;

and how they, in turn, navigate and negotiate the new realities they find themselves in. In short, there is a gap in understanding between how labour is recruited (the pull factors) and the impact of this on the erosion of rural livelihoods (the push factors).



**PHOTOGRAPH 1.3** | *Dual carriageway infrastructure project, Lahore, Pakistan (July 2014)*

The focus on construction (as a proxy for the new forces of urbanisation) and the recruitment of labour (with the view to identifying contemporary forms of migration and attendant deprivations and exclusions) makes both an important contribution to knowledge in this area, and also allows for a richer, more in-depth understanding of the driving forces. Given the increasing importance of construction, particularly in relation to infrastructure needs, these findings will be relevant at the national, regional and indeed international levels.

### 1.2.3 Internal migration

Urbanisation and migration - seasonal, circular and distress migration (Mander and Sahgal, 2012) - are intrinsically linked. Although rural-urban migration may now contribute less to changes in urbanisation rates (in comparison to the 1960s or 1970s), there is evidence that the impetus for migration, especially women, is changing from dependence (through marriage) to economic reasons (such as employment)<sup>5</sup>. Despite the pursuit of rural development policies by many governments in Asia (in part to discourage internal migration)<sup>6</sup> as long as there are opportunities for the free movement of labour within nation states, migration will remain an important part of the livelihood portfolio of vulnerable rural populations. More importantly, the use of 'contract labour migration arrangements in terms of work and housing' in the  $U^{\text{C}}Mnp^{\text{SA}}$  (once the purview of inter-rural and urban road building projects), is likely to increase. The findings from this research indicate that this flow of transient migrant construction labour migrants into the urban is more than likely to grow at a scale not witnessed previously.

## 1.3 CONCEPTUALISING THE URBANISATION-CONSTRUCTION-MIGRATION NEXUS

The  $U^{\text{C}}Mnp^{\text{SA}}$  conceptualises the urban as multi-layered. To begin with (leaving aside the question of migration) cities and urban areas in South Asia are continuously undergoing change in their social, spatial and economic relations and arrangements. Unintentional as well as intentional policies and processes, emanating from, for instance, economic competition (Schmidt, 1998; Pani, 2009; Kundu, 2000) infrastructure projects (Ghertner, 2008; Nijman, 2008) and mega-city events, are currently considered key reasons. In turn, these forces and events are altering existing social, spatial and economic relations and arrangements that give rise to a separate set of challenges. Superimposed on this first layer is a second, namely, labour contractor led migratory movements and, working and living arrangements. This is spurred in part by diminishing rural livelihood opportunities and in part by the demand generated by income rich, upwardly mobile, urban populations.

The focus of the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> is not primarily on *what* forces give rise to these urban forms. Rather, the emphasis is on: (i) *how* they play out in ‘reconfiguring’ social, spatial and economic relations and arrangements; and (ii) *what* challenges, this, in turn poses for state and non-state actors in a number of conjoined arenas, such as: housing and livelihoods; livelihoods and empowerment; or livelihoods and basic rights and so on.

Two main questions confront international development organisations, national and regional governments and civil society. First, what improvements and changes are needed to *existing* policies and programmes to accommodate these new ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ working relations and living arrangements? Second, what *new* policies and programmes may such arrangements require? Thus, although the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> focuses primarily on the urban dimension of the urbanisation-migration nexus (namely the pull rather than the push factors), it also considers how large-scale construction and labour contractor led internal rural-urban migration are juxtaposed. It is anticipated that this will enhance the scope for more joined-up policy suggestions within the overall research context and strategic need in Asia.<sup>7</sup>

Life in cities and urban areas is highly monetised (Satterthwaite, 1997; 2007). It is thus logical that livelihoods and labour market opportunities take centre stage. For decades, attention has focused on those who make a living in the informal economy – including gender<sup>8</sup> and working conditions.<sup>9</sup> Since the 1990s however, there has been an interest in processes giving rise to the notion of the ‘informalisation’ or ‘casualisation’ of urban labour (see, for example, Pais, 2002; Vanamala, 2001; Sanyal and Bhattacharyya 2009). Of late, writing is emerging on *urban* ‘labour contractors’ (with an emphasis on recruitment) in construction (for instance, Vaid, 1999) and manufacturing (for example, Carswell and DeNeve, 2013). In construction, more is known about the denial of economic, occupational health and safety rights, but less so on the social fronts of education and health.

#### 1.4 RESEARCHING THE URBANISATION-MIGRATION NEXUS THROUGH CONSTRUCTION: A NOTE ON METHODS

Conducting research on ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ is a complex and time consuming process, mainly due to gaining access to them, as the construction site is where they both work and live. Researching this group is more difficult than researching local construction labour who are city-born and long-term resident migrants.

In each of the five cities, large-scale construction was visible to the naked eye. However, there was little secondary data available on: the number of projects, their scale - in terms of area and cost, and their developers or clients. In some cities, such as Chennai in India, regulations requiring this basic information to be displayed were ignored. Therefore, the first challenge was to conduct a baseline mapping exercise in order to identify on-going, large-scale construction projects – residential, commercial, industrial and infrastructure - from which a sample, to include the four types, could be selected. This mapping was conducted between June and November 2014. In all, the research teams mapped approximately 1,000 projects (see Figure 1.1 for an example from Chennai).

The second challenge facing the research team was how to gain access to ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ given that they worked and lived in on-site, and at times in off-site, labour camps. Some of these labour camps were walled (using temporary materials such as tin sheets) with entry and exit to the camps controlled by security staff. Even in those labour camps that were not walled, prior permission from whoever was in charge was required before workers could be interviewed.<sup>10</sup> As a result, access issues varied across different construction sites within and between cities.

The third challenge relates to city specific events. As many ‘transient migrant contract construction workers’ are seasonal migrants, they could not be interviewed when they returned to their places of origin. Other events, such as the monsoons, religious festivals and political uncertainties also impacted on their availability. This was particularly challenging given that the original time frame for this research was one year. These and other challenges are discussed in more detail in the methodology (Chapter 3).

### 1.5 FIVE CITY COMPARISONS: ISSUES OF GENERALISATION VERSUS SPECIFICITY

Generalisations cannot be avoided in a regional research project such as this, if it is to help inform policy, in terms of agenda setting, formulation and implementation at the regional level. Even at the national level, policy suggestions would require some form of generalisation. Notwithstanding this, this research is cognisant of the fact that no two construction workers are alike and neither are any two construction sites, in the five cities. Thus the broad label of ‘transient migrant contract construction workers’ is bound to simplify a range of important differences between each unit of analysis – the migrant construction worker. These differences matter because they provide nuanced explanations as to why and how individuals, families and groups move, as well as informing the meaning that these migratory practices and experiences take on, for them. As Rhus and Anderson (2010: 5) argue in relation to migration to the United Kingdom (and the question of staff shortages)

*“analyses based on economic models and indicators are not sufficient to comprehensively assess the existence, nature, and magnitude of shortages in the labour market ... a purely quantitative approach doesn’t help explain why some use more migrant workers than others (economic analysis alone doesn’t support the assumptions) or why some use them more rapidly than others”.*

Instead, they argue for a multi-disciplinary approach that seeks to understand the ‘micro-foundations’ of phenomena like staff shortages, which include cultural understanding of gender-appropriate work or employers’ views of skills needs, in relation to particular industries and sectors. Although this research is not about staff shortages as such, it is concerned with the dynamics between internal migration and urbanisation. It views the dynamics through the lens of construction and construction labour, the nature of the relationships that transient migrant contract construction workers forge (or are unable to) with their host communities and local spaces, their contractors and the new dynamics they engender, in relation to both urbanisation and migration.

The U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> interview protocol therefore sought not only to capture the quantifiable aspects of the migrants’ identities (age, gender, education level for instance) as a way to understand the common characteristics marking the lives and paths of contemporary migrants in urban South Asia, but to also include questions related to their work and migration pathways, lived realities as construction labourers, as well as future aspirations. Together - this data provides the ‘micro-foundations’ needed, if one is to begin to understand more fully: who these migrants are; the paths these migrants have taken socio-spatially and economically; and the lives they hope to pursue for themselves, their immediate families and future generations. Although these realities and desires need to be located and read in relation to the current and future constraints relating to the construction sector and its employment landscape, a simple utilitarian argument highlighting that the benefits that employment for ‘transient migrant construction labour’ bring in light of the adversities and vulnerabilities that they face, need to be challenged. Clients – be they governments, private sector developers or bi- and multi-lateral development organisations – have a responsibility in valuing and treating labour (construction in this case) humanely. Employment that helps reduce vulnerability and poverty cannot be at no cost

to labour – the wages, working and living conditions that ‘transient migrant contract construction labourers’ in this research have to contend with - is not acceptable.

## 1.6 DEFINITION OF SOME OF THE TERMS USED IN THE U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup>

**TABLE 1.2 | Definition of terms used in this report – Construction**

Terms	Explanation
Large-scale construction	<p>Large-scale is a relative concept and varies within and between the five cities. As there is no agreed definition of large-scale, residential projects selected for the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> (after taking into account access constraints) were defined as such, as long as real estate developers, private companies and government - rather than individuals or small groups of people - were involved in the construction of these projects. The same applied to commercial and industrial construction where large private companies were the clients. In comparison, large-scale infrastructure projects are easier to identify, involving a combination of state and private (or solely private) actors in their construction.</p> <p>It is also worth noting that only large-scale construction projects have the physical space on a given construction site to house construction workers in on-site labour camps; when space on-site is not available (as in the case of infrastructure and some real estate projects, developers and general contractors have to invest in renting land to house workers in off-site labour camps and have to provide the means to transport them to the construction sites they are employed in.</p>
Construction (not the construction sector)	<p>It is important to note that the terms ‘construction’ and ‘construction workers’ refer to building sites and workers employed on them. Construction does not include the building materials industries – especially those that are labour intensive – even though they are directly related to construction. This point is relevant when exploring datasets that include the distribution of males and females within the broad variable of ‘construction’. For example, women made up 1.8 per cent of all female rural to urban in-migrants in the Pakistan Labour Force Surveys (1996-97 to 2009-10) – but none were to be found on construction sites (Khan and Shehnaz, 2000).</p>

**TABLE 1.3 | Definition of terms used in the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> – Transient migrant contract construction labour**

Terms	Explanation
Transient	<p>Transient because of: (i) the ‘seasonality’ of agriculture; (ii) in terms of their circular ‘intra-urban’ and ‘inter-urban’ deployment by their current labour contractor or to work with a different labour contractor; and (iii) the increasing difficulty of being able to occupy land by transient migrants who seek to settle in the city; that said, renting a room remains an option.</p>
Migrant	<p>The term migrant refers primarily to internal rural to urban migrants. This is not to say that there is no migration for work in urban to rural and urban to urban migration.</p>
Contract	<p>The term contract is used to signify an informal verbal agreement between the labour contractor and the migrant construction worker about the nature and duration of work at their place of destination, as well as wages and other entitlements.</p>
Construction	<p>As noted in Table 1.4.1, ‘construction’ refers to work on building sites.</p>
Labour	<p>Labour is used with reference to ‘class’ as well as a generic term that does not distinguish between different skill levels in construction – skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. It is also used interchangeably with ‘labourers’ and ‘workers’.</p>

**TABLE 1.4** | *Definition of terms used in the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> – Developer, contractor and labour contractor*

Terms	Explanation
Developer	The term ‘developer’ is used to denote investors in large-scale construction. Furthermore, the term developer is used primarily in relation to private sector actors involved in real estate projects. The term ‘client’ is used with reference to projects that involve governments, private sector companies (commercial and industrial), and (or) bi- and multi-lateral actors.
Contractors	In any given project, several specialist contractors (including civil contractors) operate.
Labour Contractor	Someone who supplies labour. In the main, labour contractors do not just recruit and deploy labour; they also manage and remunerate them.

## 1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

A brief review of the literature is undertaken in chapter 2 to reveal the limited attention paid to the links between urbanisation and migration from a consumption perspective, especially large-scale construction projects in urban areas. Although the literature covers migration and construction and more importantly provides detail on the recruitment of migrant labour for construction, the emphasis has been on petty-construction in the urban, or road building projects, between the urban and the rural, the rural and the rural and the urban and the urban. The methods adopted for this research and the challenges that had to be overcome are discussed in chapter 3. The migration canvas and a conceptualisation of the use of transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale projects in the five cities in south Asia is presented (Chapter 4). An analysis of the findings from the five cities is discussed, first in relation to construction, employment conditions and migrant contractual arrangements (Chapter 5) and then on migrant pathways and labour in large-scale construction projects in urban areas (Chapter 6). The policy issues and challenges raised by the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five cities in south Asia (Chapter 7) is followed by concluding thoughts (Chapter 8).

## END NOTES

- 1 In the acronym U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> the letter 'C' for construction in underlined uppercase 'C' is deliberate. It indicates the role that large-scale urban construction plays a dual role in satisfying a growth in consumption concomitant with an increase in urbanisation and as a source of demand for contract migrant construction labour. This migration is internal – the research is not a study of international migration.
- 2 It is important to distinguish construction (the processes involved in building a structure) from building materials production, not least from a gendered perspective. It is not uncommon to find women and children working in brick kilns as well as stone and sand quarries. This is not to say that they do not undertake similarly arduous tasks on construction sites.
- 3 The cities are arranged in alphabetical order of their countries.
- 4 SARH Open Call for Proposals, ToR, Service Providers for Regional Research in Asia, page 5.
- 5 For instance, between 1991 and 2000, 42% of all female migration was for employment (NSSO, circa 2000).
- 6 For instance, see: India, National Agriculture Policy, 2000, <http://agricoop.nic.in/agpolicy02.htm>
- 7 In this research, the term South Asia is used with reference to DFIDs priority countries in Asia, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The term 'Asia' is used with reference to countries in the region.
- 8 WEIGO, <http://wiego.org/wiego/about-wiego>
- 9 ILO, Decent Work Agenda, <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/decent-work-agenda/lang--en/index.htm>
- 10 The difficulties involved in interviewing construction workers on site have been noted by others who have conducted research on migrant construction worker in India: New Delhi (Jens Lerche, personal communication; Dalmia, 2012) and Hyderabad (Tucker, 2010).

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** (U<sup>C</sup>M<sub>n</sub><sup>SA</sup>)  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**2** **Literature**  
**Review**

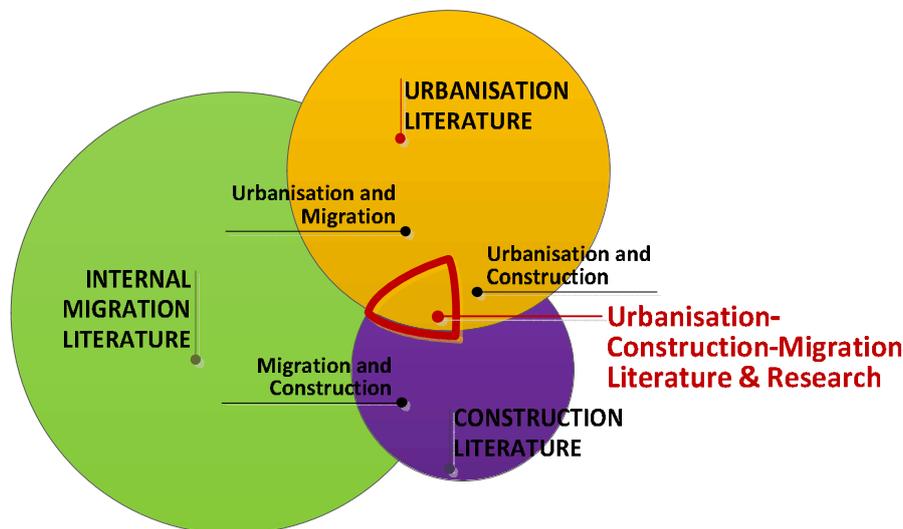
This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW: LOCATING TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR IN THE URBANISATION-CONSTRUCTION-MIGRATION NEXUS IN SOUTH ASIA

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a vast literature on internal migration and urbanisation, less so on migration and construction, and even less on urbanisation and construction (Figure 2.1). Of the five countries in south Asia, the existing literature indicates that India has been studied more extensively than, for example, Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> It is thus unavoidable that that this literature review draws more from the literature on India in comparison to the other four countries. Notwithstanding this, there are also few, if any, studies on internal migration for work in large-scale construction projects in urban areas. The U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> makes a contribution to knowledge in this area, insofar as its emphasis is on how consumption in urban areas, using the lens of large-scale construction projects, is creating and fulfilling its demand for labour by the recruitment (procurement) of contract migrant workers from rural areas. This focus takes the opposite perspective to studies that have primarily concentrated on how internal migration contributes to urbanisation (see, for example, Dyson 2001).



**FIGURE 2.1** | A Schematic Venn Diagram of the Literature and Research on Urbanisation, Construction and Migration

In exploring the link between urbanisation and migration, using construction as a proxy for consumption on the one hand, and the demand for labour on the other, a few comments on how these subjects – urbanisation, migration and construction – have been explored in the literature are in order. First, the well-established link between urbanisation and economic growth (see, Spence and Annez, 2009; Gilles, 2014)<sup>2</sup> naturally entails a link between urbanisation and consumption. Although consumption is expressed through a range of indicators (see, for instance, UN-DESA, 1998), information on consumption in the form of construction – by individual households and, private and state actors - is more difficult to come by.

Second, construction is the bedrock of all built environments, rural and urban, delivered by a range of organisations from petty-contractors to capitalist construction firms, and involves both state and non-state consumers: individuals and households, civil society organisations, private sector firms and governments. To state the obvious, construction requires labour and this labour can be sourced from within the urban (local labour) as well as from other urban and rural sources (migrant labour). It

is somewhat surprising, therefore, that the role of construction labour in urbanisation and the resulting built environment has not received the attention that it deserves, especially in the global South.

Of course, there are studies of construction labour. However, these have tended to examine construction labour, resident and migrant, from either a petty-commodity production perspective, or from the point of view of the 'firm'. Petty-contractor led construction is largely small-scale and normally draws on construction workers either from an existing urban labour pool, residing in settlements and selling their labour in day construction labour markets, or from those migrating independently. When and if petty-contractors use labour supplied by labour contractors, they seldom provide housing, as the small values of the contracts they are involved in would not make the task of housing construction workers economically viable. The study of migrant construction labour using the 'firm' as the unit of analysis has its own limitations from the point of migration flows. A firm could be contracted to undertake several urban and non-urban projects simultaneously or sequentially. Thus, migrant labourers working with a particular firm could be sub-categorised as either rural-urban or rural-rural migrants depending on the location of the construction site, road building being an instance of the latter. Two examples help illustrate this point. A study of contract labour in construction in Kota District, Rajasthan, India (Vaid and Singh, 1966) drew its sample of workers from 11 companies operating all over the country. Operations included activities such as: earthwork, stone breaking and crushing at work-sites; construction of buildings, bridges, roads, dams and canals; operating vehicles and cranes; and masonry, carpentry and welding. In a more recent study in Kathmandu, Nepal (Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015: 7) interviewed 150 construction workers chosen in equal numbers from three firms: "a large international construction company; a large national company involved in road building; and a smaller private construction company". The choice of the firm was appropriate here, as the intention was to explore whether there were inter-firm variations in working conditions and remuneration. Thus, while the study estimates that around "80 per cent of the manual labourers in the lowest jobs were migrants and had come to the city from *rural areas* with the intention of staying temporarily" (p.15, our emphasis in *italics*) it does not delve into the location of the construction sites. Taking this into account, the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> made a conscious decision to choose its transient migrant contract construction respondents from large-scale construction projects in urban areas that provided them with on-site and off-site housing (labour camps). A pertinent question to raise here is what may differentiate independent migrant construction workers from contract construction labour. Two possible answers are: (i) contract construction labour are 'bonded' and thus have no option but to work for the labour contractor (Picherit, 2014); (ii) they lack the networks required to obtain work and are thus dependent on labour contractors (for a contrary account of how some migrants attempt to break away from this dependency, see the discussion on *swanta kuli* (a self-employed labourer) in Picherit, 2014).

This chapter now turns to a review of the literature on urbanisation, migration and construction – only in so far as it is relevant for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project. In doing so, it will comment, where appropriate, on the role that this research plays in filling some of those gaps.

## 2.2 URBANISATION

Gaining a comparative understanding of urbanisation in south Asia is a complex task as the sub-sections below illustrate. A review of the literature on urbanisation finds little or no reference to consumption and construction and relatively more literature on urbanisation and infrastructure. The

U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research, makes a contribution to the literature on urbanisation by its focus on large-scale residential construction (as a proxy for household consumption power) and investments in commercial and industrial projects as well as infrastructure (as a broad indicator of the link between urbanisation and economic growth) undertaken by the private and state sectors (and a combination in the case of infrastructure).

### 2.2.1 Defining the urban and urban populations.

Maintaining a consistent definition of the urban has implications for an understanding of urbanisation trends in each of the five countries in south Asia. Three issues are of particular relevance: how the urban is defined; the impact of in-country changes on this definition; and the extent to which urban populations are estimates, due to lack of recent information.

With the exception of India, which uses population, economic activity and density<sup>3</sup> as the criteria to define the urban, administrative units are used in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal<sup>4</sup> and Pakistan. Definitions based on administrative criteria have the tendency to produce sudden change with the application of instruments of reclassification. For example, according to the 2011 Population and Housing Census of Bangladesh (GoB, 2014) the number of urban centres declined from 538 to 506 (32 less centres) and the urban area from 10712 to 8867 square kilometres (-1844 km<sup>2</sup>) compared to the Census of 2001.<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely that Bangladesh is 'de-urbanising', rather:

*"The definition of urban area used in different censuses has not been uniform. The definition of urban area used in 1981 was continued up to 2001; however, the definition was changed in 2011. In earlier censuses, the urban area included city corporations, municipalities, upazila headquarters, growth centers, cantonment and urban agglomerations adjacent to large cities, i.e., city corporations termed as Statistical Metropolitan Area (SMA). However, in 2011, the concept of SMA, growth center and some other urban areas was abandoned and the areas covered only city corporations, paurashavas, upazila headquarters and cantonment area" (GoB, 2014: 8).*

### 2.2.2 Urbanisation and urbanisation rates

The existence of country specific definitions makes any attempt to compare urbanisation trends between the five countries futile.<sup>6</sup> It is also somewhat problematic to comment on urbanisation trends if definitions are changed between censuses. Bearing these caveats in mind, the average annual rate of change of urban populations between 2010 and 2015 is the highest for Bangladesh (2.4%), followed by Nepal (2%), Afghanistan (1.6%) and then India and Pakistan (1.1% each). Urbanisation rates should also be placed in the context of the absolute size of the urban populations in the respective countries. The opportunities and challenges, for instance, in India and Pakistan are greater although their urbanisation rates are 1.1 per cent. This has implications for construction, especially residential, and notably, infrastructure.

When the literature makes reference to the pace and scale of urbanisation - especially in relation to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan - it is important to bear in mind that these countries define urban populations using administrative boundaries and that administrative boundaries are easier to change than definitions based on economic characteristics. Nevertheless, the 2011 Population and Housing Census of Bangladesh (GoB, 2014) indicates that its urban population increased by just over 4 million since the last census of 2001, resulting in a density of 3785 people per square kilometre (an increase of 1054 persons per km<sup>2</sup>); almost 9.5 times the density criteria used by India. UN-DESA (2015) estimates the urban and rural populations in 2014 to be 53.13 and 105.40 million respectively. Compared to 1990, the respective increase of the urban and rural populations was 32 and 19.3 million. The city of Dhaka, with a population of 8.91 million, occupying an area of 316

km<sup>2</sup>, produces a staggering density of 28,183 persons per square kilometre. India was 31.2 per cent urbanised in 2011 – approximately 317 million urban dwellers.<sup>7</sup> The Pakistan Economic Survey of 2014-15 (GoP, 2015), ‘estimates’ the total population of the country to be almost 192 million with just over 75 million of them classified as urban (39% urban).<sup>8</sup> Afghanistan is somewhat unique in terms of population distribution; as of July 2015, it is estimated that 948,000 people were internally displaced by violence and conflict: “... these figures tend to be underestimates, because they do not include all IDPs living in urban areas, who are often dispersed among economic migrants and the urban poor and so are difficult to identify” ... “40 per cent of the country’s IDPs make up part of the urban poor in Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar.”<sup>9</sup> It is worthy of note that given this population distribution and the sizeable proportion of IDPs in Kabul in particular, seemingly none of the respondents to the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project were IDPs. This lends support to the conceptualisation of employment in large-scale construction as a ‘closed’ labour market (Chapter 4).

### 2.2.3 Urban and rural population change – 1990 and 2014

At a more macro level, Table 2.1 contains estimates from the latest UN-DESA World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 revision.

**TABLE 2.1 | Urban and Rural Population, 1000s, urban population (%) and average annual change (%): 1990, 2014 and 2050**

	Population (thousands)						Proportion Urban 2014 (%)			AARC (%)
	Urban			Rural			1990	2014	2050	
	1990	2014	2050	1990	2014	2050	1990	2014	2050	2010-15
<b>Afghanistan</b>	2149	<b>8221</b>	25642	9583	<b>23059</b>	30909	18	<b>26</b>	45	1.6
Population Increase 1990-14		6072	17421		13476	7850				
<b>Bangladesh</b>	21275	<b>53127</b>	112443	86111	<b>105386</b>	89504	20	<b>34</b>	56	2.4
Population Increase 1990-14		31852	59316		19275	-15882				
<b>India</b>	221979	<b>410204</b>	814399	646911	<b>857198</b>	805652	26	<b>32</b>	50	1.1
Population Increase 1990-14		188225	404195		210287	-51546				
<b>Nepal</b>	1604	<b>5130</b>	12979	16508	<b>22991</b>	23501	9	<b>18</b>	36	2.0
Population Increase 1990-14		3526	7849		6483	510				
<b>Pakistan</b>	33967	<b>70912</b>	155747	77124	<b>114221</b>	115353	31	<b>38</b>	57	1.1
Population Increase 1990-14		36945	84835		37097	1132				

Source: UN-DESA (2015). *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision*.

<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/highlights/wup2014-highlights.pdf>

The figures suggest that between 1990 and 2014, there was a significant absolute increase in the urban populations of Afghanistan<sup>10</sup> and Bangladesh, relative to rural increases. Nepal’s rural population increased almost twice as much as its urban population. India and Pakistan have witnessed almost similar increases in both their urban and rural populations. If the projections for 2050 hold true, between 2014 and 2050, all five countries would have an absolute increase in their urban populations, ranging from a low of 7.85 million in Nepal to a staggering 404 million in India. In this period, Bangladesh and India would have witnessed, respectively, a 15.88 and 51.55 million *decrease* in their rural populations.

What these population changes – urban as well as rural – mean for the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in 2050 is an interesting question. Large-scale construction is most likely to remain buoyant – dependent on income increases amongst the middle and upper classes as well as

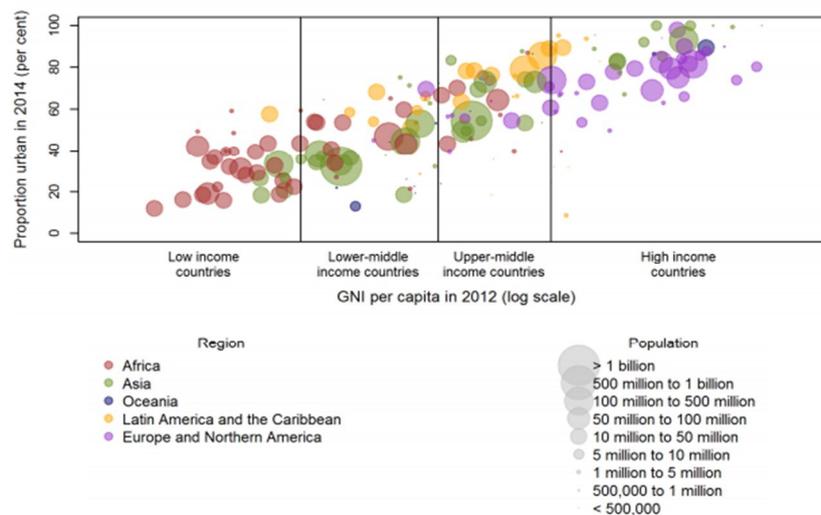
the state of the national as well as the global economy; the availability of migrant rural labour for employment in large-scale construction is another question altogether.

This report does not suggest whether rural or urban interventions should take precedence. Increasing rural and urban livelihood opportunities, ensuring equitable working conditions and wages in both rural and urban employment and striving to ensure an equitable distribution of gains on all fronts – not just economic – should be the agenda. If rural livelihood opportunities are as attractive as those in urban areas, especially construction, one could argue that labour would be ‘relatively’ free to make migration decisions blurring the boundaries between strategies of accumulation and coping.

#### 2.2.4 Urbanisation and economic growth

For some time now, it has been argued that urban areas in the global South, despite possessing a smaller urban than rural population, make a significantly greater contribution to GDP than rural areas. For instance, it is estimated that India’s current 30 per cent urban population contribute 63 per cent to its GDP; a figure expected to rise to 70-75 per cent by 2020, despite a modest 5 per cent increase in its urbanisation level. At a global level, a recent report from the McKinsey Global Institute (Dobbs, et al, 2011: 1) notes:<sup>11</sup>

*“Today, major urban areas in developed regions are, without doubt, economic giants. The 380 developed region cities in the top 600 by GDP accounted for 50 percent of global GDP in 2007, with more than 20 percent of global GDP coming from 190 North American cities alone. The 220 largest cities in developing regions contributed another 10 percent”.... Over the next 15 years, the makeup of the group of top 600 cities will change as the center of gravity of the urban world moves south and, even more decisively, east. One of every three developed market cities will no longer make the top 600, and one out of every 20 cities in emerging markets is likely to see its rank drop out of the top 600. By 2025, we expect 136 new cities to enter the top 600, all of them from the developing world and overwhelmingly (100 new cities) from China. These include cities such as Haerbin, Shantou, and Guiyang. But China is not the only economy to contribute to the shifting urban landscape. India will contribute 13 newcomers including Hyderabad and Surat ...”*



**FIGURE 2.2 | Relationship of proportion urban to GNI per capita**

Source: UN-DESA (2015). Adapted from, *World Urbanisation Prospects – The 2014 Revision*. New York: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, p. 55.

Estimates and trends of the contribution that urbanisation makes to economic growth need to be tempered with some caution, as an equitable distribution of the benefits of economic is as, if not,

more important. Similarly, statements such as “[t]he fastest growing urban agglomerations are medium-sized cities and cities with less than 1 million inhabitants located in Asia and Africa”. Whether driven by *rising economic prosperity* or by *other demographic shifts* also underway, trends in urbanization present great opportunities for development, but at the same time give rise to formidable challenges in relation to social equity, environmental sustainability and governance (UN-DESA, 2015: 2) and need careful consideration in light of the findings of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research.

It is clear that large-scale construction does create employment for a number of migrant workers but not without questions in relation to a continuum of ‘unfree’ labour. At the same time, the findings of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> also draw attention to the impact that large-scale construction has on the urban environment and most certainly on the rural from where its resources come.

### 2.2.5 Urbanisation and urban labour markets

Urban labour markets in the global South have been the focus of countless studies that cover home-based workers as well as those working away from home; the numerous so called ‘self-employed’ or ‘own-account’ workers in petty-trade and the service economy. Wells (2007) provides a comprehensive review of the so called ‘informal sector’ – from the use of the concept in the early 1970s to its renaming by the ILO as the ‘informal economy’ in 2002.

Those working in the informal economy are involved in a vast range of employment relationships: own-account workers; seemingly own-account workers (trading on behalf of someone else, for instance); piece-rate contract workers; wage work that is not permanent but may be long-term (such as domestic workers); and casual day labourers. Attempts to codify the range of employment relationships (for example, see, Harriss, Kannan and Rodgers, 1990) together with a number of micro-level studies have been undertaken, about occupations in the informal economy: for example, on domestic workers and organising strategies (Dhavsse, 2004) day labourers (Baauw, Louw and Schenk, 2006).

One urban labour market that is unique to construction is the ‘day labour market’ – places in urban areas where construction workers (local as well as migrant) gather to offer their labour for sale on a casual daily basis (see for example, Harris, Rosser and Kumar, 1996). Day labour markets are referred to as cross-roads in Afghanistan and as Opel (2005: 2) notes:

*“In Kabul particularly ... the research ... identified ten cross-roads where hundreds of labourers gather every morning. In Herat and Jalalabad cross-roads were few (three in each of the cities).”*

Nevertheless, the literature is largely silent on large-scale construction projects in urban areas as a sub-market for construction labour.

## 2.3 MIGRATION

The literature on internal migration in the global South is rich and extensive and covers a range of important issues, among many others, including: poverty (for example, Afsar, 1999, 2003; Mosse et. al. 2002; Rogaly et. al. 2002); livelihoods (for instance, Begum and Sen, 2005; de Haan 2000, 2002; de Haan, Brock and Coulibaly; 2002; Opel, 2005); gender (for example, Bhatt, 2009; Rashid, 2013); social networks (for instance, Khun, 2003); and rural change (for example, de Haan and Rogaly, 2002).

The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project undertook an analysis of available datasets for each country that contained information on migration.<sup>12</sup> This revealed huge variations not only in the definition of a migrant but also in a temporal sense - time duration - as well as differences in the manner and extent to which in and out migration were adequately captured (Table 2.2).

**TABLE 2.2 | Comparison of migration related variable in 4 country datasets**

DEFINITIONS/CONCEPTUALISATION	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	India	Nepal
Minimum age bound (years old)	7 years (IM) and 14 years (OM)	None	None	5 years
In-migrant, unit of analysis	Individual	None	Household	Individual
In-migrant, temporal frame of analysis	None	None	Last 365 days	First in-migration
Out-migrant, unit of analysis	Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual
Out-migrant, temporal frame of analysis	Past 12 months.	Past 5 years	Any time in past	Past 5 years
Out-migrant, time classification	Seasonal: 1 or more months; Permanent: no longer HH member	Currently away for 6 or more months.	None	2 or more continuous months.

Source: Analysis of four country datasets<sup>13</sup>

Note: IM = In-migration and OM = Out-migration

Setting aside the temporal differences in the definition of a migrant (internal and international) between the five countries, the data available is at a relatively high level of aggregation, namely broad trends within countries at the regional or provincial level. Moreover, secondary datasets only contain information on migration ‘stocks’ rather than ‘flows’. Similar to other city level studies, the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project provides new information on the places of origin of transient migrant contract construction labour in each of the five cities studied (see Chapter 5 for details).

### 2.3.1 Internal Migration in south Asia

Internal migration in south Asia remains significant, although its contribution to urbanisation in comparison to previous decades has been tempered by urban population growth being higher than rural population growth.

#### *Afghanistan*

“Migration – either “voluntary” economic migration or “forced” due to conflict or natural disaster – has a long history in Afghanistan. For decades, Afghan households and/or individual household members have used mobility both as an “ex-post” coping mechanism for conflict and natural disaster, as well as to manage “ex-ante” risks associated with the rural economy” (World Bank and UNHCR, 2011: 6). Migration to cities has been found to be both one-way and seasonal (Opel, 2005; Schütte, 2009). The majority of the rural population survive on subsistence agriculture despite the scarcity of arable land and the fact that much of the country is arid. Few have access to machinery, and almost all labour is done by people or domesticated animals (Metcalf et al., 2012: 6). A study of 450 households found that conflict and insecurity were cited as the primary reasons for migration. The second most important factor was less clear. Over a third of respondents reported food insecurity and others unemployment (for the last reason, also see, Metcalfe et al., 2012). Ninety per cent of the internally displaced people (IDPs) were from rural areas.<sup>14</sup> In sum, migration is described as an “intersection of forced migration paths with urbanization in Afghanistan” (World Bank and UNHCR, 2011: 8).

This would suggest that the influence of urbanisation on migration from a consumption and investment perspective (as opposed to the impact of migration on urbanisation) is related to: international aid - the reconstruction-development industry base in urban areas; perception of greater physical security in large urban centres, especially Kabul (Metcalfe, Haysom and Martin, 2012: 7); perceived greater economic opportunities in urban areas; and the high prevalence of daily wage construction work among recent migrants, compared with other forms of employment among earlier settlers. Some argue that the last factor is due to the time necessary to acquire sufficient capital to start own account businesses (Opel, 2005: 29).

### *Bangladesh*

Two prominent push factors account for rural out migration: natural disasters and seasonal food deprivation. *Moonga* (the three month lean agricultural season) gives rise to high unemployment and increased vulnerabilities (Khandker, Khalily and Samad, 2012). Migration is often undertaken over short distances. If the distance to an urban destination is great, migration is often to neighbouring villages with greater employment opportunities as a result of less pressure on land. Dhaka or Chittagong, for instance, are destinations for those closer to these cities (Nabi, 1992).

Levels of impoverishment result in the migration of women in particular, who migrate out for work, in order to pay for their own dowry (Afsar, 20003). Families are constantly trying to find ways and means to diversify their household's economy (Afsar, 2003; Deshingkar & Start, 2003). In such situations and under such conditions, female migration to the non-farm sector plays a very important role in shaping the migration (processes and patterns) to urban areas.

### *India*

The urban and rural populations of India grew at 18.1 per cent and 31.5 per cent respectively in the inter-census period 1991-2001; the comparative figures for the 2001-2011 period was 12.2 per cent and 31.8 per cent. In the period 1991-2001, India's urban population increased by 67.7 per cent of which 21 per cent was attributed to internal rural to urban migration. Recently published data on internal migration from the 2011 census indicates that 28 per cent of all migrants, whose last place of residence was rural, had migrated to urban areas in the inter-census period 2001-2011. Only 13 per cent of all internal migration was interstate. It is worth noting that inter-state migration can be both short and long distance, as it depends on the location of the places of origin and destination vis-à-vis state boundaries. The vast majority of internal migrants (85%) moved within states; given the size of some of the Indian states, such movements will contain a combination of short and long distance travel. Of this proportion of intra-state migrants, 72 per cent migrated within the district of birth; just over a quarter migrated between districts of a given state.

In 2001, 37 per cent of the population of the Chennai Metropolitan Area comprised migrants. Of these, 16 per cent were intra-district migrants, 64 per cent inter-district and 19 per cent inter-state; international migrants formed a very small proportion (1.5%) of all migrants (Transparent Chennai, 2006).<sup>15</sup> Of all 132 'transient migrant contract construction' respondents in the Chennai study, there were no migrants from Tamil Nadu. The largest number were from Odisha (37 – 28%), followed by: Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (27; 21%); Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (16 from each state; 12% from each state); Jharkhand (14; 11%); Bihar (12; 9%); Madhya Pradesh (6; 5%); and Assam (4; 3%).<sup>16</sup> The absence of migrants from Tamil Nadu in the construction sites studies could be due to "a culture of consumerism ... facilitated by urbanization – not because of the rural exodus but, rather, through circular migration". (Guerin 2013: 412). In other words, this would indicate that migration is

undertaken for accumulation rather than coping - opening up employment choices for seasonal and circular migrants.

### *Nepal*

The academic and policy literature linking migration to urbanisation in Nepal has grown considerably in the last decade. Writings on out-migration (Subedi, 1991; Adhikari, 2001; Sharma and Sharma, 2011; Jones and Basnett, 2013) as well as urbanisation (Banister and Thapa, 1981; Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013) recognise that 'migration is a powerful force for urban change' (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013: 4). More recently, Sharma, Pandey, Pathak & Sijapati-Basnett (2014: 21-23) note that "[m]igrants from the Hills are more mobile compared to those from the other two regions. A vast majority of internal migrants, as reported by their household members, have origins in the Eastern, Central and Western regions .... Nine out of 10 internal migrants originate in the rural areas ... a proportion that holds true across the gender divide as well. Similarly, rural-to-rural migration accounts for more than 60 per cent of all internal migration .... In fact, the volume of migration between rural areas is three times more than that of rural-to-urban migration". However, the literature is limited on how the construction sector and contemporary investments in urban infrastructure are acting as powerful pull factors for internal labour migration (for an exception see Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015).

### *Pakistan*

Three significant events are cited in relation to large waves of internal migration in Pakistan (Gazdar, 2003; Hasan, 2003; Hasan and Raza, 2011; Memon, 2005). The first wave occurred in 1947, following partition from India; the second in 1971 followed the independence of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and an influx of refugees; and the third wave that started in the late 1970s, followed the fall of the Soviet regime in Afghanistan. Hasan and Raza (2011) state that rural to urban migration in the 1950s and 1960s could be attributed to the introduction of 'green revolution' technologies in agriculture - a 'push' factor, and in the 1970s, industrialisation promoted a cash rather than barter economy, resulting in migration from the agricultural sector to industrial ones – a 'pull' factor.

There are several nationally representative data sets containing information on migration. However, the definition of migration is inconsistent between them. With this in mind, the three sources that contain data on migration are: the Pakistan Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM); the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Census. It is important to note that the Census was last conducted in 1998. The LFS is preferred over the PSLM for two reasons. (i) The former is representative of workers whilst the latter, households and (ii) eleven rounds of the LFS are available – spanning a fifteen year period (1996-2011) and contain data on just over 2 million individuals.<sup>17</sup> The LFS data between 1996 and 2001 indicates that the migration stock is around 12 per cent and that rural to urban migration has been stable at around 30 to 33 per cent. Karachi is the most favoured destination of migrants (5.5%) followed by Lahore (3.9%) and Hyderabad (3.5%). Migration flows into Lahore are predominantly regional – from the Punjab.<sup>18</sup>

### **2.3.1 Internal Migration, Agricultural Cycles and Non-Agricultural Employment**

Internal rural to urban migration, rural to rural as well as rural to urban, comprises both seasonal and circular migration. At times, the terms seasonal and circular are used interchangeably in the literature; at times one incorporates the other. Although this does not matter that much in an individual piece of writing (as the meaning of the term used can be inferred), it has implications for how the migration cycle is understood insofar as it relates to the rural economy and the agricultural cycle within which individual migrants are situated and originate from.

### Seasonal migration

As the term suggests, seasonal migration is linked to the agricultural cycle.

“This type of labour mobility is seasonal for two reasons: (i) because of the uneven rhythm of the economic activities over the year – peak periods alternating with slack periods, and (ii) because of the open air character of production processes, which makes it necessary for work to stop with the onset of the monsoon” Smita (2008: 2).

In other words, seasonal migration is punctuated by return migration to tend to agricultural duties migrants are tasked with. Depending on the type of agricultural activity, seasonal migration can involve long periods away from the village and involve migration from one site to another - multiple sites (see, Smita, 2008 for illustrations). In the literature, reference to seasonal migration is often made in relation to the return migration of a migrant to tend to her or his agricultural needs. However, there are also migrants who do not possess the ‘means of production’ – land, being a key input – and have little option but to work for others during the agricultural season. Thus, circular migration involve short and long-distance moves that are unconnected with the agricultural cycle of the individual migrant, but connected with the agricultural cycle of others involved in agriculture, as the quote below demonstrates:

“For nine months of every year, labourers are kept under surveillance by a *maistri* who controls every aspect of their lives: work, huts, food, health, money, and their consumption of alcohol. The labourers’ low-calorie diet on which the *maistri* makes savings, the intensive 12-hour work days, the provision of only one day off in a fortnight, and the harsh living conditions in secluded work camps exhaust the body and preclude most contestation and routes of escape. Debt-bonded labourers never stay more than three months before moving to another working site, up to five per season, from Kanyakumari to Delhi. The solidarities that develop on work sites are understandably limited”(Picherit, 2014: 271).

### Circular migration

Multisite migration, within the period of being away from the village, is one way of thinking about circular migration. Circular migration (as part of seasonal migration) is different from commuting; the daily movement of people from peri-rural or peri-urban residential locations into the city. It is not uncommon for the population of urban areas to increase during the day and return to ‘normal’ levels at night; a phenomenon normally associated with towns that act as dormitories or commuter movements concomitant upon the location of their residence in relation to that of work. As far as rural-urban migration in the global South is concerned, rural-urban as well as urban-rural commuting does take place. In 2009-10, it was estimated that 8.05 million non-agricultural workers made the rural-urban commute, whilst 4.37 million commuted in the opposite direction – a total of 12.42 million (Chandrasekhar, 2011).

Data from the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> indicates that both forms of migration are present – but more nuanced than the discussion thus far suggests. In other words, although migration is predominantly seasonal, it is punctuated in-between seasons, by circular migration for work in construction. This is encapsulated in the intra-urban and inter-urban moves that ‘transient contract construction workers’ undertake when their labour contractors redeploy, or when they work for a labour contractor other than the one they are currently employed by. This combination of migratory moves can be described as ‘seasonally punctuated circular’ migration.

It is relevant to point out here that until recently, migration was often linked to poverty as illustrated by the phrase, ‘migration as a coping’ strategy. However, it is becoming clearer that

migration is also undertaken for ‘accumulation’ purposes (Deshingkar, 2005). Coping and accumulation were both found as reasons given by the transient migrant contract construction labour in the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project; for instance, there were some who had land and others who did not, those who had debt and others who did not.

## 2.4 CONSTRUCTION

To begin with, any discussion of construction must be cognisant of four aspects. Firstly, what does the term construction encompass and how is the term used in the literature. Second, how is the construction enterprise constituted – is it formal, informal or a combination of the two. Third, how is employment organised: is it permanent and thus formal or is it temporary and thus informal. In addition, there is a fourth aspect – location - that is often subsumed within references to construction. This has major implications for how the nature of internal migration flows is understood. For example, there are plenty of references in the literature on migrant rural labour employment in road construction. However, it is not that often that a distinction is made between roads being built within a city (or an urban area) and those in rural spaces, for instance between urban areas, rural areas or rural and urban settlements.<sup>19</sup> In the case of the latter, migration is rural to rural whereas in the former, it is rural to urban. The distinction between urban and rural spaces as destinations may not differ that much in terms of working conditions, but they do differ in terms of the provision of housing and services. All these aspects, especially location, are important, in relation to the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research as discussed below.

### 2.4.1 The composition of construction

So, what does construction comprise? Although this question may seem simplistic, the manner in which the term construction is used in the literature and official statistics can be problematic. Wells (1984: 9) notes that:

... “the term ‘construction’ is generally defined to encompass the creation of physical infrastructure (roads, railways, harbours), other civil-engineering work (dams, irrigation projects, power plants), all building work (including housing), as well as the maintenance and repair of existing structures. As such it is an activity which clearly plays a very vital role in the process of economic growth. ‘Value-added’ in construction generally falls within the range of 3-7% of Gross Domestic Product in developing countries, and 5-9% in advanced countries.”

In the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project, the term ‘large-scale construction’ is used to include buildings (residential, commercial and industrial) as well as urban infrastructure projects. All the firms involved in construction in the five cities are from the private sector (so called formal) and operate on capitalist principles, namely the reproduction of capital. A mix of employment relationships exist – from a handful of permanent employees (for instance, engineers and back-office staff) to a number of sub-contracted smaller enterprises, who in turn subcontract the hiring of labour. Informalisation increases lower down the chain, yet its starting point is quite high – from the specialist subcontractor downwards.

### 2.4.2 Construction: Contribution to the national economy

In addition to the contribution that construction makes to the national economy and employment, the net output of construction is much more than that. As Wells (1984: 9) also notes:

“Value-added, or the ‘net’ output of construction is, however, only a small part of the total construction process; a large percentage of total construction output consists of intermediate inputs from other sectors of the economy, mainly the building materials and service industries. Estimates from a variety of sources put the ‘multiplier’ effect of on-site construction activity at two

or two-and-a-half times the net value of construction output. Thus, 'gross output' of construction in developing countries may be as much as 14% of the GDP.' In addition to this direct contribution to production, the construction of physical facilities is also an essential part of the development of other productive activities, which in turn may contribute further to economic growth. As much as 60% of total investment, or Gross Fixed Capital Formation, may in fact be in construction. Thus, to the extent to which economic growth is related to the level and efficiency of capital formation, it is also linked to the capacity and productivity of the construction sector."

Construction, understood in the broadest of terms, makes an important contribution to the economy and to the creation of employment opportunities (ILO, 2007; 2001). However, as Parry (2014: 1251) notes, for India, it "has attracted little sociological attention". The same could be said for the other four south Asian countries.

A study of employment in the construction sector in two states in India found that in Gujarat, the highest input-output multiplier in an open model is in 'highways' and 'urban road construction' at 1:2.360 and in a closed model (to include the endogenous household sector) the highest multiplier was in 'buildings' construction at 1:5.775. The figures for West Bengal using the open model produced similar multipliers as Gujarat - 1:2.415. However, in the closed model, 'highways' and 'buildings' as subsectors of construction produced output ratios of 1:7.672 and 1:7.608 respectively (Sinha, Prabhakar, Jaiswal, 2015).

"As final demand for this sector rises by Re 1, Rs. 5.795 worth of output is generated in the Gujarat economy. This means that when the induced effect is included in the feedback that takes on board the consumption demand arising from the additional income (due to additional workers) in the economy as there arises additional demand for Buildings construction sector and this multiplier effect is higher than that of all other sectors" (Sinha, Prabhakar, Jaiswal, 2015: 10).

### 2.4.3 Construction: Contribution to employment

Construction is one of the largest sectors of the national economy which contributes to employment. Based on information from 90 countries, the ILO (2001: 5) estimates that total employment in construction was distributed as follows: 26 per cent for high-income countries and 74 per cent for low-income countries (distribution of output was 77 and 23 per cent respectively).

In India, construction is the second largest employer after agriculture; estimated to employ 34 million people or 16 per cent of the workforce (Parry, 2014: 1251-1252). In GDP terms, construction has contributed 7 per cent in the period 1994-2005 and has witnessed a growth in employment of 11 per cent from 2004-05 to 2009-10 (Papola and Sahu, 2012). In rural India, the period 1990-00 to 2009-10 witnessed a growth in employment in construction of 12.04 percent (more than twice that observed in the urban at 5.64 percent); it was the largest rural non-farm employment category at 29 per cent, with manufacturing following at 22 per cent (Papola and Sahu, 2012). The authors note that source of this employment is not clear – housing versus infrastructure – but they posit that much of it could be to do with public infrastructure under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREA), as well as road building, as employment in transport also grew from 6.7 per cent to over 9 per cent during 1993-94/2009-10. In addition to the increased livelihood opportunities that the growth of employment in the rural non-farm economy creates, the experience gained by those who work in construction could be of importance for those who migrate to take up employment in large-scale construction projects in urban India. Employment opportunities in construction are more likely to be in the private, rather than the public sector, because employment in construction in the public sector declined by 0.7 per cent in 1988-94 and 1.9 per cent in 2005-08. In comparison, it increased in the organised private sector by 0.3 and 12.2 per cent over the same periods<sup>20</sup> (Papola and

Sahu, 2012). It is important to note that although the ‘organised private sector’, in urban areas in all the five countries, has the potential to create employment, such employment will be ‘informal’ given the sub-contracting that characterises construction.

In Nepal, construction accounted for 3.1 per cent of employment in 2008, 71 per cent (261,000 workers) were men from rural areas (NLFS, 2008: 75). Although there was a decline in the growth of construction between 2010-11 and 2012-13 (NPC 2013: 2), it is argued that ‘construction is booming’ and land values increasing as the recipients of remittances have little option but to invest in land and housing (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013: 25).

#### 2.4.4 Construction: Employment Status

There is agreement in the literature that a very large proportion of employment in construction in the global South is ‘informal’. However, the extent to which it is so, in some cases, is very surprising. Sinha, Prabhakar and Jaiswal (2015), analysed 2009-10 data on employment in construction in two states in India (Gujarat and West Bengal). They found that in Gujarat, so called ‘formal’ workers accounted for only 3.14 per cent of all construction workers (76,000 out of a total of 2,450,745); this number is far fewer in West Bengal at 0.08 per cent (295,680 out of a total of 3,775,806).

#### 2.4.5 Women in Construction

Questions relating to the role and position of women in the construction industry are universal; north<sup>21</sup> as well as south. It is important to note that construction is an umbrella term that refers to, amongst other things: the range of trades present in construction projects (civil, electrical, mechanical and so on); the nature of the labour force, which is gendered and skill differentiated, associated with these and other trades (unskilled labour to professionals); and industries that produce building materials exclusively for construction, such as bricks and cement, and those that do so for other products such as steel, aluminium and glass, and production processes that involve extraction, such as sand and stone. As professionals – engineers, architects and quantity surveyors – women are present, albeit not representative, in both the north and south. This is where the discussion begins to diverge. In the north, it relates to the huge underrepresentation of women in skilled building trades – bricklayers, carpenters and plumbers, for example. Although this forms part of the discussion in the global South, it is set in the context of the position that women occupy in construction – unskilled labour, from where their upward mobility is non-existent. In addition, given that a large number of men are employed as unskilled labour, there are added concerns about the injustice in the wage differentials between women and men in unskilled positions. Drawing upon the life histories of twelve female construction workers from two day labour markets in Sylhet city, Bangladesh, Chowdhury (2013) provides a very interesting narrative of the gender divisions of labour, wage discrimination and inequity present. One quote (among other interesting ones) on the wage disparity by sex, from a respondent aged 29 and married, is cited here:

“If we ask, why do male workers get more wages? The contractor and male co-workers reply, a man is responsible for maintaining his family financially [...] you are a woman; if you do not work for the whole week it does not matter. You are not running the family.” (Chowdhury, 2013: 889).

In south Asia, at one end of the continuum of countries - Afghanistan and Pakistan - cultural (as well as religious) reasons are cited for the absence of women in construction. If this is the case, what explains the presence of 1.9 per cent of women in construction in the Pakistan Labour Force Surveys?

The narrative of culture and religion seem only to apply to women in construction sites and not in the production of building materials. Issues relating to masculinity are also omnipresent:

“In Bangladesh, women’s mobility is culturally constrained and women need to negotiate with patriarchy in order to join the male dominated labour market outside the home. A large number of men continue to be highly resistant to women’s paid employment, partly because of the social norm of purdah and partly because they tend to consider it a shameful reflection on their ability as breadwinners, and hence on their masculine identity” (Chowdhury, 2014: 883).

At the other end of the continuum of countries – India, Bangladesh and Nepal - women are present in sizeable but varying proportions: in India, 33 per cent in Bhilai (Parry, 2014) and less so in Kathmandu, Nepal (14 percent in the study by Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015). There is no comparable data for Dhaka – however, micro studies indicate the presence of women in construction. A study of female migrant construction workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, found that women from male-headed households take up work in construction to enhance the livelihood portfolio of the household. A smaller proportion of female construction workers from female-headed households were also found (Ahsan, 1997; for Sylhet city see, Chowdhury, 2013). While this research adds to the understanding of migrants in construction, it focuses on a migrant group that is resident in the city – unlike the transient migrant contract construction workers found in the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project.

Despite an emphasis on construction workers in the informal economy and predominantly on small construction sites, Parry (2014: 1242) provides an elaborate commentary on the issues confronting female construction workers in Bhilai, a steel town in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh. These include “[c]lass inequalities [that] produce a particular configuration of gender relations; gender relations (and in particular sexual relations) produce a powerful ideological justification for class differentiation”.

Studies relating to the health of female construction workers are far and few in between (for an exception see, Jatrana and Sangwan, 2004 on the health of female construction workers in New Delhi, India).

## 2.5 INTERNAL MIGRATION AND CONSTRUCTION: INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

Of particular importance to the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project is the differentiation between the terms ‘independent’ and ‘dependent’ construction migrants. The former is used with reference to individuals and households who migrate from rural to urban areas ‘independently of labour contractors’, irrespective of the extent to which other social networks are used. Independent migrants seeking work in construction, house themselves either by squatting (which is becoming increasingly difficult) or renting. Having arrived in the urban as independent migrants, their ‘search’ for work begins through their networks; those without networks (or whose labour is de-valued due to age, disability or other factors) can be found in one of the many day-labour markets in the city (Harris, Rosser and Kumar, 1996). Importantly, this does not preclude independent migrants seeking work in construction from finding employment through labour contractors residing in urban areas (see, for example, Parry, 2014). The latter, namely ‘dependent’ or ‘transient migrant contract construction workers’ as used in the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> are recruited by labour contractors for work in construction ‘prior’ to their migration from rural to urban areas. A distinctive feature of this form of migration is that it is undertaken to ‘take-up’ work and not ‘search’ for it, as is predominantly the case for independent migrants.

It is important to note that in differentiating between independent and dependent migration, this report does not suggest that these categories exist in non-interchangeable, impervious ‘siloes’. On the contrary, the siloes are permeable and there are possibilities for ‘silo-crossing’ or ‘silo-circulation’; the move from being dependent to becoming independent is influenced by agency and structure, whereas in the case of the reverse, structure has a greater part to play. In sum, independent migrant construction workers can start off as being independent, become dependent and then return to being independent again. The following quote illustrates this.

*“Kedarnath [pseudonym] is from rural Bihar and a Dusadh (also an Untouchable caste, though not one of the lowest). He fled his village after a fight; and before arriving in Bhilai in 1984 had dug dam foundations in Assam, worked as a coolie in various north Indian cities and become a mason. His first contract was to build a boundary wall on the industrial estate. On subsequent commissions he often incurred losses and had to revert to working for others. By 2003, however, he had a fluctuating labour force of 50–60 on six different sites—the largest of which was a subcontracting job on the leisure facility just mentioned. Since he has landed large contracts in his own right and is currently constructing more than a hundred units for a Housing Board development, he has acquired a pick-up truck and a couple of cement mixers, bought a house in a middle class residential area and invested in six acres of peri-urban land” (Parry, 2014: 1253-54).*

Mobility, expressed as aspirations by respondents of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project, takes three forms: becoming independent, gaining higher skills to command higher wages, or becoming a labour contractor based on the belief that this is where monetary returns are the highest.<sup>22</sup> However, as Picherit (2014: 272) notes, such aspirations for independence are expressed vis-à-vis labour-contractors and not the construction labour market as a whole.

*... “the swanta kuli [self-employed] represents an emerging, influential, and valued category among young Madigas [scheduled caste group], who favour working independently of a maistri [labour contractor]. A bachelor and the son of debt-bonded labourers, Kurmaiah works on his own: he breaks stones that he sells to the company on a piece-rate basis. Although he is better paid than debt-bonded labourers, his independence has a cost: he works longer and harder (to ensure a better wage), pays for his food, his tools, and his huts, has no job security, and is compelled to circulate between stone quarries according to the fluctuations of the market.”*

### 2.5.1 Internal migration and construction: The literature

Existing literature on internal migration for work in construction can be grouped into two broad strands. The first comprises studies on construction workers at their places or origin (for example, Picherit, 2014); and the second on construction workers at their places of destination (for example, Chowdhury, 2013; Parry, 2014). Destination studies include migrants who are temporary rural to urban migrants already in urban areas. Research on migrants, employed in construction, at both destination and origin are rare (for an exception see, for instance, Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015). Both strands include construction in general (for example, road building) as well as construction in urban areas, albeit with a focus on petty-commodity building contractors (van der Loop, 1992). Moreover, they cover construction workers that migrate independently of labour contractors as well as those that move as a result of being recruited by labour contractors (Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015; Picherit, 2014). For instance, a recent study of construction workers in three firms (international, national and private) in Kathmandu, Nepal found that the proportion of workers who had been recruited by labour contractors were 46, 58 and 32 per cent respectively and those that obtained work through other networks being 34, 30 and 44 per cent respectively (Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015: 20).

This raises an important question that needs further investigation, namely: as large-scale construction, especially infrastructure projects are here to stay in the medium to long term, how will they affect the labour market prospects of local and independent migrant construction labour.

In addition, secondary quantitative data on migration and construction is patchy and rural to urban migration for construction scarce. Analysis<sup>23</sup> of data from various years of the Pakistan Labour Force Survey (PLFS) provides the following estimates: construction, together with mining, contributes 5 per cent to the country's GDP; and construction workers make up around 8 per cent of the labour force.<sup>24</sup> The analysis also reveals that 12 per cent of all construction workers are migrants and that 8 per cent of all migrants are construction workers. An important point to bear in mind is that although the LFS focuses on workers, the survey is conducted at their places of residence. Thus, it does not capture migrant contract construction labour residing in labour camps.

A recent attempt has been made to define a 'research agenda' for internal and regional migration for construction (see, Zeitlyn and Deshingkar with Holtom, 2014). Such a research agenda is timely. However, a more nuanced set of questions relating to labour contracted rural-urban migrant labour for construction need to be considered. These are discussed in the conclusion (chapter 8).

## 2.6 CONSTRUCTION AND CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR

As noted earlier in this chapter, construction is underpinned by contracting and sub-contracting labour. Parry (2014: 1245) notes that "[t]here are also well-guarded barriers to entry into even the most unenviable informal sector occupations". In other words, access to lower end urban labour markets in the global South is mediated by 'who knows whom'. This has resulted in the operation of urban labour markets being described as: 'opportunity hoarding' (Tilly, 1999); 'referral based' (Mosse, 2010); and 'closed shop character' (Breman, 1996).<sup>25</sup> Urban construction labour markets in the global South operate in much the same way. The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project uses the term the 'enclosure of the commons of employment opportunities in large-scale construction' (Chapter 4).

That said, there is a difference between what the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project terms migrant 'contract' construction labour and temporary migrants, who are allocated work by contractors in urban areas.

*"Unless previously instructed, Kedarnath's [engaged in general building works, an employer of labour in this case] labour would gather each morning at a tea-stall on the main road near his house to be told which of his sites they would work on that day. There were often wrangles. Rejas and coolies mostly provide bricks and mortar to a particular mason who directs them. They tried to avoid ... because he abused them. There were also sites on which they reluctantly worked because the owner was an unreasonable taskmaster; and there were tensions over timekeeping" (Parry 2014: 1257).*

Although this quote illustrates that construction labour is dependent on building contractors for work and that although their employment relationship is not permanent or 'formal', similar to domestic workers, there is an unspoken agreement, that if there is work, they will be employed. What is different about the labour that Parry writes about is that they are resident in the city – a mix of permanent and temporary migrants perhaps - and live somewhere other than in the construction site in labour camps. Many of the studies of construction labour in urban areas are of such migrants (for example, Ahsan, 1997; Choudhury, 2013). Transient migrant contract construction labour not only depends on contractors for work but also for housing and basic services. This has different implications for policy.

### 2.6.1 Migrant contract labour in construction

Any discussion of labour contracting in construction, insofar as it relates to internal migration and the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project needs to distinguish between construction projects ‘within’ urban areas, as compared with construction projects sited ‘outwith’ the urban. The simple reason for doing so is to distinguish between rural-urban migration and rural-rural migration. In one of the earliest studies perhaps, on contract labour in construction in Rajasthan, India (Vaid and Singh, 1966: 307) note:

*“[t]he setting up of big hydro-electric projects, and the construction of buildings for plants that subsequently came into existence in the project areas involve human labour on a large scale. This demand has caused mass migration of low-skill workers to the dam sites. Almost all these workers are recruited by contractors or their firms who obtained assignments from either the government or the manufacturing companies for execution of works. Thus, the construction industry is the biggest promoter of “contract labour” system in India” (our emphasis in italics).*

Vaid and Singh (1966: 313) provide a meticulous account of the system of contract labour in the town and district of Kota in Rajasthan, India. They identify three main branches within a construction company: sub-contractors, technical (e.g., engineers) and personnel (e.g., accounts). Two categories are identified within the second, ‘technical’ branch: these are skilled workers or *Mistris*, and the head *Jamadars* - those who supply labour - who ‘[i]n practice, ... becomes the senior most officer on the worksite. He controls labour. Long experience on the job has given him enough knowledge about *mistri’s* skills. He earns more than anyone else.’ (p. 314).

## 2.7 CONSTRUCTION: INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL DISTINCTIONS

There is no doubt that the advent of international migration for construction work is a growing and relevant phenomenon, both outwith and within South Asia, dynamically related to a number of other local, regional and transnational urbanisation processes. Much academic, journalistic and policy attention has recently been paid to the phenomenon, particularly within the rapidly urbanising Gulf cities that rely almost entirely on foreign construction workers because of local lack of skills or willingness to undertake such work (Buckley, 2014, 2012a; Graeme, 2012; Hassan and Houdmont, 2014). The exploitation and abuse, perpetrated by intermediaries and employers on international migrant construction workers, have begun to both be more widely documented and denounced. Some characteristics evidenced in those contexts are arguably similar to those lived by internal migrants in the countries in this study. For instance, accommodation forms are often in bunker-like barracks, living conditions are precarious, there is little communication or integration with locals and workers’ movements can be heavily constrained by security personnel. But certain experiences like passport confiscation and illegal fee extractions appear unique to international migration and are therefore not directly comparable to that of in-country labour migrants. Nonetheless, there may be some equivalence in the way employers in places like Bangladesh and India fail to collect migrant workers’ identity information, which can lead to there being no record of who has had an accident or even died. Moreover, cities like Chennai where inter-state migration for construction is so prevalent, the vast language and cultural differences between migrant workers and their employers means that workers can face very similar forms of abuse and misinformation to those seen internationally.

A key difference between transnational (see Buckley’s Dubai study, cited above) and internal migration for construction, are the conditions under which recruitment takes place. In the main, in the five countries researched, a local pool of labour was available (albeit to varying extents) for

construction work. Therefore, employers, or contractors, had a choice between recruiting internal migrants or local labour. Internal migrants are also opting for this kind of unskilled work, amidst other opportunities.

Key questions our project set out to address, in this sense, were: what shaped the employers' decision to hire internal migrants, when faced with an available local pool of labour; whether this appeared to produce any conflicts locally; and what influenced migrant workers in their choice of construction work. Their perspectives regarding 'individual choice' within the less constrained environment of internal migration need to be understood, not just within the larger construction labour supply and demand trends of each country, but also in the region and internationally.

Another apparent distinction between these two forms of migration has to do with the extent of labour organisation. While both these contexts most often imply isolated and policed living and sleeping arrangements, international migration appears to have generated more organised demands for improved conditions and treatment, often successfully (Buckley, 2014; Torres et al., 2013; Meardy et al, 2012). Internal migrants from all five cities in this study were generally unaware of (or uninterested in) their rights as workers, or the mechanisms available to them to claim any, including through unions. Given their many parallel structural circumstances, it seems unlikely that international migrants were much more seriously aggrieved or knowledgeable of their rights. Instead, possible explanations for the discrepancy between the two groups, may be that the information filtered to internal migrants is more heavily guarded by local intermediaries or recruiters, due to the higher risk of losing this more mobile workforce; or that, because they are in their own country, the workers consider they can better de-codify both the situation in which they are in, as well as the risks and repercussions of their actions, and linked to this, that they have a more internalised or present fear of complaining, protesting or seeking redress.

Importantly, in our study, we did not encounter any of the recruitment agencies that are so important to international migration, and which have been shown to influence the conditions and outcomes of migrants (Hassan and Houdmont, 2014: 331; Buckley, 2012). A significant difference from that body of work and ours involves repayment periods: for international migrants who have to pay large fees and take on large loans with interest rates, workers usually expect they will be able to repay debts earlier than they can in reality; whereas, for the internal migrants in our five country study whose loans were small (at most, for internal forms of transport or costs associated with vacations), the major disparity was found to be between their aspirations and the reality of their wages which, when calculated, suggested only exceptional cases would be able to fulfil such aspirations (see Chapter 5).

Finally, it is important to note that like most of the available studies on international migration for construction to date, our five empirical case studies and analysis focused on large-scale building activity, thereby privileging this much more visible form of city-making, at the expense of looking at the smaller-scale or informal construction activity, that takes place with less capital investment and is more 'under the radar'. Our choice is not based on the latter being in any way less significant to the question of urbanisation. We know from work on the erection of vast human settlements throughout the world how important everyday small-scale construction activity is to urban economies and livelihoods. But the current scale of city-building, which we are witnessing in countries across South Asia, warrants a closer look at the particularities of how this new and increasing form of commodity production is interrelated to new and shifting forms of internal migration.

## 2.8 URBANISATION, CONSTRUCTION AND MIGRATION. SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

To begin with, the datasets that contain information on internal migration in the five countries in south Asia only speak to the ‘stocks’ of migrants and not their flows. Seasonal and circular migration is not adequately captured.

The literature on urbanisation is yet to engage with construction from a social science perspective.<sup>26</sup> Although there is no dearth of warnings about urban sustainability – services as well as livelihoods – the fact that construction is an integral part of the urban built environment and shapes its landscape with long-term implications can hardly be denied. Although important, construction is also not just about its contribution to the national economy – both in terms of GDP/GNI or employment – but also about its contribution to the urban economy; this is important if one is to make sense of the link between urbanisation and economic growth.

The rich literature on internal migration does contain studies on internal migration and work in construction. However, this literature needs serious disaggregation, in terms of the extent to which migrant construction workers in urban areas have migrated independently of labour contractors, even if they are employed by labour contractors while residing in urban areas. This is important because these migrants, unlike transient migrant contract construction labour, live in settlements outside their work sites. Where construction workers live is important. Housing and services acted as a hub from which collective action and social movements arose. Opportunities to reside in the city are becoming increasingly difficult; the corollary being that social movements that include transient migrant contract construction workers are elusive. Labour camps restrict the spaces and motivations for engaging in collective action or forming social movements.

Most importantly perhaps and in addition to the question of “who builds our cities, and under what conditions?” (Buckley, 2014), a question from a social justice point of view is: *what happens to those who build our cities?* The urban landscape of inclusion has always been very uneven. There were times when rural to urban migrants (lest one should forget that internal migration was and continues to contribute to the process of urbanisation), including those seeing work in construction, were able to find a way of settling in the city, if they sought to do so.

Until about the late 1980s, residential construction projects in urban south Asia were modest compared to the opulence displayed by contemporary high-rise residential complexes, in cities such as Chennai and Dhaka and the extensive provision of residential plots of land with basic physical infrastructure in Lahore and Kabul. Transient migrant contract construction workers become aware of the lifestyles that the consumers of these projects, especially residential, will soon lead and it would be difficult to imagine that they do not relate it to the circumstances that they find themselves in. This was expressed by an unskilled transient migrant contract construction worker in Chennai, India, who noted that, although he knew that he would never be able to live like this, he would like to have seen the finished product. When asked why he did not think he could do so, he said that he was told: “so what if you worked on the construction of this building, you will not be let in (into the gated residential complex) to look”. It is often overlooked that transient migrant contract labour working in large-scale residential projects and housed in labour camps live in gated communities, whilst building gated communities for the wealthy.<sup>27</sup>

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This refers to the literature available in English rather than national, regional or local languages.
- <sup>2</sup> For more recent information, see World Bank (2015). Indian Cities Can Take More Advantage of Urbanization for Economic Growth, 14 September, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/09/24/indian-cities-can-take-more-advantage-urbanization-for-economic-growth>. This press release also makes reference to cities in south Asia as a whole.
- <sup>3</sup> India has the most stringent definition with three conditions to be met before an urban area can be declared a 'Census Town': (i) a minimum population of 5,000; at least 75 per cent of the male main working population should be engaged in non-agricultural activities; and (iii) a density of more than 400 per square kilometre.
- <sup>4</sup> Sharma (circa 2013: 377) notes that '[t]he Municipality Act of 1992, and the Local Self Governance Act of 1999 redefine and classify municipal areas' and that according to the 1999 Act, there are three categories of municipalities, ... '*Mahanagarpalika* (Metropolitan city), *Upa-Mahanagarpalika* (Sub-Metropolitan city), and *Nagarpalika* (Municipality)'. The classifications are based on population, revenue and other physical and social infrastructure and are: *Mahanagarpalika* (population 300,000 and revenue Rs. 400 million); *Upa-Mahanagarpalika* (population 100,000 and revenue of Rs. 100 million); and *Nagarpalika* (population between 20,000 and 10,000 and revenues of Rs 5 million to Rs 500,000 depending on whether they are located in the Tarai or the hills/mountains).
- <sup>5</sup> The number of City Corporations and *Paurashava's* increased by 93, as a result of the decline in the next urban tier, namely Upazila headquarters (-61).
- <sup>6</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2014). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/352).
- <sup>7</sup> See, [http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data\\_files/India2/1.%20Data%20Highlight.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data_files/India2/1.%20Data%20Highlight.pdf). The other urban category is 'Statutory Towns' and are 'notified under law by the concerned State/UT Government and have local bodies like municipal corporations, municipalities, municipal committees, etc., irrespective of their demographic characteristics as reckoned on 31st December 2009'.
- <sup>8</sup> GoP (2015). *Pakistan Economic Survey 2014-15*. Islamabad: Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan ([http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey\\_1415.html](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_1415.html)). Chapter 12, entitled 'Population, Labour Force and Employment' notes that the last census was carried out in 1998, making it difficult to accurately plan. It indicates that a population and housing census is to be carried out in March 2016.
- <sup>9</sup> IDMC (2015). 'Afghanistan IDP Figures Analysis'. *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* (<http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/afghanistan/figures-analysis>).
- <sup>10</sup> This urban growth has been fuelled by the repatriation of refugees, IDPs fleeing conflict and disasters and leaving rural areas to seek better livelihood opportunities. The exact contribution of these factors is disputed and politicised. Benelli, Donini, & Niland (2012: 12) note that 'population movements and displacement, both internal and international, represent another key indicator of the humanitarian situation. Statistical claims on displacement and refugees are, undeniably, highly politicized and, thus, questionable to some extent.'
- <sup>11</sup> Dobbs, R., S. Smit, J. Remes, J. Manyika, C. Roxburgh and A. Restrepo (2011). *Urban world: Mapping the Economic Power of Cities*. McKinsey Global Institute ([file:///H:/!UCM-Np%20Final%20Chapters%2010%20Jan%202016/MGI\\_urban\\_world\\_mapping\\_economic\\_power\\_of\\_cities\\_full\\_report.pdf](file:///H:/!UCM-Np%20Final%20Chapters%2010%20Jan%202016/MGI_urban_world_mapping_economic_power_of_cities_full_report.pdf))
- <sup>12</sup> The datasets analysed are as follows: Afghanistan: Bangladesh - 2011-2012 Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey Questionnaire (BIHS); India: 2007-2008 National Sample Survey (NSS); and Nepal: 2010 Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS)—Round III Household Questionnaire.
- <sup>13</sup> The datasets analysed are as follows: Afghanistan: Bangladesh - 2011-2012 Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey Questionnaire (BIHS); India: 2007-2008 National Sample Survey (NSS); and Nepal: 2010 Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS)—Round III Household Questionnaire. Data analysed by Panayiota Kastritis.

- <sup>14</sup> It seems that there is political capital in being able to designate rural-urban migrants as ‘economic migrants’ as this reduces UNHCR / aid agency caseloads and supports the narrative of a successful transition.
- <sup>15</sup> Transparent Chennai, April 2006, mimeo (<http://www.transparentchennai.com/>).
- <sup>16</sup> Percentages have been rounded up.
- <sup>17</sup> Rashid Memon, the lead U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> Lahore research partner, cautions that the LFS migration estimates are likely to be underestimates because it ignores intra-district migration. However, he also notes that since new areas being brought into the city’s limits are classified as rural, the bias due to the non-inclusion of intra-district migration is likely to be small compared to that induced as a result of the lack of a common definition of the urban over time.
- <sup>18</sup> Rashid Memon, the lead U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> Lahore research partner finds it surprising that only 600 of the 28,923 Pashtun migrants in the 20 years of the LFS had settled in Lahore; they are considered the most mobile ethnic group.
- <sup>19</sup> See, A. Sinha, R. Prabhakar and R. Jaiswal (2015) ‘Employment dimension of infrastructure investment: State level input-output analysis’. *Employment Policy Department, Employment Working Paper No168*. Geneva: International Labour Office where they note that they have ‘introduced four new sectors: irrigation canal construction, buildings construction, highways/urban roads construction and rural roads construction’ (p. 4).
- <sup>20</sup> Note that there was a decline of 3 per cent in 2004-05.
- <sup>21</sup> See, ‘Construction jobs drive for women’, Monday 2 November 2009 - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/8338730.stm>. Also see ‘Gender bias’ in training scheme’, 5 May 2004 - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3684369.stm>.
- <sup>22</sup> Such aspirations are aired as narratives of upward mobility; the possibilities of reversal when faced with insurmountable adversities are omnipresent.
- <sup>23</sup> The calculations are by Rashid Memon, the lead U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> Lahore research partner.
- <sup>24</sup> Rashid Memon, the lead U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> Lahore research partner, notes that the occupation data in the LFS turned out to be ‘dirtier’ than expected and that this figure has to be treated with some caution.
- <sup>25</sup> All cited in: Parry, J (2014) ‘Sex, bricks and mortar: Constructing class in a central Indian steel town’. *Modern Asian Studies*, 48 (5): 1242-1275.
- <sup>26</sup> It does so, for example, from planning and urban design perspectives.
- <sup>27</sup> Credit is due to Dr Edmundo Werna, Urbanist and Construction Specialist, ILO, who mentioned this to Dr Sunil Kumar who was at the ILO to give a public lecture on 9 November 2015.

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**3** **Methodology**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 3

**METHODOLOGY | RESEARCHING TRANSIENT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION MIGRANT LABOUR IN FIVE CITIES IN SOUTH ASIA****3.1 CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted for an enquiry into the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five cities in south Asia: Kabul (Afghanistan), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Chennai (India), Kathmandu (Nepal), and Lahore (Pakistan). The research focused on large-scale construction in each city as a proxy for urbanisation (understood as increasing consumption power which underpins contemporary urbanism) and its dynamically interconnected relationships to internal patterns of rural-urban migration. The nexus was analysed through three avenues of investigation – mapping, interviews with migrant construction workers, and an analysis of secondary datasets, described in more detail below.

**3.1.1 Mapping the large-scale construction sector**

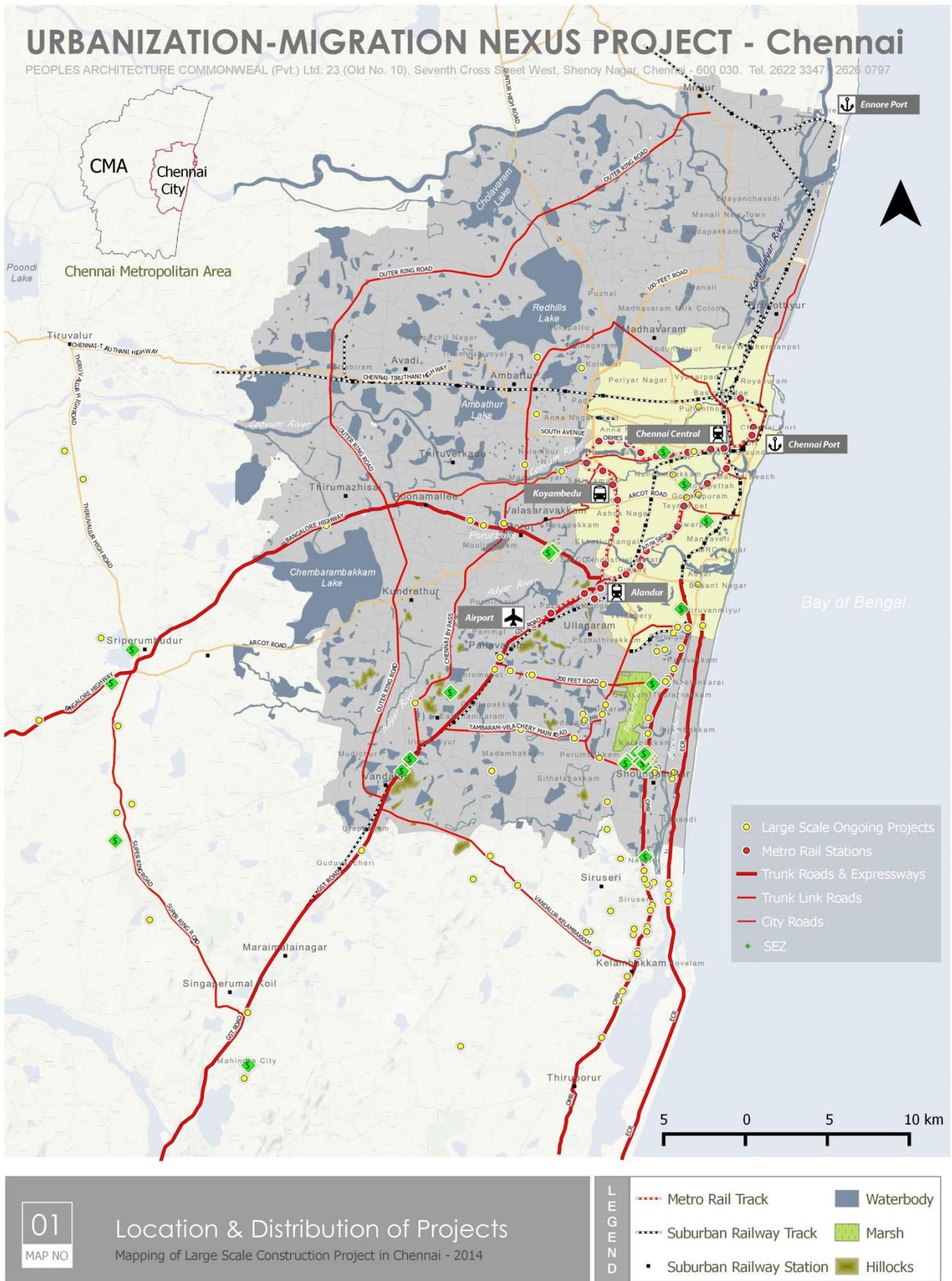
Given the dearth of readily available secondary data, about the scale and location of large-scale construction activity, a ‘mapping’ exercise was designed and undertaken. Its aim was not only to map large-scale construction activity in each city, but also to understand the current social, political, economic and legal landscape of contemporary urbanism, insofar as it linked large-scale construction to concomitant migration patterns. Two key questions framed the mapping exercise.<sup>1</sup>

1. What are the forms (residential, commercial, industrial and infrastructure) and investment sources (aid, national versus international capital, and state-private arrangements) in construction in each city?
2. Where is this construction taking place (in the centre or at the periphery) and what regulatory frameworks define it?

The process entailed gathering as much basic primary data as possible about large-scale, on-going construction activity in each city. This included: estimating the number of migrants employed; and collecting as much relevant information as possible, on consumption patterns, capital inflows into real estate and other forms of urban infrastructure investments, GDP per economic sector, occupational distribution, and existing governance (legal and regulatory) frameworks. Although local realities determined the extent of information that each research partner was able to capture, the exercise generated results that provided them with the necessary real-time information to determine which construction sites and locations would be most appropriate to focus on, for the next fieldwork stage (See Appendix A, B and C for instructions related to the mapping exercise).

**3.1.2 Respondents and Interviews**

A key distinguishing feature of migrants working in the large-scale construction sector in all of the cities studied was that many, if not most, tended to live in on-site labour camps. Thus, our respondents were individuals living at their place of work, rather than elsewhere in the city and commuting to work. Studies that use housing as the entry point to studying migrant labour most often capture the experiences of the latter. In the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> the researchers were clear from the outset that this study would focus on migrant construction labour living in labour camps, as this was the only way the urban work-life dynamic of this ‘transient’ migrant labour force could be captured.



**FIGURE 3.1** | Mapping of large-scale construction projects in Chennai, India: Illustrative of the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> mapping exercise in 2014

The selection of a limited number of construction sites in which to conduct the interviews was determined mainly by the difficulty in gaining access to workers in their labour-camps and to some extent the only effective way of reaching the intended one hundred interviewees per city, within the short timeframe of the project. As a result, although the sample is purposive rather than representative, the information gathered reveals a pattern that amplifies: the push factors behind migration into construction, their working and living conditions, their social and political exclusions as well as their aspirations for the future.

The LSE team developed an extensive interview protocol document with structured (quantitative) and semi-structured (qualitative) questions in consultation with country partners (see Appendix D). The questions were designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the shifting and 'new' patterns of migration and its impact, as these relate to: (a) individuals' and groups' socio-economic conditions; and (b) larger forces of urbanisation in their city of residence and work. Despite the different social, economic and political contexts in each of the countries and cities, developing a standard set of quantitative and qualitative questions was intended to facilitate a comparative cross-country analysis, so as to identify regional similarities and disparities.

- *The structured quantitative questions* were designed to collect basic information including demographic, socio-economic, income and consumption data from internal migrant construction workers. There were also questions about previous employment and migration routes, and conditions of life and work in their places of origin. These were intended to assist analysis of how inter and intra-group dynamics (for instance, gender, age, caste, ethnicity, religion, education and skills) were related to migratory movements, current employment or economic conditions, or future aspirations (see 2.1.3. below).
- *The open-ended semi-structured qualitative questions* sought to better understand issues in relation to: labour recruitment processes and practices; workers' experience of working and living conditions; their reasons for migrating and ties with place of origin; their relationship to the city and their aspirations. These questions were intended to aid our comprehension of the challenges and opportunities faced by construction labour migrants in alien urban environments; the exclusions and deprivations they face in relation to welfare provision; their living arrangements; future aspirations; and the (shifting) meaning of migration and work in the context of contemporary urbanism.

With the exception of Nepal, the other four countries carried out a small number of pilot surveys and interviews with migrant workers within the pre-selected sites. The point of this exercise was to: (a) verify the relevance of the questions and prioritise those that were most important for the final interview schedule, given the time-constraints of the research; (b) amend either the questions or the order in which they were to be asked if necessary, in accordance with their local contexts; and (c) estimate the time it would take to collect data. In the Kathmandu case, the research team conducted a pilot study with six labourers (three male and three female) working in various construction sites across Kathmandu. These respondents were not from the sites identified for the actual study, as securing permission for interviews via formal avenues was too time consuming. In all cases, interview protocol times were noted as challenging, particularly given the fatigue of interviewees. This led to the prioritisation of certain sections or areas of the survey over others. Some of the questions were also, in the first iteration, confusing to the respondents and led to clarifications to the protocol. Certain topics (such as income, or gender-specific questions) proved sensitive, and research partners had

either to amend the wording, or seek out situations (such as ensuring men were not present, when interviewing women) in order to avoid hesitancy or mistrust, or eliminate them from the schedule altogether. All research partners translated the questionnaire and open-ended interview schedule into the local languages.

A general inductive (interpretative) approach was adopted for interview analyses. Therefore, while interviews were initially coded according to key pre-determined thematic categories (deductive), all partners were encouraged to identify significant or dominant sub-themes, as these emerged from the raw data and to analytically triangulate the emerging themes, with the quantitative data from the structured questions, in order to arrive at preliminary findings and conclusions. As the city partners progressed with their fieldwork, the LSE team provided on-going feedback and direction. The research experience was a guided, incremental and iterative process - with some absolutes across all countries - as well as variations based on local contexts and grounded realities, as they emerged from the fieldwork. This kind of approach allowed for extensive and complex data (recorded across this project) to be rigorously examined, both in relation to the research objectives and within the relatively short project timeframe. Most importantly, the research process captured local experiences allowing the data to speak 'for itself' as much as possible, without assumptions problematically built-into, or reproduced in, the analysis. This process was critical to the development of our theoretical understandings of the 'urbanisation-construction-migration nexus' structures at play. Each country partner made their own decisions about whether to conduct interviews 'in one go' per site concurrently, or have a 'reserve' at each site, in order to return, after the initial phase of analysis had concluded.

Interviews were also conducted with a select number of managers, supervisors, contractors and/or employers to collect supplementary information about employment preferences. These interviews explored, for instance, reasons for employing migrant workers instead of local workers; recruitment and management practices; and wage determination, so as to provide a picture of intra-city as well as inter-city variations.

A final set of interviews was conducted with key government employees and civil society organisations, directly or indirectly involved in urbanisation, migration or construction in each of the cities. These 'official' perspectives (which were intentionally captured after interviews with migrant workers had concluded) were aimed at generating information about current and future policies, so as to help identify gaps in knowledge, as well as suggest possible ways forward.

Some individual country partners supplemented the above activities with additional fieldwork actions that enriched and nuanced their conclusions. For example, the Chennai study included 84 independent migrant respondents who had been residing the city for the past five to twenty-five years. These more extensive experiences are detailed in the city case studies.

### 3.1.3 Statistical Analysis

**Primary:** The inclusion of structured quantitative questions in the interview schedule was essential for this research, as the large-scale quantitative surveys (see, secondary datasets below) only provided an extremely broad level understanding of migration. The data does not specify, for instance, whether search for employment means *looking* for employment or to *join* work. The interviews with transient migrant contract construction workers clarified it was the latter. The primary quantitative data was initially analysed by country research partners, in their case studies, and triangulated with their

qualitative research. This primary data was also shared with the LSE team in its raw form to allow an overall comparative cross-country analysis.

**Secondary:** In addition, a separate and more extensive statistical review and analysis, of the following national population/migration datasets, was conducted.

1. Afghanistan: the Population and Housing Census and National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) Multipurpose Survey (2010)<sup>2</sup>.
2. Bangladesh: the Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (2011-2012).
3. India: the National Sample Survey (NSS) (2008) and ICRISAT.
4. Nepal: the Living Standards Survey—Round III (2010).
5. Pakistan: Labour Force Survey (1990/91 -2010/11).

These datasets were individually cross tabulated across a wide range of categories, for instance questions relating to education and gender, in order to identify the extent to which the information contained in the datasets, did or did not provide information that would allow for a better understanding of the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in south Asia. Attempts were also made to identify where existing questions could be expanded and new questions posed, in order to assist with development of appropriate policy responses.

Given the information analysed from these available datasets, we were able to draw more nuanced conclusions about specific migration trends and channels, both between and within groups. Where possible, we related these findings to any additional national socio-economic data. Moreover, we compared them to the information gathered and analysed in our own primary statistical exercise, in order to suggest areas that were missing in the official datasets. We critiqued the gaps in the available sources, in relation to their relative utility in addressing the questions our project set out to address, together with any methodological issues or inconsistencies, that did not allow for certain conclusions to be drawn.

### 3.2 CHOICE OF RESEARCH SITES

The mapping exercise was designed to provide all partners with a clearer sense of what the forms (residential, commercial, industrial, infrastructure) and investment sources (aid, national versus international capital and state-private arrangements) in construction in urban areas were, where they were concentrated, and what regulatory frameworks defined, or were defined by the sector, in each city. This, together with initial site visits and data from secondary sources led to the selection of between three and five case study sites per city<sup>3</sup>. The selected sites were identified according to the following criteria: (a) location (where new construction was concentrated and/or the direction it was moving, in the city); (b) building typology (selection of most relevant or predominant kinds of ‘capital and resource intensive’<sup>4</sup> construction activity already underway); and (c) association with medium, large, national or international construction companies (that could potentially capture distinct contractual arrangements and offer rich narratives about land acquisition practices).

The LSE team also visited some of the pre-identified potential study sites in Chennai, Dhaka and Kathmandu during the inception mission in August 2014. Field visits gave us a sense of the various areas where urbanisation and development - in terms of new forms of construction and consumption - were taking place; and allowed us to see some of the specific study sites under consideration at the time, as well as speak<sup>5</sup> to some of the migrant workers, engineers or supervisors on site<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.3 METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Given the multi-pronged nature of this project and the fact that its focus (depending on which actor is being approached) could be perceived as controversial, methodological issues need to be understood, not just in relation to the possible problems associated with accessing the workers to be interviewed (something which the literature refers to and is elaborated on below) but also in relation to our own research process, including the mapping and the collection of primary and secondary data. In addition, constraints specific to the construction sector, such as the availability of migrant workers during the agricultural seasons and festivals, and how these influence data collection and analysis, need also to be borne in mind.

#### 3.3.1 Mapping data and sources

The city research teams went about collecting primary information about construction sites in different ways. In so doing, they gathered distinct kinds of data and encountered different obstacles (the particularities of which are discussed in detail in the case studies). Depending on the level of trust, gatekeepers (such as managers or security personnel on construction sites) varied in how open respondents were both to researchers and to their initial questions. This led to variations in the final mapping data of each country partner (in terms of the amount of information gathered). Moreover, while much of the secondary information that was sought for the mapping was straightforward enough and publicly accessible, either through the internet or relevant repositories, libraries or archives, there were often gaps in what was both actually, and usefully, available. As a result, some countries had to triangulate whatever was available with field observations. Finally, the size, capacity and human resources of each research team had an impact on the information they were able to collect and how extensively the researchers could search.

#### 3.3.2 Access

The most time-consuming of all project activities was gaining initial access to construction sites and permission to interview migrant workers employed therein. As with the mapping exercise, each country research partner experienced different attitudes, as well as varying degrees of willingness to participate in the project (for details, please see country studies). Official 'vouching', processed by construction project managers or company representatives, involved the procurement of letters of permission, signing confidentiality agreements, multiple visits and numerous phone calls. In some cases, the project manager had the authority to approve access, thus rendering the process less complicated; for others, gatekeepers were more senior in the hierarchy, making the process both an incremental and time-consuming one.

Even when access was secured, after lengthy negotiations, project managers sometimes 'selected' the workers to be interviewed (without explaining their reasons), with some obviously problematic consequences. A third access issue had to do with timing. Some sites went into 'off-season' mode immediately after permission had been obtained. This meant that workers were not available to be interviewed, as they had returned to their places of origin, for festivities (such as Eid, Dashain, Tihar and Chhath), or to work on their land, during the harvesting season. Since this tended to be a citywide phenomenon in the construction sector, these 'off season periods' had the secondary effect of further delaying project time-lines, set out in the original schedule. All five city partners experienced such pauses in construction.

### 3.3.3 Interviews

For all interviews in the five cities, confidentiality was assured verbally to interviewees (and confidentiality forms were provided to all project partners to use if, and when, necessary). The purpose of the research was explained in a way that researchers felt confident that interviewees had a reasonable understanding of what their participation and consent entailed. Where language was an issue, trusted translators were employed, and where age (youth) was a factor, researchers spent more time explaining questions to ensure clarity. Once 'official' access was granted, other methodological issues arose when conducting the interviews. The reasons are many and varied and are explained here.

- *Trust and time*

As with any interview process, building rapport and trust with the research participants was crucial to achieving what were considered to be candid responses. Interview schedules were long and time-consuming, and the project period relatively short for covering between 2-3 sites and 100 workers in total, in each city. This combination of factors meant that researchers often felt there was not sufficient time to develop the ideal kind of rapport or trusting relationships one would have done given a longer time frame, where they could have undertaken a more ethnographic approach. This was further compounded by the nature of construction work, which takes place from the early morning until late afternoon, or even through the evenings. This meant that finding both the time and convenient places to administer the questionnaire was far from straightforward. In most cities, in order to address these concerns, researchers interviewed during the evenings. A final issue related to the limited time available for fieldwork in a project of this nature. This made it difficult to ascertain whether the stories being told reflected the reality. We can only, in some cases, speculate as to potential alternative realities that were expounded (based on the local knowledge of researchers or broader public knowledge). Therefore, in line with social constructivist lines of inquiry, we treat the research respondents' voices, with respect and as truthful accounts.

- *'Security' personnel*

All of the sites visited had some form of security, either guards or police. Some security personnel made access impossible. Those sites where access was relatively easy and supervisors were not that concerned about their workers speaking to the research team, interviewing proved to be less of a challenge. In other cases, however, the security guards 'hovering' around during interviewing were considered by all researchers to be an intimidating factor, not only for the interviewees but also for them. Projects that researchers expected would be most secretive and difficult to gain access to, on account of their private developers' known entanglements with corrupt-like entities, were in fact, surprisingly more open than public projects that, in theory, the researchers thought would be more open to scrutiny.

- *Individual response*

In some cases when individuals were reticent to share information and provided only brief responses to the questions posed, others around them (i.e., fellow workers) would reply on their behalf, add to their information, or address the questions, as if the questions were posed to them. Considering these interviews on case by case basis researchers used their judgement and either viewed these responses, as one or as two separate interviews (as long as they were then able to gather basic quantitative information from the second respondent).

### 3.3.4 Secondary Datasets

As noted, the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> began with an examination of the quantitative data sets for each country. However, secondary data can only capture a limited picture, rather than the full dynamics of migration. To name a few of the issues: in certain contexts, migration only picks up inter-district movement, and the migration and movements of women are recorded predominantly as family related (with little economic information about their livelihoods, or their own views). More broadly, the survey/census data is not designed to link questions of urbanisation with migration. They lack specific questions related to the construction sector, such as: how workers are recruited (for instance, via recruitment agencies and companies/individuals); ethnic and low-caste identities; or important qualitative distinctions. In many of the official country data sets, flows of migrants, rather than stocks, are not fully captured. Moreover, all datasets are slightly dated (in Bangladesh 2012 is the most recent) and as such, it is not likely to reflect the most up-to-date migration trends. In India, as noted by UNESCO-UNICEF (2013: 3), there is “a serious gap on the extent, nature and magnitude of internal migration”. Not only does the NSSO data produce conflicting secondary estimates about the actual scale of short-term migration, but migration figures from the 2011 Census are yet to be published. After consideration of these constraints, the decision was taken to analyse the secondary, quantitative data together with other dimensions of the project, in order to be able to draw a holistic, dynamic picture of the urbanisation-migration nexus.

### 3.3.5 Project timings

As the project gained greater thematic coherence during the initial phase of the research, the actual start dates for empirical studies were delayed, for two reasons.

First, we asked project partners to map the construction sector to assist with ascertaining the range and types of projects being carried out, their locations, dispersion and concentrations around each city, and the relative participation of migrants in each. This was a major undertaking. Second, we had not planned visits to the project partners<sup>6</sup> in the initial phase. This three-week journey was undertaken whilst each research team was conducting their mapping exercise. In our face-to-face meetings, considerable time was spent revising work plans, and discussing interview schedules, which also contributed to some delays in meeting planned deadlines. In total, the interviews started approximately 1.5 to 2 months later than originally envisaged. This had the knock on effect of moving all other project outputs associated with the data collection and fieldwork phase of the research.

## 3.4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In summary, there are three key points worth bearing in mind. Firstly, this was a five-city (country) study conducted by several teams, within a relatively short time frame. Secondly, it generated vast amounts fascinating insights and findings from five cities regarding urbanisation, construction and migration in the global South.

With increased resources, people and time, the teams could have conducted an in depth, ethnographic study, which would uncover nuances and assist with triangulation, allowing for deeper insight into the labour market dynamics, saturation or competitiveness, as well as the veracity of some ‘push’ narratives. Migrants’ places of origin can also be visited to get a fuller grasp of the lived and shifting relations and meanings that internal migration produces. The project also revealed the need to develop a finer understanding of the political economy of land acquisition; and the growth of construction - locally, regionally and internationally for two reasons. First, in order to understand its

complex engagement with migration and migrants, and second to critically assess the way in which such practices have serious and long-term environmental, social and economic impacts on the South Asian urban, peri-urban and rural environments, not least via the mechanisms of enclosure, described in the following chapter.

**END NOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> The outcome of the mapping exercise in each of the cities will be published as standalone documents in due course.
- <sup>2</sup> The LSE began the process of acquiring this data set in June 2014 and only succeeded in obtaining it on 16 April 2015.
- <sup>3</sup> The results of these exercises and specific site-selection criteria are detailed in each of the country case studies and will be published in due course.
- <sup>4</sup> We use the term ‘capital and resource intensive’ construction to refer to what is normally called large-scale construction. This is to distinguish it from petty-commodity forms of construction that tend to mainly employ local or resident migrant workers (see Chennai case study).
- <sup>5</sup> In India, we had three full and intensive days of visits to North Chennai (Ennore and Minjur-Kattupalli), West Chennai (Sriperumbudur-Oragadam, Chennakuppam) and South Chennai. In Bangladesh, we also had two and a half days of visits to cover four projects in four distinct zones of Dhaka South and three projects of different sizes in the expanding peripheral areas of Dhaka North. In Nepal, we spent a day visiting two pre-selected public and private projects (Suresh Wagle Memorial Cancer Centre/IOM Teaching Hospital and Classic Tower – Phase 1) in two central Kathmandu zones, and another day visiting the large public and international infrastructure project in the outskirts of the valley (Melamchi Diversion Scheme (Melamchi Water Supply Project)).
- <sup>6</sup> Due to security and visa issues, we were unable to visit Kabul and Lahore. Instead, our Lahore partner travelled to Nepal and our Kabul partner to India.

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**4** **Conceptual**  
**Positioning**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 4

**THE CONCEPTUAL CANVAS FOR THE URBANISATION-CONSTRUCTION-MIGRATION PROJECT**  
(U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup>)**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Construction, irrespective of scale, almost always involves subcontracting<sup>1</sup> due to the diverse range of specialisms (civil, mechanical, electrical etc.) and the different skill-sets each specialism requires. Subcontracting and the use of labour contractors were prevalent in the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project and its focus on large-scale construction projects generated three key observations: (i) the quantity of construction labour required; (ii) where this labour originated from and how it was sourced; and (iii) how migrant construction labour was housed – largely in on - and off - site labour camps. Labour camps, in themselves, are not new to the construction landscape; they have been, and continue to be, used in ‘road building’ projects<sup>2</sup> as well as in the production of building materials, such as bricks made in brick kilns<sup>3</sup> and the quarrying of stone and sand. However, in all the five cities, the practice of using labour camps in large-scale construction projects began in the early 1990s. Of note, is the emerging commercialisation of the supply of ‘sheds’ for these labour camps (Figure 4.1).

As the findings from the research began to emerge, the question was, how best to conceptualise the contemporary recruitment and deployment of use of ‘transient contract migrant construction labour’, in large-scale construction projects in urban areas. Given the range of actors involved – the developer or client, a range of specialist contractors, labour contractors, labour in general, and migrant labour in particular – questions of the power and freedom to choose what work to do and the location of work is not that easy to untangle. This research sees the benefit of using the notion of a continuum of ‘unfreedoms’ (Lerche, 2011) within which migrant labour (and some may argue, labour contractors) operate. As Lerche (2011: 22) notes:

“... for capital, unfree labour fulfil (sic) the same purpose as does labour relations such as putting-out systems, employment of labour through labour subcontractors, child labour and, at a societal level, oppression of labour rights: they create a more docile and cheap labour force. Similarly for labour, employment in unfree labour relations are not always seen as the worst possible kind of employment. The evidence is that it is chosen ahead of free labour alternatives available which are perceived as even worse, such as irregular and underpaid (but free) employment as agricultural labour, or survival petty commodity production. For both capital and labour unfreedom is one of many employment relations which serve the same general purpose”.

Proponents of a centre-right outlook may argue that the creation of employment, in this case for a number of construction workers, is a good thing, while those from a centre-left perspective may argue that the creation of work should not take precedence over poor working and living conditions. While there may be agreements and disagreements relating to these caricaturised views, there is another question that is seldom posed:<sup>4</sup> how large-scale construction in urban areas is positioned vis-à-vis locally available pools of construction labour – city-born, long-term resident migrants and independent migrants? Do the latter migrants not wish to offer their labour, or are they deliberately excluded? If large-scale construction projects become the norm – and there are indications that this is likely to be the case – what does the short to medium term future hold for local construction labour?

**4.2 CONCEPTUALISING TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR**

The conceptualisation uses a ‘grounded’ methodological approach; namely, it emerges from the research findings. ‘Transient contract migrant construction labour’ in large-scale construction projects in urban areas is located within a conceptual canvas that schematically represents key internal migration

arrangements and processes. These are: (1) rural to rural migration; (2) rural to urban periphery to rural migration; (3a) urban to rural; (3b) urban to urban; (3c) international migration – south-north as well as south-south migration; (4) rural-urban migration; and (5) rural to urban transient contract construction labour migration (Table 4.1). Skeldon (2008), when speaking of the blurring of the boundaries between internal and international migration states: “[w]hat we need to do is to look at the whole range of potential destinations available to migrants ... By focusing so much of our attention only on international migration we are truncating a unified migration space” (p. 35).

**TABLE 4.1 | Migration Type, Notation, Notation Explanation and Commentary**

Migration Type	Notation	Notation Explanation	Commentary
1	oM1 <sup>rr</sup>	Out and return migration type (oM1), <b>rural-rural</b>	Longstanding rural to rural migration involving individuals, families and groups as well as contract labour. Camps, housing migrant labour, used in the latter; camps more visible than those housing ‘transient migrant contract construction workers’ in urban projects.
2	M2 <sup>rPur</sup>	Migration <b>rural to peri-urban to rural</b>	Migration to the urban periphery to work in brick kilns, as well as stone and sand quarries. Camps, housing migrant contracted workers, are more visible than those housing ‘transient migrant contract construction workers’ in urban projects.
3a	oM3A <sup>ur</sup>	Out migration, <b>urban to rural</b>	Does not preclude employment in construction.
3b	oM3B <sup>uu</sup>	Out and in migration, <b>urban to urban</b>	
3c	IM3c <sup>ss</sup> IM3c <sup>sn</sup>	International migration, <b>south to south</b> as well as <b>south to north</b>	Migration for work in construction is one employment classification. Others, for example, include domestic work and the care economy.
4	oM4 <sup>ruIL</sup>	Out migration type (oM4), <b>rural to urban</b> ( <sup>ru</sup> ), <b>Independent Labour</b> ( <sup>ILC</sup> ).	Longstanding independent (of labour contractors) migration of labour with construction skills residing in urban areas in squatter settlements or in rented accommodation. Squatting is increasingly becoming difficult, due to lack of opportunities – space wise and due to state eviction drives.
5	oM5 <sup>ruCCL</sup>	Out migration type (oM5), <b>rural to urban</b> ( <sup>ru</sup> ), <b>Contract Construction Labour</b> ( <sup>CCL</sup> ) migrants.	Out migration of <b>contract construction labour</b> by virtue of being recruited by <b>labour contractors</b> to ‘join work’.

Large-scale construction projects in urban areas and the recruitment of migrant contract construction labour serves to highlight two other concerns: first, what the future of work would look like for local construction workers; and second, the current and future impact of large-scale construction on the urban and urban periphery, as well as the rural and rural peripheries. These include processes of displacement and the enclosure of a range of commons, and of equal significance, the pressure placed on critical urban services, for instance, water and sanitation (Table 4.2).

**TABLE 4.2 | Local Construction Labour and Impact of Construction (urban, peri-urban, rural and peri-rural).**

ID	Notation	Notation Explanation	Commentary
<b>A</b>	LCL	Local Construction Labour	Local construction labour includes those who are city-born as well as migrant construction workers who have settled in the urban (long-term resident migrants).
<b>B</b>	Construction	Construction, urban ( $C^{ui}$ ) and rural ( $C^{ri}$ ) impact	The impact of large-scale urban construction in the urban on the urban, peri-urban, rural and peri-rural landscapes on two fronts: (i) the quantity of material resources required by the construction industry, some of which displaces rural populations to other rural and peri-rural areas; and (ii) the dispossession of agricultural land on the urban periphery, building on the urban and peri-urban commons, and displacing urban and peri-urban residents.

In sum, the migration canvas provides a frame of reference for the: (i) findings of this research to be located in relation to other forms of internal migration; and (ii) ability to ‘drill down’ into the recruitment (‘procurement’) of transient rural migrant contract labour for deployment in large scale construction projects in urban areas (Figure 4.1).

The framework neither suggests a simple dichotomy between the urban and the rural, nor that a given migration form dominates. Moreover, whilst there is no doubt that internal migration is far more complex than represented in Figure 4.1 - the framework serves as a heuristic device to represent the migration complexities at work. The forms of migration represented in Figure 4.1 take place asynchronously as well as simultaneously and the boundaries between types are porous. At any given point, one or more forms may dominate and then decline, only to dominate again. The main focus of the  $UM^C-Np$  is an investigation into how urbanisation (viewed from the perspective of increasing consumption power), when represented by large-scale construction (real estate, commercial, industrial and infrastructure) as a proxy, creates a demand for migrant construction labour, in five cities in south Asia. As a result, the conceptualisation is generic. It incorporates processes relating to ‘transient contract migrant construction labour’ in large-scale construction projects from five cities in five countries, each with different economic, social, cultural and political underpinnings, as well as differences in the scale and form (high rise residential versus serviced plots of land, for instance) of large-scale construction. Nuanced understandings of similarities and differences are presented in the chapters that follow with the view to exploring their bearing on policy issues and challenges.

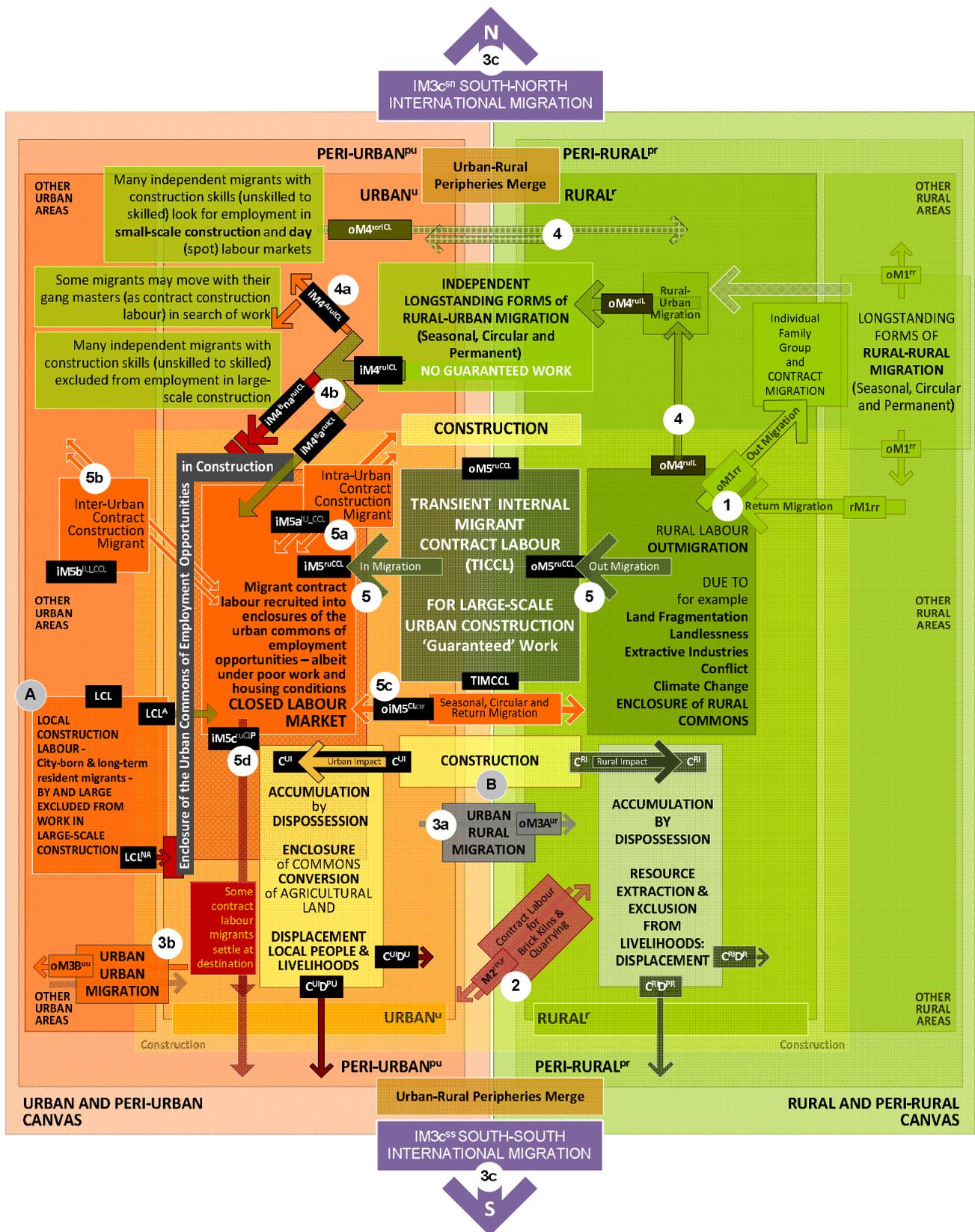


FIGURE 4.1 | The Conceptual Canvas for the Urbanisation-Construction-Migration Nexus

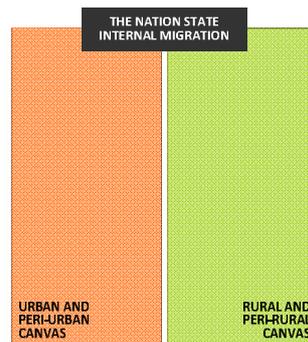
### 4.3 DECONSTRUCTING THE CONCEPTUAL CANVAS: KEY FORMS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION

This section deconstructs the conceptual canvas presented in Figure 4.1. More time and attention is paid to the phenomenon of ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ as it is the focus of the

U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project. Brief mention is made to urban to rural and urban to urban migration, as these forms of migration do not preclude work in construction. Reference to international migration for work in construction is also made insofar as there are broad similarities in the working (economic) and living (social) conditions of internal and international construction migrants, despite other significant differences discussed in the introduction (Chapter 1).

### 4.3.1 The first heuristic layer – time and space

The key range of internal migration possibilities is located with a simple urban-rural canvas to signify the space and boundary of the nation state (Figure 4.2).

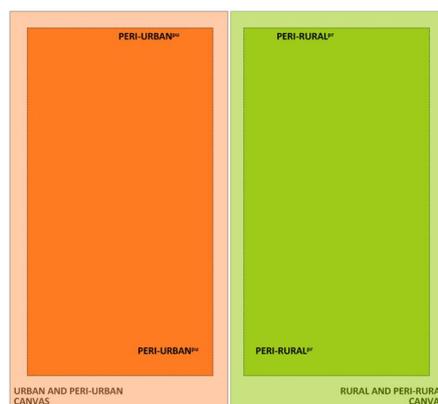


**FIGURE 4.2** | *The urban, peri-urban, rural and peri-rural canvas forming the boundary of the nation state*

The first layer of the heuristic canvas is the space and time within which a range of economic, social, political, cultural, environmental and other states of existence and exchange coexist, or are in conflict; such states being in constant flux. The manner in which these states impact upon livelihoods of the rural and urban poor is significant insofar as large-scale construction links urbanisation and migration.

### 4.3.2 The second layer heuristic – peri-urban and peri-rural areas

The second layer of the heuristic canvas represents the peri-urban and peri-rural migration, where production (brick kilns) and the extraction (stone and sand quarries) of materials for construction take place (Figure 4.3).



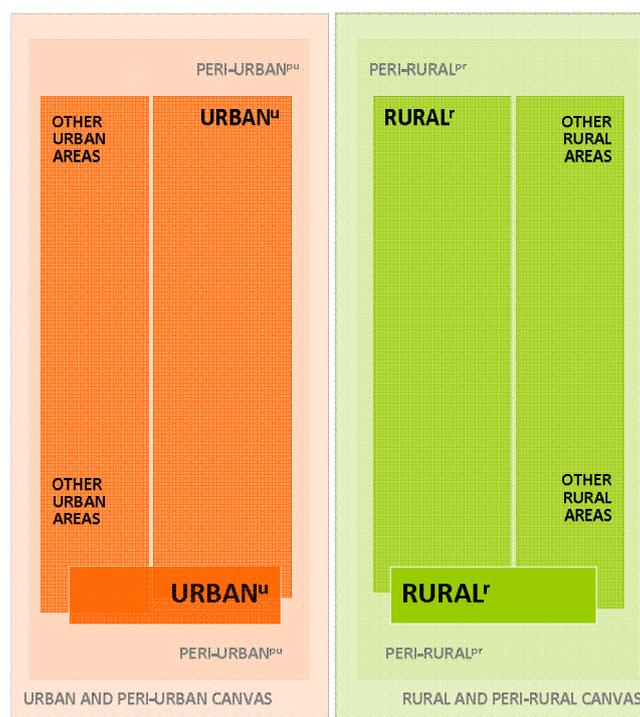
**FIGURE 4.3** | *Peri-urban and peri-rural economic, social, cultural and geo-political livelihoods spaces*

This is important for two reasons. First, the current intensity of demand for resources (used directly or indirectly) by large-scale construction has a significant, direct bearing on peri-urban and peri-rural landscapes and livelihoods, as well as those involved in the production of building materials.<sup>5</sup> This is of significance, in so far as construction is concerned, as the production of certain building

materials - such as brick making and the quarrying of stone and sand - takes place here. Workers in the building material industries are not sufficiently disaggregated in the secondary quantitative datasets, which makes it difficult to distinguish between workers in the building and materials parts of the construction sector.

### 4.3.3 The third heuristic layer – urban and rural areas

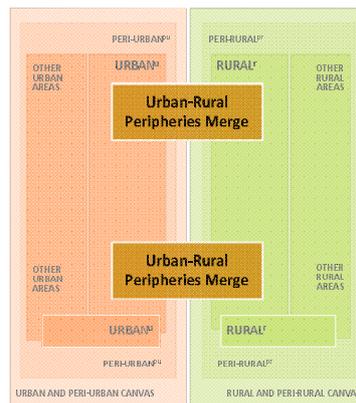
The third layer of the heuristic canvas is the urban and the rural (Figure 4.4). The research does not engage with the debates in the literature on what constitutes the urban,<sup>6</sup> rural, peri-urban or peri-rural, as this is not its focus. It uses country specific definitions to focus on the entry of migrant labour into large-scale construction projects in urban areas, irrespective of how the urban and rural are defined.



**FIGURE 4.4** | *Urban and rural economic, social, cultural, environmental and geo-political livelihoods spaces*

### 4.3.4 The merging of the urban and rural peripheries

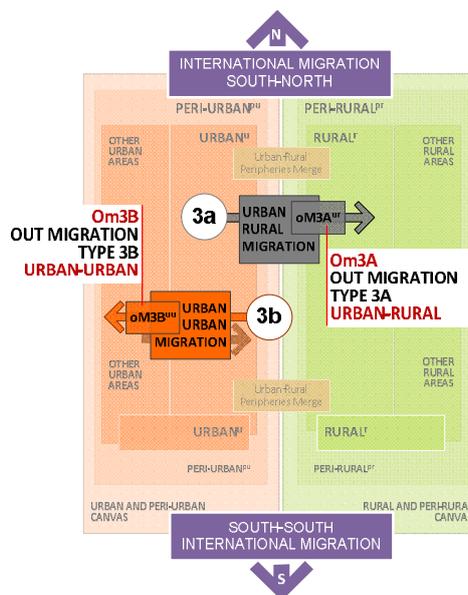
The merging of the urban and rural peripheries in cities in the global South is not always easily discernible to the naked eye (Figure 4.5). Official delineations of city boundaries are at odds with the reality on the ground: the conversion of agricultural land as well as range of ‘commons’ to other uses, often contravenes city planning edicts. In all the five cities, on-going large-scale residential,<sup>7</sup> commercial and industrial construction projects blur the urban and rural peripheries into a hive of activity that is compounded with new ones planned in these spaces. This indiscriminate peri-urban urbanisation does not take place without the tacit approval of the state; in some cases, as in Chennai, the state is the client of large-scale low-income housing projects built on fast disappearing marshy land. Consumers (individuals as well as organisations) of this new built-environment seem unaware (or unconcerned) about the impact that such construction is having on the urban and peri-urban environments, as well as the enclosure and building on agricultural and common land.



**FIGURE 4.5 | The merging of the urban and rural peripheries**

**4.3.5 Urban-rural and urban-urban internal migration, and international migration**

The conceptual canvas also includes two forms of ‘internal’ migration not specifically addressed by this research (Figure 4.6). These are: urban-rural migration (3A); and urban-urban migration (3.B). They are found in all the five countries and do not preclude migration for employment in construction – skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. However, they comprise migrants moving ‘independently’ of labour contractors and should not be confused with the inter-urban and intra-urban movement of contract construction labour, working either under the direction of their existing labour contractor, or different labour contractors, during intermittent or slack employment periods.<sup>8</sup>



**FIGURE 4.6 | Urban-rural, Urban-urban and international migration for construction (south-south & south-north)**

To complete the picture, the canvas also situates international migration – both south-north and south-south (3C). Setting aside the question of what constitutes an international migrant in the context of geo-political changes (such as Hong Kong SAR or the breakup of the Soviet Union), internal and international migration at times are linked (Skeldon, 2008). Nevertheless, a renewed interest in international migration, in general as well as for construction, both legal and trafficked, has grown since the early to mid-2000s (DeWind and Holdaway, 2008; Laczko, 2008). A number of organisations such as the International Labour Organisation, International Organisation for Migration<sup>9</sup> and the Migration Policy Institute<sup>10</sup> are working on issues of international migration.

Migrants, internal and international (legal), working in construction share some common features: (i) both migrate not to ‘search’ for, but to ‘take up’ work - while no system of sponsorship exists for the former, international migrants require a ‘Kafeel’<sup>11</sup> (a sponsor in the case of the Gulf Arab States) or a ‘work permit’ (countries other than the Arab States); (ii) both groups are equally vulnerable to economic exploitation – wages, overtime and payments can be withheld; and (iii) both are housed in labour camps where living conditions are poor. The use of labour camps to house internal migrants is an increasing phenomenon.

However, there are also certain differences between them. (i) In the international migration for construction, recruitment agents in sending countries do not cross the international border, but transfer the workers to the *Kafeel* (giving rise to what is called the ‘*Kafala*’ system). In contrast, the labour-contractor in the internal migration process, procures and manages migrant construction labour and their work, and pay their wages. (ii) Given the *Kafeel* and need for work permits in countries where the *Kafala* system does not exist, there is more information available about the number and destination of international migrants in comparison to internal migrants where there is little, if any, information. (iii) The nation state, in principle, appears (or is even forced) to pay more attention to its citizens abroad, than to those at home.

This has different implications for policy formulation and implementation. In the case of international migration, the accountability of labour recruiters and recruitment agencies, supplying migrant workers for cross-border work in construction, lies in the transparency of their recruitment processes and procedures. From the perspective of the sending country, the protection of ‘legal’ international migrant construction workers from economic abuse by recruitment agencies is paramount. This would also entail cooperation between sending and receiving countries and may pose a greater challenge in dealing with south-south international migration. Insofar as internal transient migrant contract construction labour is concerned, labour contractors are part of the challenge and should, therefore, be part of the solution, if the working and living conditions of transient migrant contract construction workers are to be improved. This is easier said than done since labour contractors are dependent on those they work for their own livelihood welfare. That said, their control over labour supply and outputs could be used to leverage beneficial outcomes.

In both internal and international migration for work in construction, governments are increasingly contracting out construction projects to contractors or developers. In doing so, as clients they absolve themselves of all responsibility for any violation of the rights of construction workers. As Lerche (2011: 26) notes:

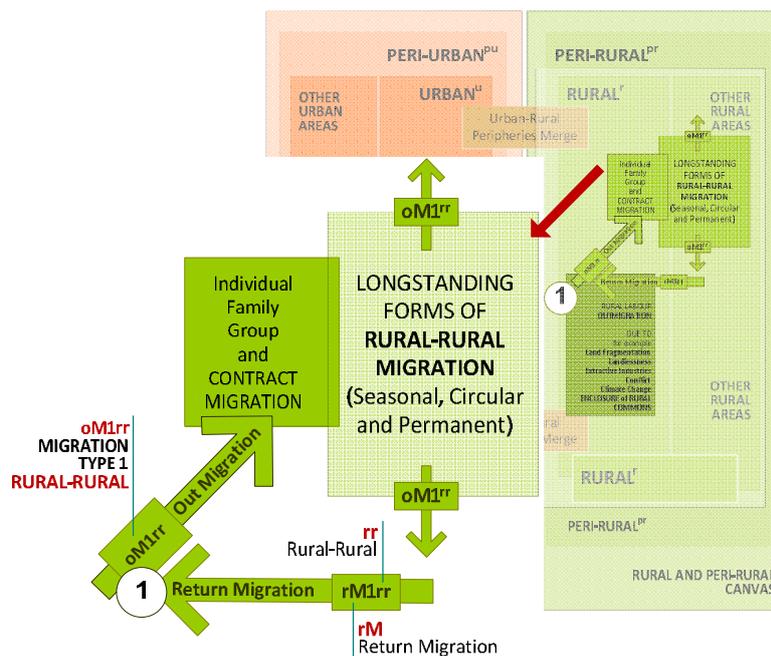
*“[a]nother way to put in additional tiers of control and to distance the lead firm from the labour relation is to subcontract the supply of labour to labour contractors who employ, pay and oversee the work of their labour. Such temporary labour can be treated as informal labour and offered the same kind of poor pay and insecure employment conditions as other informal workers. Labour contractors dominates in informalized sectors such as construction but has also been reported from garment sector enterprises”.*

The argument, not uncommon to that used in production and supply chains in other parts of the economy, is that the enforcement of worker rights, is the responsibility of the contractor. The very same explanation is also used by private clients – individuals as well as organisations. This raises questions of accountability: who is or should be responsible for ensuring ‘decent’ working and living conditions of construction labour when most, if not all, of the clients of large-scale construction projects are separated from those responsible for their delivery. Should the focus be on clients? How best should one go about holding them accountable, especially when governments themselves are

clients of projects that violate laws and regulations dealing not only with working and living conditions but also planning laws? In terms of infrastructure projects, should donors be held accountable?

### 4.3.6 Internal rural-rural migration

Internal rural to rural migration, circular and seasonal (see, for example, Deshingkar et al., 2008) has a long history; in some of the five countries, it still accounts for a sizeable proportion of all internal migration. In India, for example, data from the NSS 2007-08 survey suggests that almost half (48.9%) of all internal migration was rural to rural; with more women (59.6%) than men (27.5%) migrating (Mahapatro, 2012). In addition to independent migration, rural to rural migration has and continues to involve the supply of labour by labour contractors or ‘gang masters’, to meet the demand generated by a range of agricultural related activities (Guerin, Bhukhut, Mariou-Gnanou and Venkatasubramanian, 2009). The extent to which such labour is ‘bonded’ and the extent of such ‘bondage’ - in addition to other exploitative practices - have been causes for concern for a number of stakeholders, such as the International Labour Office and civil society organisations (local and global) focussed on human rights. Whilst U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> interviewees did not indicate the existence of bonded labour, the interviews suggest that this labour is not totally free – they, as Lerche (2011) suggests are best seen as representing a continuum that consists of ‘degrees’ of being ‘unfree’ in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres, as well as in the power relations with a range of actors they come into contact with.

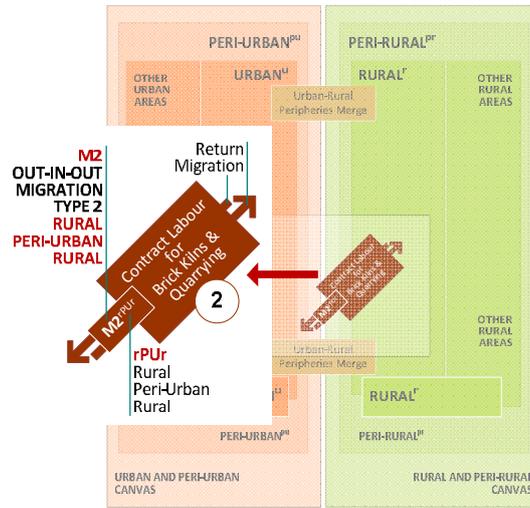


**FIGURE 4.7 | Longstanding rural-rural migration – individual, family, group and contract labour**

Setting aside concerns about economic and other forms of exploitation, contract rural to rural migrants are also housed in labour camps, however, unlike migrant contract construction labourers, their camps are more visible. As will be discussed in more depth later, labour camps housing transient migration contract construction workers in large-scale construction projects are not only dispersed (a direct result of construction being site specific in nature) but the security arrangements in place, render them both ‘invisible’ and ‘hard-to-reach’.

### 4.3.7 Internal rural to peri-urban to rural (return) migration

Contract, and in many cases ‘bonded’, labour is also prevalent in the building materials sector, for example, those working in brick kilns (Guerin and Venkatusubrahmanian, 2009) and stone and sand quarries.

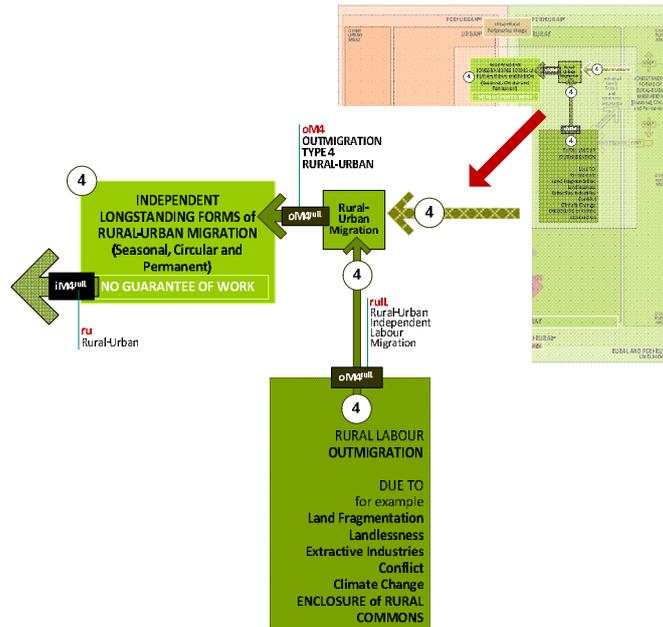


**FIGURE 4.8 | Rural to peri-urban or peri-rural contract labour migration for work in brick kilns and, stone and sand quarries**

Similar to contract labour in rural to rural migration, rural to peri-urban migrant workers are housed in camps near production and extraction sites, with higher visibility, than those housing transient contract migrant labour in large-scale construction projects, in urban areas. Once again, the invisibility and hard-to-reach nature of labour camps used in large-scale construction in urban areas has different implications for policy design and implementation.

### 4.3.8 Rural-urban migration

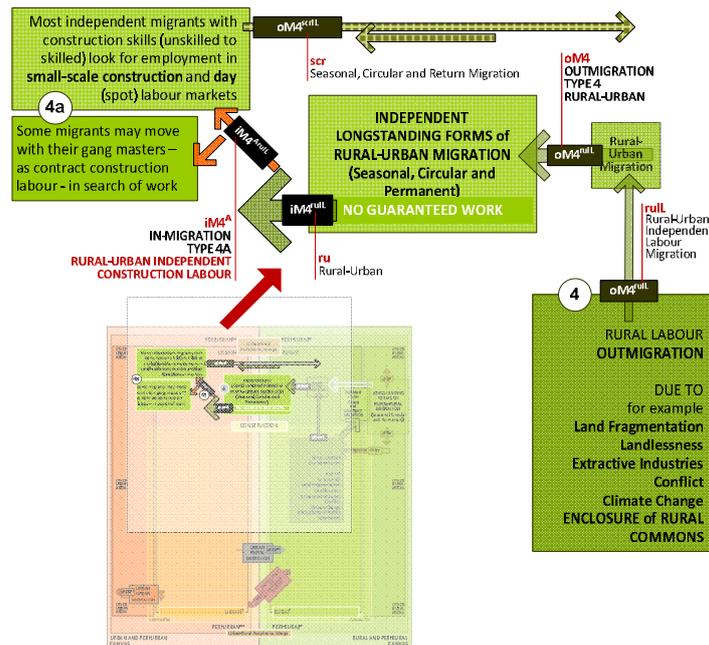
Interest in internal migration in the global South (see, Ravenstein, 1885) precedes an interest in urbanisation by a number of decades.



**FIGURE 4.9 | Longstanding independent rural-urban migration work not guaranteed**

Rural-rural migration (Figure 4.9) continues to be an important livelihood option for a significant number of individuals and households (for instance, de Haan, 2002, 2000, 1999; de Haan and Rogali, 2002; de Haan, Brock and Coulibaly, 2002).

Since the 1960s, explanations regarding rural to urban migration have focused on ‘push-pull’ factors (Lee, 1966) and, rural-urban wage differentials and the opportunity cost of not being present in the urban, when opportunities for work present themselves (Todaro, 1976). Other scholars have drawn attention to the locus of migration decisions - the individual (Todaro, 1976) versus the household (Stark, 1981) – and the gendered nature of the differences in internal rural to urban migration within the global South (for example, Chant, 1998).



**FIGURE 4.10 | Rural-urban migration for construction – mainly independent (also includes migrants under gang masters)**

There are two key differences between the literature that primarily focuses on migration that is ‘independent’ of labour contractors (Figure 4.10), and the  $U^C M n^{SA}$  where labour contractors recruit ‘transient migrant contract construction labourers’. They are: (i) that independent rural to urban migration is often undertaken to ‘search for work’ whereas transient migrant contract construction labour migrate to ‘take up’ work, and (ii) the former have to organise their own housing, whereas for the latter, housing is provided by their employers. The broader question which relates to equality of employment opportunities for local versus those open to migrant contract construction workers was explored to some extent in Chennai and is discussed later.

The  $U^C M n^{SA}$  does not suggest that the recruitment of contract migrant construction labour did not exist before the 1990s, in the five cities studied. What is different, however, is that prior to the 1990s, the recruitment and deployment of contract migrant labour took place in tandem with the use of local (city-born and long-term resident migrants), as well as first generation migrants. Local and independent migrant workers used networks to connect to contractors involved in smaller scale construction projects, often residential. Those without networks had little option but to find work by joining the ranks of other construction workers in day labour markets. Findings from the  $U^C M n^{SA}$

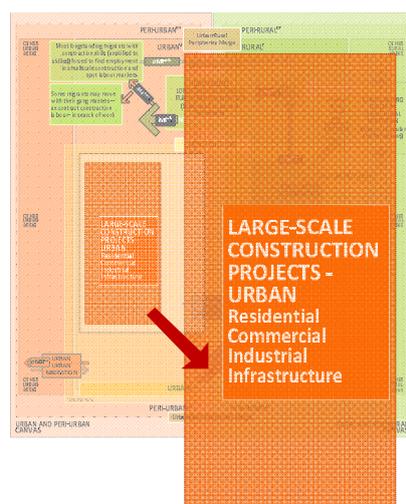
indicate that large-scale construction has, by and large, leap-frogged local labour supply through recruiting migrant construction labour from the rural hinterland instead.

#### 4.4 DECONSTRUCTING THE CONCEPTUAL CANVAS: LARGE-SCALE CONSTRUCTION AND TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR.

Having set out the key forms of internal migration, this section turns its attention to the conceptualisation of the link between urbanisation and migration, using large-scale construction as a lens for the recruitment and deployment of transient migrant contract construction labour. With reference to the notion of equitable urban development, it applies the notion of ‘equality of opportunity’ in relation to employment, especially in construction. It does so by positioning migrant contract construction labour recruitment and deployment in large-scale construction vis-à-vis potential sources of local and migrant labour. The conceptual framework posits that the opportunity for work, created by large-scale construction in urban areas, is within the confines of a closed labour market; it is similar to the enclosure of the rural commons (and more recently the peri-urban commons) that denies access to livelihood opportunities. This line of thinking argues that in the urban, the recruitment and deployment of transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale construction projects acts to ‘enclose’ the urban ‘commons of employment opportunities’ in construction. This is elaborated upon later.

##### 4.4.1 Large-scale construction projects in urban areas.

In four of the five cities, with the exception of Kabul, large-scale construction projects (Figure 4.11) began to appear in the early 1990s. The reasons for this vary. In Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, this coincides with economic liberalisation and a growing middle class with the economic power to ‘consume’ residential property. In Pakistan, the growth in low-rise large-scale construction in Lahore (unlike Karachi) cannot be disassociated from political support. In Afghanistan, a greater sense of security since early 2000, particularly in Kabul, saw large-scale development of serviced (the provision of basic physical infrastructure) residential plots of land.



**FIGURE 4.11** | *Introducing large-scale construction in urban areas - residential, commercial, industrial and infrastructure*

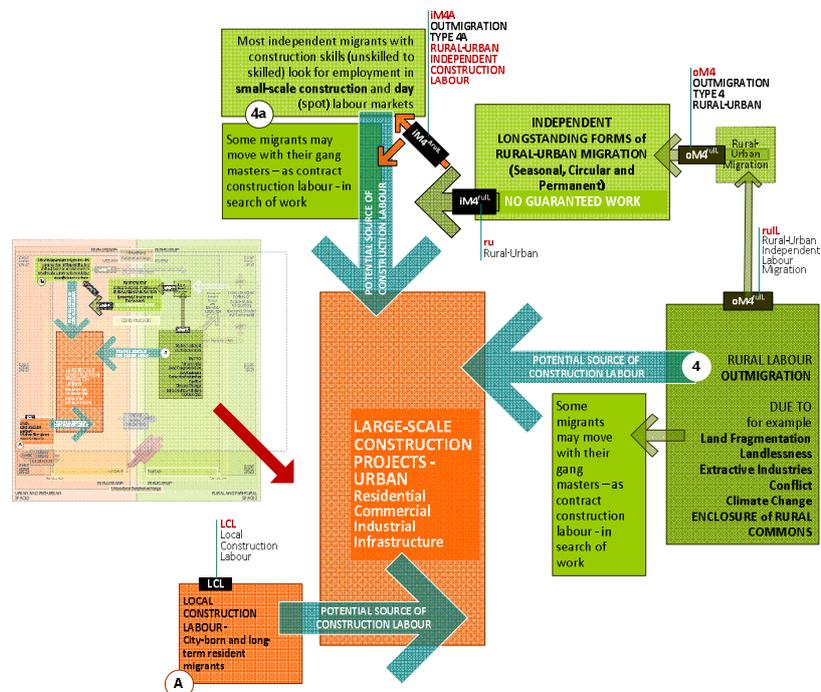
It should also be noted that in several of these five cities, the opportunity for acquiring a plot of land on which to build a house is becoming increasingly beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest, due to high land prices. The middle and upper-middle classes are left with little option but to purchase

apartments in a high-rise residential complexes (Chennai, Dhaka and Kathmandu) or a low-rise one (Lahore and Kabul), or a serviced plot of land from a developer. Most of these residential developments are to be found on the city periphery, where land for large-scale construction is more easily available. In addition, the success of some of these cities in attracting foreign direct investment is visible in the form of the construction of large industrial complexes, some of them in Special Economic Zones. Commercial buildings – retail and business – also reflect the increasing power of consumption in the urban.

Of greater significance is the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects – the Metro Rail in Chennai, road and flyover construction in Dhaka and Lahore, a water project in Kathmandu and road building in Kabul are a few examples. Setting aside the boom and bust cycle associated, in particular with real estate, infrastructure investments in the short to medium term are here to stay<sup>12</sup> as is the demand for construction labour. Of note is that there is little, if any, discussion in the documentation pertaining to infrastructure of the scale of labour required or how it would be sourced. The logical conclusion of ignoring construction labour requirements suggests that the Marxist notion of ‘reserve army of labour’ continues to thrive.

**4.4.2 Potential sources of construction labour for large-scale construction project in urban areas.**

Three potential sources of labour recruitment are available to developers and contractors of large-scale construction projects (Figure 4.12). These are: (i) local construction labour – city-born as well as long-term resident migrants; (ii) independent rural to urban migrants; and (iii) the labour contractors’ own, often rural, contract migrant labour supply (see, for example, Picherit, 2014). All three sources, individually or in some combination, have been traditionally used in construction projects in urban areas.



**FIGURE 4.12 | Potential sources of labour for large-scale construction projects in urban areas**

With a few notable exceptions, such as the Melamchi water supply project in Kathmandu, there were few, if any, respondents who were local or independent migrants; none in the case of Chennai. The spatial origin of respondents varied. None of the respondents in Chennai were intra-state (from

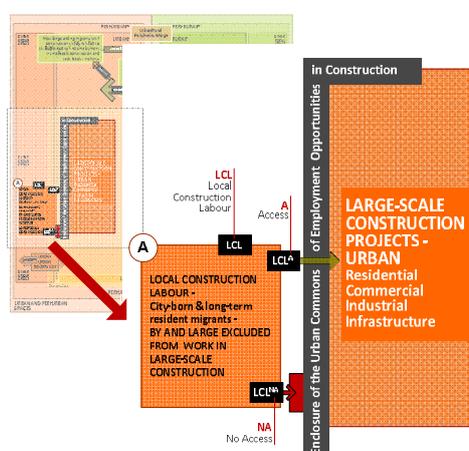
the state of Tamil Nadu) whereas the respondents in Lahore did originate from the Punjab province. Even in Kabul where there was a sizeable internally displaced population, the majority of the respondents were from areas other than the city.

Before the growth of large-scale urban construction projects that now occupy the urban built landscape, local and independent migrant construction workers found employment in construction projects, in urban areas. With construction being location specific, it was not uncommon for workers to reside in temporary accommodation in close proximity to the construction sites they were working in. Over time, many of these settlements were incorporated into the urban fabric as a result of their regularisation by government. In the contemporary climate of the ‘city beautiful’ and the need to be ‘globally attractive’, these self-help housing opportunities are the exception rather than the rule. The need to reside close to construction work should also be examined in relation to the emergence of large-scale construction projects attracting its own transient migrant contract construction labour. Employment opportunities for most local and migrant construction now tend to be in small-scale individual client funded projects where the need to reside close to worksites diminishes.

The contractors’ narrative for the use of migrant labour often makes reference to characteristics such as ‘hard working’ as well as, at times, to particular skills associated with the place of origin, of a given migrant group. Whilst there is no reason to suggest such narratives are disingenuous (see, for instance, Picherit, 2014), there is however, more to the use of migrant labour than just these explanations. It is a known fact that the use of migrant labour in road building projects is linked to wage levels. By housing construction labour in camps and separating them from the local population not only does this weaken any possibility of collective action, but most importantly it strengthens the employers control over labour. As Lerche (2011: 31) notes: “[i]n today’s world the analysis involves contextualizing class struggle from above as part and parcel of neo-liberalism. This includes both wider pro-capital and anti-labour policies and initiatives, and changes to the labour relation in order to cheapen labour and make it more docile”. Such an explanation is also pertinent when applied to ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ in large-scale construction projects in urban areas.

#### 4.4.3 Local construction labour and large-scale construction projects in urban areas

Local construction labour – both city-born and long term resident migrant workers – were, with few exceptions such as the Melamchi water supply project in Kathmandu, Nepal - not present in the large-scale construction projects studied (Figure 4.13).



**FIGURE 4.13** | Local labour, by and large, not employed in large-scale construction projects in urban areas



required, to access potential employment opportunities, in large-scale construction projects in urban areas. Transient migrant contract construction labourers employed in large-scale construction projects were, at times, found to be a recruitment route for others they knew, when additional demands for labour arose.

#### 4.4.5 Selective use of local and independent migrant construction labour in large-scale construction projects in urban areas

During different phases of the construction process, additional labour, over and above the labour contracted to work on any given project, may be required. One such instance is the pouring of concrete (foundations, floors and ceilings) a process that once started, has to be completed, irrespective of the time of day. Parry (2014: 1254) is eloquent in his description of this process:

*“... the casting of the concrete, a laborious and lengthy operation that cannot be suspended once started or the concrete will crack, that often lasts late into the night and may even continue throughout it, and that involves a long line of workers of both sexes passing ghamelas (shallow metal basins) filled with the mix and weighing seven or eight kilos rapidly up a human chain to the area that is being concreted—one every 10–15 seconds”.*

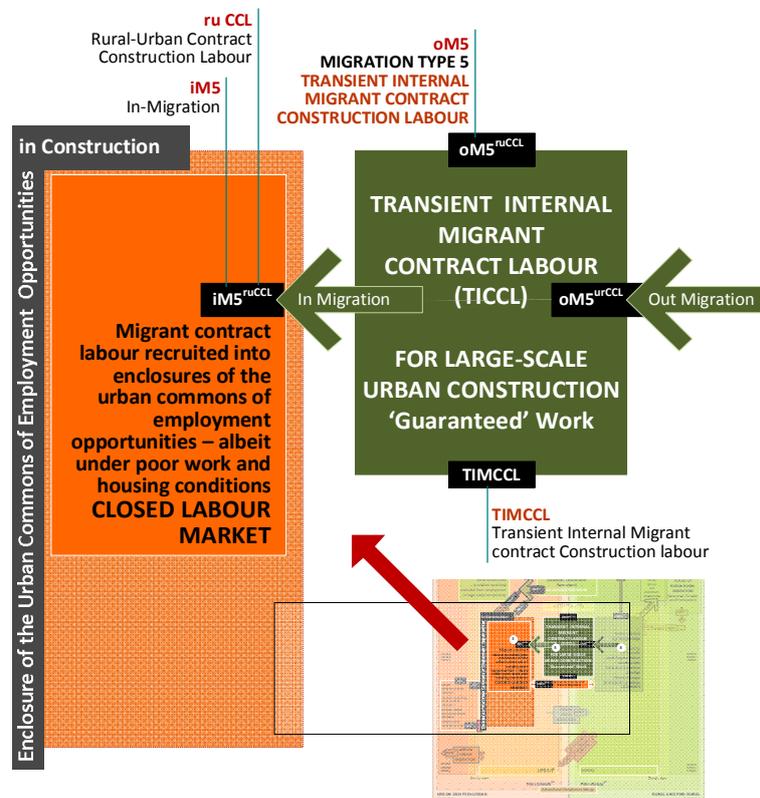
On such occasions, construction projects turn to local and migrant labour, hiring them on a casual basis from the many settlements where they reside, as well as from casual day labour markets.<sup>13</sup> The notation LCL<sup>A</sup> in the ‘local construction labour’ box labelled A, in Figure 4.13 and the notation iM4a<sup>full</sup> in the arrow labelled 4b, in Figure 4.14, indicate such access. In the case of the pouring of concrete, the requirement is for unskilled labour, employed on a daily basis and hence they do not need to be housed. Control over this casual labour is exercised on the construction site and via the specific activity, not by housing them in labour camps.

#### 4.4.6 Recruitment of transient migrant contract construction labour for large-scale construction projects in urban areas.

The findings from the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project indicate the predominance of transient migrant contract construction labourers in large-scale construction projects. Labour contractors associated with large-scale construction projects in urban areas, form the link between capital and labour (Figure 4.15), as do recruitment agencies involved in the supply of migrant construction labour for overseas construction projects.

However, in comparison to international migrant recruitment agencies, whose sole function is to meet the demand for international migrant construction workers and not to manage or pay them, labour contractors that supply migrant labour within national boundaries, not only recruit and supply labour, but also manage their work and pay their wages. This is important, insofar as the question of the availability of information about the number of workers and wages paid in a particular construction project. More often than not, labour contractors would only disclose estimates of the number of workers involved at any given stage of the large-scale construction projects that were studied, despite the fact that they (or someone they designate) must surely possess records about the work that a given worker has completed, in order for wages to be calculated and paid. While it is understandable that keeping such records may be difficult in relation to a local and casual workforce working on different projects, transient migrant contract construction workers are ‘sedentary’ by virtue of their residence in project specific labour camps. The supposed lack of information in relation to transient migrant contract construction workers is a narrative that needs to be challenged.

It is well known, that a range of networks, are drawn upon to connect labour contractors to potential migrant construction labour and vice-versa. In the initial stages, especially in relation to long-distance migration (inter-state or inter-province), such networks would have used a range of ‘network’ chains – ‘someone who knows someone who knows someone else’. Overtime, as the links between labour contractors and migrant construction labour strengthen, the densities of these ‘network’ chains (the number of points of networked contacts) reduce in number, thereby becoming less dense and more direct.



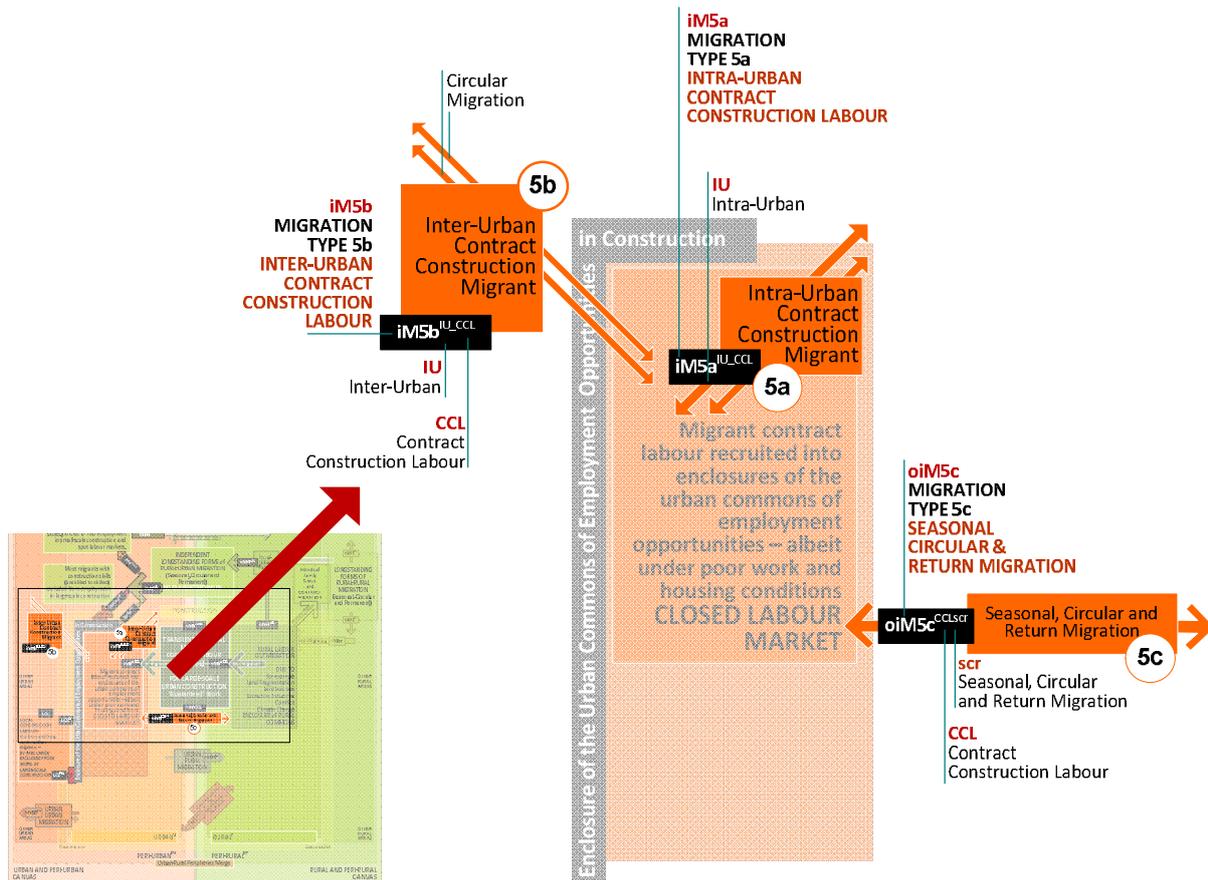
**Figure 4.15** | Rural to urban contract construction labour recruited by labour contractors for work in large-scale construction projects in urban areas

Transient migrant contract construction labourers recruited by labour contractors migrate to ‘take-up’ work. In other words, unlike independent migrants without networks, they do not migrate in search of the likelihood of work. In addition, transient migrant contract construction workers do not have to concern themselves about housing provision, as they are housed in on-site or off-site camps. More often than not, the labour camps housing transient migrant contract construction workers are built of tin sheets or other temporary materials, in order to be easily dismantled.

The extent and quality of physical infrastructure provision – electricity, water and sanitation – varies hugely. The provision of electricity is easier in on-site labour camps when compared to those that are located off-site. In the former, electricity for the project under construction is easily extended, whereas there are fewer opportunities to connect to existing electricity provision in the case of the latter. Water and sanitation are seemingly more problematic in both on-site and off-site labour camps, although again, the former less so than the latter. An important distinction needs to be made between the provision of water and sanitation. The former requires its supply to the labour camps whereas the latter requires the removal and treatment of human waste. The different direction of the flow between water and sanitation makes it easier for water to be provided, irrespective of the extent to which it is potable. Sanitation, on the other hand, was found to be seriously lacking in most of the

projects studied. This was particularly problematic in projects, such as Chennai, where significant numbers of women and children were present. The justification for the poor quality of housing and infrastructure was that these conditions did not differ from that which transient migrant contract construction workers were used to, in their places of origin.

Internal rural to urban migrant contract construction workers are ‘transient’ not only in terms of their availability in relation to the agricultural cycle or festivals and the like, but primarily as the tasks that they are employed to undertake are time-bound (Figure 4.16).



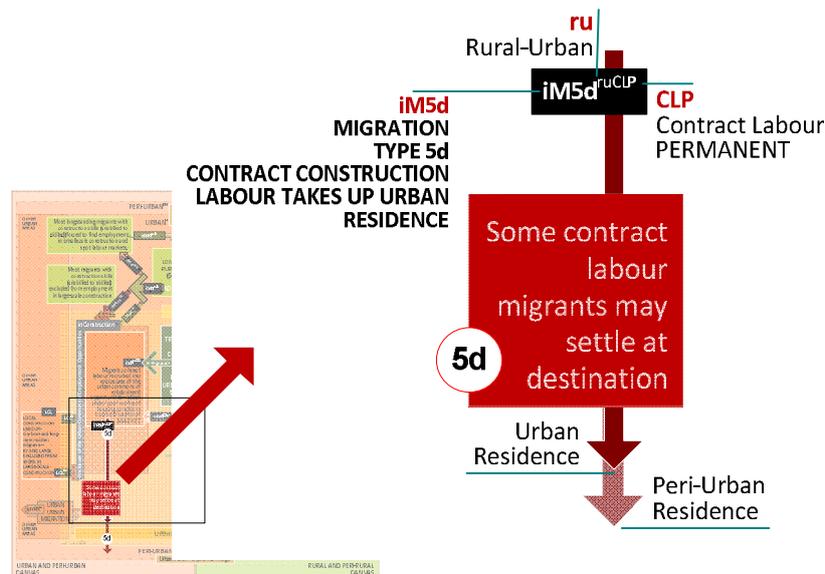
**FIGURE 4.16** | Deployment of transient migrant contract construction labour to other large-scale construction projects within the same or to other urban areas – as well as the seasonal and circular migration of this labour.

On completion of a particular task, their labour contractors seek to deploy them to other intra-urban or inter-urban construction sites. Figure 4.15, uses the notation  $oiM5c^{CCLscr}$  in the double-headed arrow (5c) to indicate the seasonal, circular and return migration of rural to urban transient migrant contract construction labour.

The  $U^C M n^{SA}$  also came across respondents who had previously worked with a small number of other labour contractors. It is not clear if the move from one contractor to another took place without the knowledge of the employing labour contractor, or that a network amongst labour contractors enabled the sharing of labour to smooth out the fluctuations in demand and supply. It is likely that labour contractors collaborate in the movement of transient migrant contract construction labour, from one labour contractor to another.

#### 4.4.7 Declining opportunities for transient migrant contract construction labour to settle in the urban

The early literature on the housing options available to rural-urban migrants paid a lot of attention to ‘squatting’ (for example, Abrams, 1964; Turner, 1968, 1976). By the 1980s, opportunities for squatting in and around the city centre began to diminish – renting was often the only alternative available to those seeking to live close to places of employment opportunity (for instance, Gilbert, 1983, 1987; Gilbert and Varley, 1990).



**FIGURE 4.17** | Opportunities for those transient migrant contract construction labour, who would like to settle in the urban, becoming increasingly difficult.

Opportunities for those transient migrant contract construction workers who may be considering settling in the urban (Figure 4.17) are now far fewer than existed prior the 1990s. In addition to the declining opportunities to occupy land, especially land that in proximity to employment opportunities, due to forced eviction drives (for instance, Roy, 2014; Doshi, 2012; Rahman, 2001),<sup>14</sup> forced evictions also reduce the availability of rental housing.

#### 4.4.8 Impact of large-scale construction projects in urban areas on the urban, peri-urban, peri-rural and rural.

The urbanisation of the periphery by large-scale construction, especially residential and industrial, is hard to miss in all the five cities. Relatively less obvious to the untrained eye, is the impact that this large-scale construction is having on livelihoods<sup>15</sup> and the environment in both the urban<sup>15</sup> and the rural, including their respective peripheries (Figure 4.18).

Although this is not something that the  $U^C M n^{SA}$  focused on, it was hard not to notice. The conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural land does not only give rise to capital ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey, 2004) but also displaces livelihoods within and outside the urban periphery. For example, between 1972 and 1990 just under a third of agricultural land in the Lahore Metropolitan District of Pakistan had been converted to non-agricultural use; between 1990 and 2010, the total cultivated area in the district had more than halved - from 114,298 to 52,232 hectares (Khaliq-uz-Zaman and Baloch, 2011). In some instances such as Chennai, a large-scale government relocation

housing project has been constructed on marshy land; concerns relating to the appropriateness of site selection are amplified by the destruction of ecologically sensitive habitats (see, for example, Coelho and Raman, 2013).

Large-scale construction is resource intensive. The mining of raw materials for products used in large-scale construction, such as limestone and clay (for cement), iron ore (for steel) and bauxite<sup>16</sup> (for aluminium) can only but add to and worsen the displacement of rural populations and their livelihoods.

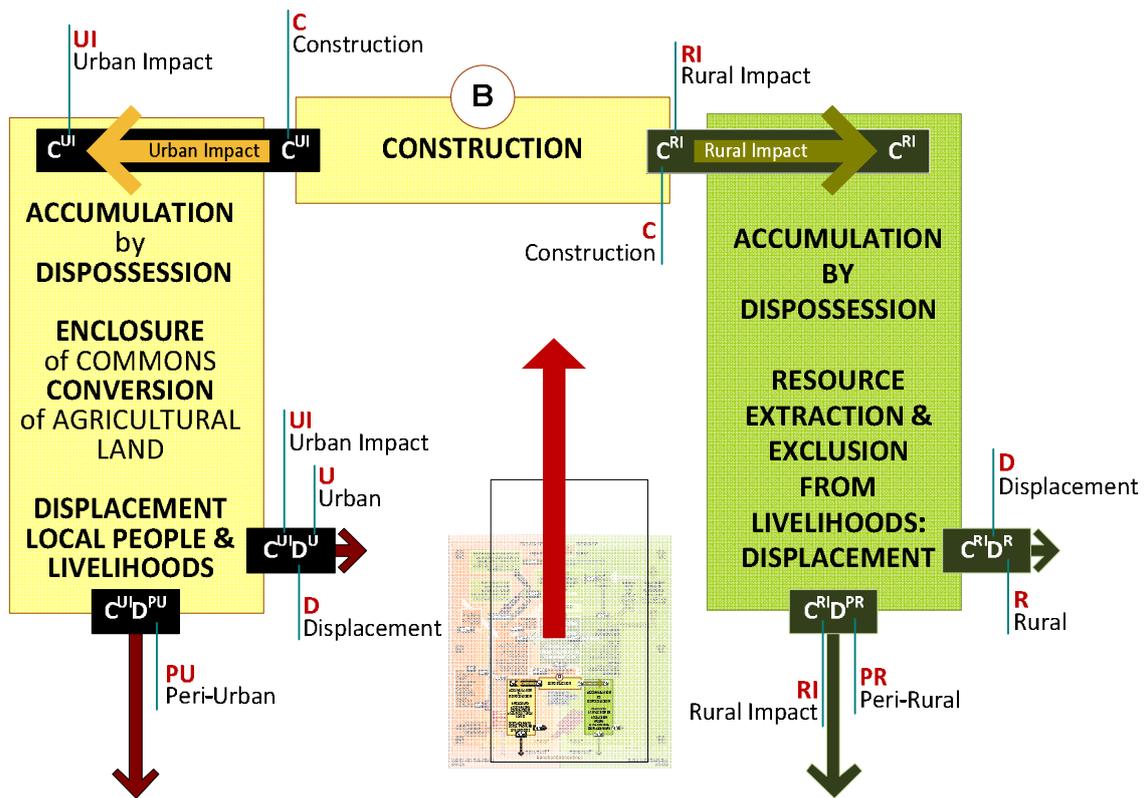


FIGURE 4.18 | Impact of large-scale construction projects in urban areas on urban, peri-urban, peri-rural and rural landscapes.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

The conceptual canvas, not only sketches the various forms of internal migration as well as international migration - south-south and south-north but also draws attention to the impact that large-scale construction has, on urban and rural areas (including their respective peripheries).

This conceptual canvas is significant on two counts. First, it helps locate the core of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research study, namely the working and living conditions of transient migrant contract labour in large-scale construction projects in urban areas and ways in which improvements in these areas can be brought about. Second, it also brings into sharp relief a number of wider concerns. These are: the exclusion of transient migrant contract construction labour from state provided welfare (where and insofar as they exist); the future for local as well as independent migrant construction labour; and the impact of large-scale construction in urban areas, on both the rural and urban (including their peripheries) landscapes and livelihoods. These are issues worthy of further research.

## END NOTES

- 1 In the past, organisations, particularly government public works departments, were known to maintain an in-house construction labour force; sub-contracting was therefore comparatively less. However, since the early to mid-1980s, in-house construction labour has been slowly eroded; a preference for outsourcing and thus subcontracting gaining prominence. This process has been referred to in the literature as the 'informalisation' or 'casualisation' of the labour force. See, for instance, K. Meagher (1995), 'Crisis, Informalization and the urban informal sector in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Development and Change*, 26 pp. 259-284; N. AlSayyad (2004), 'Urban informality as a new way of life'. In A. Roy and N. AlSayyad (eds.) *Urban informality : transnational perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, pp. 1-19. Also see, J. Pais (2002), 'Casualisation of urban labour force: Analysis of recent trends in manufacturing', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (7), pp. 631-652; M. Vanamala (2001), 'Informalisation and feminisation of a formal sector industry', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36 (26), pp. 2378-2389.
- 2 The term 'road building' projects does not refer to road building within urban areas but roads constructed to link urban, rural and urban-rural areas. Also see, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-31529995>
- 3 See, for instance, A. Shah (2006). The Labour of Love: Seasonal Migration from Jharkhand to the Brick Kilns of Other States in India, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 40(1), pp. 91-118. Also see Anti-slavery (2015). Forced labour in the brick kiln sector in India. [http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm\\_docs/2015/f/forced\\_labour\\_in\\_brick\\_kilns\\_in\\_india\\_august\\_2015\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2015/f/forced_labour_in_brick_kilns_in_india_august_2015_briefing.pdf), accessed 10 November 2015).
- 4 This question was explored in Chennai as the initial group of workers to whom the team was introduced were long-term resident migrant workers – their children were born in Chennai.
- 5 <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2014/jan/08/blood-bricks-india-urbanisation-human-rights-slave-labour> (accessed 20 November 2015). For Dhaka, see, <http://citiscopes.org/story/2014/making-bricks-dhakas-construction-boom-without-all-soot>, and for Pakistan <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2858775/Paying-debts-brick-brick-Pakistani-modern-day-slaves-trapped-lifetime-hardship.html>, (both accessed 20 November 2015).
- 6 D. Satterthwaite (2007), 'The transition to a predominantly urban world and its underpinnings'. Human Settlements Discussion Paper, International Institute for Environment and Development: London.
- 7 High-rise in Chennai, Dhaka and Kathmandu, and low-rise as well as serviced residential plots in Kabul and Lahore
- 8 The cases where workers had mentioned that they had worked with a handful labour contractors other than their current employer were not explored further. However, it is possible, given the patron client relationship between the labour contractor and the construction worker, that labour contractors transfer workers amongst themselves during slack employment periods.
- 9 Thus said, see the latest IOM report on Cities and Migration
- 10 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/>
- 11 The misuse of the Kafala system in recent decades (since its origins in the 1930) have raised concerns in relation to worker rights. See <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/feb/26/time-to-end-kafala>
- 12 The Asian Development Bank estimates that the Asian region will require \$ 8.22 trillion to meet infrastructure needs in the current decade. Given financing concerns, attention has been focused on the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) – see <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/06/25/is-aiib-the-answer-to-asias-infrastructure-needs.html> (accessed 3 September 2015).
- 13 See the film 'Locke', a 2013 British drama film written and directed by Steven Knight.
- 14 Also see, Shree-DSK (2012). <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/EEP/Korail-Eviction-Report.pdf>; and Human Rights Watch (2012). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/10/nepal-halt-evictions-kathmandu>.
- 15 See, for instance, The Monopolisation of Urban Resources: the case of the Hyderabad Golf Club, <http://www.ritimo.org/The-Monopolisation-of-Urban-Resources-the-case-of-the-Hyderabad-Golf-Club>

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Padel and Das (2010) for a very detailed understanding of the impacts of mining of Bauxite on the forests and indigenous people of Orissa, India. Orissa is also an out-migrant state; workers from Orissa are present in some number in large-scale construction sites in Chennai.

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**5**

**Construction,  
Employment  
Conditions and  
Migrant Contractual  
Arrangements**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 5

**CONSTRUCTION, EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND MIGRANT CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS  
IN FIVE CITIES IN SOUTH ASIA****5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Construction is undoubtedly a major and growing outcome of investment in south Asian cities. It is a response to; on the one hand, the increasing consumption power of the middle and upper classes, which has given rise to residential, as well as commercial and industrial construction projects, and on the other, government identified infrastructure deficits. An influx of local as well as international capital underpins investment in large-scale construction activities. In the five case study cities, the growth of large-scale construction since the late 1980s and early 1990s is linked to both the levels of urbanisation and the liberalisation of national economies. It is inevitable that large-scale construction generates an insatiable demand for labour. This labour, in the most part, is supplied by numerous unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled rural to urban internal migrants. Whilst outside the scope of this project, we recognise that the construction industry also has strong positive externalities, related to other sectors of the economy, such as furnishing and furniture, paint, sanitary ware, white goods such as washing machines, ceramics and glass among others.

Chapter 2 has reviewed the literature on urbanisation, construction and migration in the five countries that are the focus of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project. In particular, it discussed the composition of construction, its contribution to the national economy and employment, women in construction and migrant labour in urban construction projects.

**TABLE 5.1 | Construction industry by country: economy, employment and share of total population.**

Country	GDP or GDP Growth rate	Employs	Total population
<b>Afghanistan</b>	25%* (up from 9.2% in 2008-09)	N/A**	28.1m (2014 estimate)***
<b>Bangladesh</b>	9 to 10%~	Between 1.5m and >2m~~	156,594,962 (2013 estimate)
<b>India</b>	^9%	^^32m (1m/year between 1999 and 2005), or 11-16% of the population +24m jobs created btw 2004/05 and 2011/12	196,174,380 (2014 Estimate)
<b>Nepal</b>	10%®	>1m®	1,210,193,422 (2011 Census)
<b>Pakistan</b>	5% (with mining)¥	8% of labour force¥	26,494,504 (2011 Census)

Sources:

\* Karimi and Gidado 2012

\*\* Our Afghanistan partner consulted the Ministry of Work, the Ministry of Urban Development Affairs and AMKA but none of them were able to provide data regarding number of worker in construction in Afghanistan.

\*\*\* Afghanistan Central Statistical Organization Afghanistan (<http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-socile-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897111>).

~ <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/gdp-growth-annual> and UNEPs SUSHI in Bangladesh project ([http://www.unep.org/sustainablehousing/CaseStudies\\_Bangladesh/Bangladesh\\_sushi.asp](http://www.unep.org/sustainablehousing/CaseStudies_Bangladesh/Bangladesh_sushi.asp))

~~ Ishtiaque and Ullah, 2013 and UNEP's SUSHI in Bangladesh project.

^ <http://www.indianmirror.com/indian-industries/2012/construction-2012.html>

^^ Dalmia, 2012; 16% in Barnabas, Anbarasu and Clifford, 2013, p. 122; 11% in Soundararajan, 2013, p. 21;

® FCAN: <http://www.fcan.org.np/pages.php?pid=83>

¥ Pakistan case study author, Labour Force Survey

Table 5.1 summarises the economic role played by the construction sector in each of the five countries covered in this research.<sup>1</sup> In GDP terms, the Afghani and Indian<sup>2</sup> construction sectors are the largest contributors in the five and Pakistan contributes the least. In the latter, however, construction is a significant source of the country's employment. In Afghanistan, despite construction being the third most important sector in the economy and exhibiting large growth annually over the last decade or so, the decline in donor funds and foreign investment since 2014 is expected to have a dramatic impact. However, according to the acting Minister of Urban Development, who was interviewed for this project:

“Investment wise construction is the biggest sector in Afghanistan. In 2010 and 2011, it was the biggest business with almost 5 billion USD investments and with largest employment opportunity. In Afghanistan on yearly bases, almost 2 to 3 billion USD is spent on construction material”.

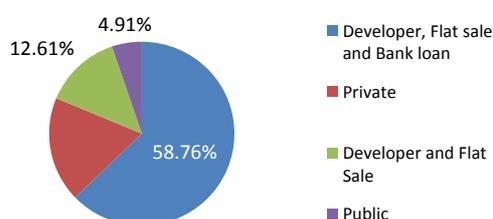
It is important to note that the contribution of construction to national GDP and employment is likely to be an underestimate, given the underreporting of the production of construction components and high levels of informal employment. Moreover, estimates of the contribution that construction makes to GDP or GNI and employment, is undertaken at a macro-level to include, power, railways and dams, for example. Currently, it is not easy to estimate the contribution that urbanisation makes to construction and vice-versa at the city level. Such estimates would require highly disaggregated data on: urbanisation and income growth; income growth and construction investment or consumption; and the purchase of construction related goods and services. However, investment in construction - civil (residential, commercial, industrial and institutional) and infrastructure - is highly visible. In particular, the rapidity with which residential projects are coming onto the market is conspicuously displayed through advertisements in many national and urban newspapers.

This chapter draws upon the empirical evidence from the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project to: (a) understand the relationships between forms of investment (i.e., private, public), labour recruitment processes and employment practices and conditions; and (b) consider what the benefits are for employers, in the recruitment of internal rural to urban, rather than local and long-term resident construction migrant labour. This is a longstanding question that Roy (2007) explores in relation to recruitment agents of indentured labour in the nineteenth century, labour in the tea plantations of Assam and workers in the textile mills of Mumbai – “throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, a figure in part a foreman, in part a headman, and in part a recruiting contractor, formed an indispensable part of labour organization in mills, mines, ports and plantations in India, and in the tropical colonies where Indian emigrants went for work. The *intermediary embodied a blend of different kinds of authorities, economic, cultural and political* Roy (2007: 972). Of interest, insofar as it pertains to the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research is that labour contractors connected migrants with work, given the limited knowledge that workers have of where that work is. However, by the time the whereabouts of work became more common knowledge, potential workers found it difficult to access work without going through the gatekeeper i.e., the labour contractor.

The data presented in this chapter not only draws attention to what trends are common and where, but also highlights those instances where it is not the norm, in specific parts of the south Asian region. Many of the findings, for example in relation to the age and education of transient migrant contract construction workers, wages and working conditions, are not that dissimilar to the findings in the literature on construction workers in general, including the five countries and cities studied. However, some findings, for example on recruitment and living conditions in relation to internal rural to urban migrant workers for work in large-scale construction are different and add value to the existing literature, which is largely silent about this.

## 5.2 NATURE OF INVESTMENTS

Investments in construction can be either public (including donor) or private, national or international - or a combination of these (see Figure 5.1 for Dhaka, for example).



**FIGURE 5.1 | Different Funding Sources of Construction Sites, Dhaka**

Other sources:: Co-operative (2.56%; Private and Bank Loan, 2.14%, and Foreign Aid, 1.71%) - Source: Dhaka country partners

Large-scale construction projects can be residential, commercial, industrial, institutional or infrastructure and for security in the case of Afghanistan (see Table 5.2 for all cities and Figures 5.2 and 5.3 for the proportions identified in Kathmandu and Chennai through the mapping exercise).

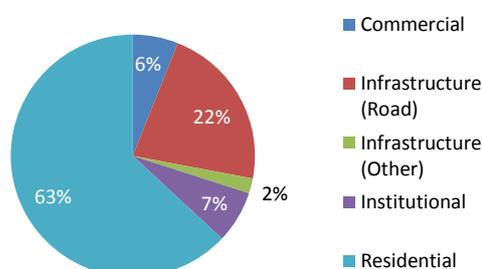
**TABLE 5.2 | Proportion of on-going residential construction projects by city (mapped in 2014)**

Kabul	Dhaka	Chennai	Kathmandu	Lahore
	64%	69%	63%	65%

Source: Country partner mapping reports

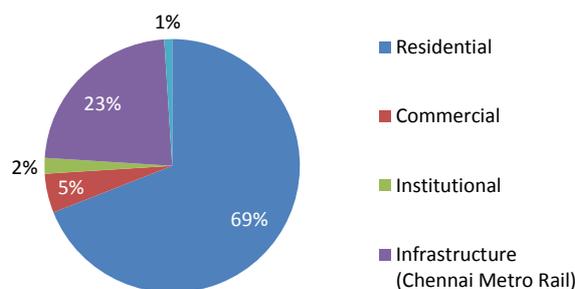
In all the countries studied, irrespective of the nature or provenance of finance, two forms of investment, with their concomitant typologies dominated. These were as follows.

1. Large-scale public infrastructure projects - particularly roads (Chennai, Kathmandu, Lahore and Kabul) or flyovers (Kabul), but also the Chennai Metro Rail (Chennai).
2. Residential real estate - particularly high-rise, private, middle and upper-class condominiums (Dhaka, Chennai, Kathmandu) and low-rise, residential colonies/enclaves (Lahore, Kabul), vast public housing relocation schemes (Chennai), and townships and satellite cities (Dhaka, Kabul).



**FIGURE 5.2 | Construction Projects by Type, Kathmandu Municipality**

Source: Nepal country partners (Social Science Baha)



**FIGURE 5.3 | Construction Projects by Type, Chennai**

*Source: India research partner*

There was a mix of the kinds of construction projects mapped by each country partner (see, Figure 5.1 for Kathmandu as an example). These ranged from public infrastructure projects and commercial establishments to individual/private construction works. Residential building projects tended to comprise the highest proportion of all ongoing activities. This included foundation work such as electricity cabling and canal construction on large individual plots of land. In Kabul, a commercial development<sup>3</sup> inside an industrial district was initially selected as a study site; however difficulties with access meant the researchers had to change focus, so a residential project was selected instead. Moreover, in all cities, formal construction activities operate alongside the continued haphazard and uncontrolled development of informal settlements and other smaller-scale individual private activities. Chennai's peri-urban construction landscape is further characterised by large-scale IT and SEZ industry developments. Afghanistan is unique as the massive flows of external aid since 2001 have mediated the growth and nature of Kabul's development, particularly as these pertain to major military/security installations and donor-funded government reconstruction projects. These have not only generated direct building activity, but the International Assistance Forces (IAS - as in, the security, reconstruction, development and humanitarian agency workers) that they cater to, create new demands for residential and commercial property development (see for example, Unruh and Shalaby, 2012; Esser, 2013; Miszak and Monsutti, 2014; Bove and Gavrilova, 2014).

### 5.3 ACTORS

The construction sector comprises a vast range of actors that are present either throughout the construction process, or at particular stages of development. These actors, amongst others include landowners, developers and clients (public and private), investors and lenders (including donors, government departments), architects and engineers, construction companies and building contractors, project managers, private security personnel, contractors including labour contractors, workers – unskilled to skilled, and other non-state actors.

In all of the South Asian cities studied, these actors were present with more or less prominence, depending on the local context as well as the project typology. In Nepal, for instance, where the vast majority of residential development is 'owner-built'<sup>4</sup> the government plays a minor role, limited to issuing building permits and providing basic urban services, and there was no formal contract between the owner, the contractor or the designer. In all cases, privately hired security personnel were present - the extent to which they were considered to be an intimidating presence for the workers varied on a case by case basis. Their control over the working population in the projects cannot to be underestimated; like walls, they limit the opportunities for movement, action and freedom.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the backdrop of war and conflict has and continues to play a role in the kinds of actors involved in construction. In both cases, a relatively small number of powerful players dominate the industry and in both, real estate developers are intimately connected to highly influential political actors, and sometimes appointed as politicians themselves. Afghanistan, in particular, is controlled by a politically connected oligopoly, commonly referred to as the ‘construction mafia’ with its actors (politicians, contractors and warlords) entangled with the poppy economy and with large-scale, private and commercial construction (for example, shopping malls and the ‘narcotecture’/‘Pakistani’ villas (Lister and Pain, 2004)<sup>5</sup>.

In Pakistan, their military is a major actor (developer) of real estate, as is the Provincial Government, providing land and elite housing projects (colonies) to senior military personnel and upper middle class civilians. The presence of these powerful actors influence the way the sector operates in a broad sense.<sup>6</sup> This includes both land acquisition practices and also the kinds of time and delivery pressures felt by particular project managers if and when government officials are directly involved and want certain outputs to be met.

India and Bangladesh large real estate developers are supplying apartment blocks to the largest and most profitable demand sector: upper and middle-income groups. In Bangladesh, this is partly fuelled by a serious housing deficit and a growing consumption base<sup>7</sup>. In Chennai, based on recorded apartment prices, 68% of all residential units under construction target the upper class investor, 10% target the super-luxury segment, while only 22% target the middle class (Table 5.3). The drive to launch new lucrative residential and office projects appears relentless, even in light of the fact that the city’s unsold housing (and commercial) stock is rising<sup>8</sup>. In this context, the role of real estate consultants, investment bankers and the corporate media in promoting specific locations and creating the right climate for large scale, high-end residential developments, cannot be underestimated.

**TABLE 5.3 | Price Range of Smallest to Largest Residential Units in large-scale construction projects in Chennai (Mapping, 2014)**

Unit Size Range up to 1000 SFT					
Range of Rates/SFT of Unit Area in 2014 (based on OMR)		Price of Smallest Unit in Unit Size Range Rs.	Price of Largest Unit in Unit Size Range Rs.	Price Range Rs. 100,000's	Price Range for Unit Size Range Rs. 100,000's
	<b>Rate/SFT in 2014 Rs.</b>	405 SFT	1000 SFT		
Lowest Range	4,000	16,20,000	40,00,000	16-40	16-43
Average Range	4,250	17,21,250	42,50,000	17-43	
Unit Size Range greater than 1000 SFT					
	<b>Rate/SFT in 2014 Rs.</b>	1014 SFT	4645 SFT		
Average Range	4,250	43,09,500	1,97,41,250	43 - 197	43-1400
Highest Range	5,250	53,23,500	2,43,86,250	53 - 244	
Super Luxury Range	30,000		13,93,50,000	1,400	

Note: Average exchange rate 2014 – US\$ 1 = Rs 60; 1 Euro = Rs 79 and 1 GBP = Rs 100 (<http://www.x-rates.com/>).

#### 5.4 TEMPORALITY

The construction industry is highly seasonal and cyclical, the latter subject to economic boom and bust. As noted earlier, employment relationships in construction are predominantly informal, especially those at the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled levels. When demand for construction of buildings in urban areas is buoyant, large-scale construction generates a demand for labour and provides work for seasonal rural to urban migrants, as the findings of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> demonstrate. However, the creation of employment has other costs. As noted by Breman, Das and Agarwal (2000: 20) in the Indian context,

“it is clear that labour that is down and out is at the beck and call of capital, utilised and discarded with an apparently arbitrary economic logic” ... “the simple, if also cruel, fact is that the very high profit margins in the informal sector circuit have a logic of their own ... [p]aying wages lower than the legal minimum, carrying out production in conditions worse than prescribed under law, evading taxation and flouting municipal regulations — all these create’ conditions for massive accumulation and super-profits” (Bremner, Das and Agarwal, 2000: 22-24). These relationships to the capitalist economy cannot be understood as separate from but are indeed integral to the realities of migrant construction (also see, Buckley, 2014).

The sector also contends with national and local conditions, both political and environmental. In Pakistan, terrorist acts halted some of the construction work the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project was investigating, and in Afghanistan, where corruption is rife, projects and materials were sometimes held to ransom (Gidado and Niazai, 2012). International aid and its links to the conflict scenario also influence the volatility of the market.

This is compounded by *the seasonality of work opportunities* and phasing, natural to construction projects, where particular skills are required at particular moments in time and not others. In Mazar, Afghanistan, for example, most urban daily wage labour opportunities cease to exist in the long and harsh winter months. In Kabul, casual wage labour is said to be fully available only in the summer and completely unavailable during the winter. Construction activities (and many small-scale factories) tend to come to a complete halt during that time (Schütte, 2006). This leads to high competition for work during summers, particularly in Kabul when many rural seasonal migrants come to the city seeking work (Schütte 2009: 476). In addition, the festivals of Ramadan and Eid in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh and Hindu festivals in India and Nepal are times when migrant workers return to their places of origin.

Delays are also endemic to the sector, dependent on project management and the nature and availability of finances (whether payments are made on time or not). If delays result in extensions to the project and thus the possibility of longer periods of work, this can be a good thing for those seeking extended employment opportunities. However, if delays are caused by financial troubles and the resulting slow-downs impact upon the regularity of work and thus wages, this can be a problem.

#### 5.4 MIGRANT WORKER EMPLOYMENT IN CONSTRUCTION

Construction work can be casual with wages paid: on a day to day basis; on piece-rate calculations; or on a weekly/monthly basis, over an informally agreed period of time. Wages and piece-rate payments can coexist. Construction workers that are city-born, long-term resident migrants, or those who live in peri-urban areas, do not live in housing provided by employers on construction sites. The vast majority go to work and return home. If worksites and places of residences are distant, construction workers may choose to take up residence on a temporary basis near the work site. This is not an option for those working on a seasonal basis and who return to their villages for the harvesting seasons, festivals and other social commitments. They are often housed in the construction sites where they work and in those instances where there is no space, in off-site labour camps. Given the larger ratio of unskilled and semi-skilled to skilled workers in any construction project, those with low levels of education tend to be over-represented.

In Pakistan, 12% of all construction workers are migrants and 8% of all migrants are construction workers. In Lahore, contrary to national statistical data, the majority of construction workers were migrants. In India, the construction industry has the second largest number of informal workers (Barnabas, Anbarasu and Clifford, 2013) with internal migrants making up approximately 33% of

construction workers in urban areas, and 19% in rural areas in 2007-08 (Soundararajan, 2013). Drawing on the same data, other research suggests that 25% of rural-urban migrants are employed in the construction industry. The Chennai, India, mapping exercise found that the overwhelming majority of construction workers were internal migrants. In the case of stone quarries in India, the preference was for recruiting migrant labour in quarries because they were both more reliable and readily available throughout the season (Bremen, Das and Agarwal, 2000). The Chennai mapping suggests that the practice of hiring migrant workers has not only continued but has expanded, even exponentially, to include construction work. In addition, although earlier studies observed that migrant labourers responsible for building or repairing roads ate and slept on the roadside, more recent research indicates that this is no longer happening. In Chennai migrant labour is now accommodated in labour camps.

**TABLE 5.4 | Projects and Migrant Workers in Chennai, India (Mapping exercise 2014)**

Migrant Workers	No of Projects	Projects (%)
<100	14	19.18
101-500	38	52.05
501-1000	9	12.33
1001-2000	7	9.59
>2000	5	6.85
Total	73	100.00

Source: Chennai Research Partner

#### 5.4.1 Recruitment forms of internal migrant workers

The literature does not often discuss the sourcing of internal migrant labour for work in construction.<sup>9</sup> The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project found that in all the cities, the majority of the migrant labour force came from rural areas, having previously worked in agriculture, although there were important exceptions (See 'trajectories' in Chapter 6). While the channels and processes of labour recruitment vary both between and within countries in South Asia, three recruitment forms appear to be the most relevant (with varying strengths) across the region.

##### 5.4.1a Speculative: Workers that arrive without a job offer.

In this form, workers gather at certain labour markets<sup>10</sup> every morning from 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. to sell their labour and contractors; landowners and developers negotiate with labourers, through a bargaining process, about market rates for a day of labour<sup>11</sup>. While this route promises a fixed daily wage and is therefore more reliable, competition for unskilled opportunities are high (as are transport costs) and most expectant labourers leave the market without employment (Schütte, 2006, 2009; Mumtaz, 2004). This was the least prevalent of all forms of recruitment from our sample and falls under what we define as 'old forms of labour migration'. Nevertheless, 'marketplace' hiring practice just outnumbered pre-migration contracting recruitment in Kabul, although not significantly and by only two workers (51 versus 49 workers).

##### 5.4.1b Direct recruitment: through companies and other contractors.

On some occasions (seen in Kathmandu and Dhaka) construction companies recruit long term and permanent labourers, such as electricians and machine operators, directly. These long term contracts are rare, and reserved for those who will work for the entire duration of the project. These more

secure, permanently contracted labourers move from one construction site to another with the company, have a monthly salary and enjoy certain job benefits (such as health care).

More often than not, however, developers or construction companies prefer to recruit labourers through contractors. These intermediaries liberate companies of their responsibility with reference to wage determination and payments, entitlements, worker management and decent labour conditions. It appears that from the employers' perspective, informal word-of-mouth approaches to recruitment are preferable to other more planned approaches, due to the delivery time-frames associated with construction projects (Chen et al, 2010; Raiden and Dainty, 2006). Previous research has noted how these flexible paths have the unintended consequences of discriminating in two senses: they operate on the 'no outsider mentality' and employ those with existing skills (thus dis-incentivizing the need for training) (ibid.).

#### *5.4.1c Indirect recruitment: through labour contractors.*

Labour contracting is an informal, word of mouth recruitment process, where sub-contractors of large employers/construction firms encourage and secure labour from their villages (or via other established networks) and from areas where workers are considered to be comparatively cheaper. They facilitate the work of developer companies who may not have direct links to workers, or the resources to manage labour for the various types of work needed, such as diggers, carpenters, electricians, sanitary workers, among others. Labour contractors are usually ex-manual labourers themselves with management ability. These middlemen (we didn't come across any women) act as the employers, leaders and controllers of the workers and get a percentage from both labourers and developers. In all cities, some workers aspired to become contractors themselves, and in Dhaka this has emerged as a professional (non-institutional) body and a profitable business in its own right. This aspiration was commonly found in all five countries. Below, we outline the networked processes through which recruitment tends to take place.

#### **5.4.2 Recruitment networks of internal migrant workers**

'Labourers bring labourers'. This phrase sums up the way in which construction work is most often found: through a relative or friend already working in the sector. As expected, networks based on kinship, neighbourhoods and professional friendships were immensely important. While the literature documents the importance of networks in general, the literature on the role of networks in migration focuses on their role in reducing the costs of migration and making it easier to find employment. In this literature, the physical act of migration occurs prior to the act of finding a job. However, much of the migration observed in each of our case studies was of a fundamentally different nature: here it was more common to have a job offer prior to the commencement of migration - though, there were exceptions.

It was very common for workers to have been alerted about employment opportunities by their next of kin, or for them to bring their own family members to their construction project after arrival. When a construction project needs more labourers, contractors often ask existing labourers to draw upon their networks back home. They, in turn, contact their friends and families and inform them of job opportunities, using either their mobile phones and in some cases, Facebook and/or other social media. In Lahore and Dhaka, the cell phone was extremely important and workers spent a large percentage of their salary on maintaining contact via their phone. When current contractors are not in a position to offer work beyond that which the worker has been hired to undertake, workers get in touch with former contractors or friends to seek employment opportunities. Having located a new job

they move either within the same urban area or to another one. The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project was unable to investigate if labour contractors have an active network amongst themselves, so as to direct labour to sites where there is demand. This would help them balance excesses and shortages of labour resulting from the cyclical nature of construction.

According to the migration literature, the decision to migrate is influenced by the presence of kin and friendship relationships, as they can potentially reduce housing expenditure. Paradoxically, as housing is provided by the labour-contractor and is generally on site, this reduces the importance of networks in reducing the costs of searching for housing at the destination. Moreover, since contractors tend to be from the same villages, or were themselves construction workers at some point in time, the trust relationships that they have with migrant labour is akin to kin networks. The following excerpt describes the ‘network’ path of a 32 year old Indian petty contractor, who has been working in Kathmandu for approximately 18 years:

*“I got this contract from a Marwadi. He got the contract from the Classic Developers to do the plastering of the walls. So, he asked me to do it. Now I have called around 30 workers from India ... there is a lack of skilled labour [plasterers] in Nepal. Unskilled labour/helpers can be found here, but skilled masons have to be called from India. I like the people here in Nepal. They are friendlier than people in India. I first came as a tourist and liked the place. Then I started working as a labourer for one of the friends. Slowly, I learned the work and started working. There were more than 100 people living here in Kathmandu. I felt like my whole village was here. Lots of people are still living here. We stay in Tahachal. I have worked in many parts of Kathmandu as well as around Nepal” (32 year old Indian petty-contractors, Kathmandu, Nepal).*

This story represents the narrative of international migration, which was only visible in the Kathmandu city study. The narrative encapsulates not just a personal trajectory of labour mobility but also shows how regional supply and demand dynamics are fulfilled (in the absence of borders, in this case) through friendship networks. When a potential migrant is seeking work, contact is made with friends, kin or village acquaintances, who are working in the destination city. Personal introductions to contractors are considered advantageous, not just in securing work but also in potentially ensuring fair wages and, sometimes, not having to pay bribes. Moreover, ‘horizontal’ social networks appear to play a role once the workers arrive, since many learn their trade either through direct mentoring by other co-workers, or by observing others carrying out the work. In some circumstances, they may share food and accommodation with friends from their village (see Chapter 5).

In all but a few cases, contractors and builders prefer to hire people they know directly or indirectly from their own village and/or tribe, as this minimises risk (of desertion, for instance) and ensures trust and loyalty from labourers. It is interesting to note that in one Kabul project, a supervisor assured the researchers that the Hazara labourers on site were hired purely for their skills and not on the basis of personal or ethnic references (i.e., known or stereotyped specialisations like painting). Workers also tend to use their local networks in villages to secure work before migrating, as it also minimises their risk and - if travelling in groups - can assist with minimising travel expenses.

In Chennai, Lahore and Kabul, a large number of respondents appeared to be moving as members of a group, rather than alone. While there was no evidence of group labour contracts in our research, it seems plausible that by travelling and living together, workers either from the same places or from the same ethnic group may be able to negotiate better deals through collective bargaining, than if they were individuals unknown either to each other, or to the contractors (see Chapter 5 on ethnic groupings)<sup>12</sup>. This is something that is worth investigating further.

In Chennai and Kathmandu, women travel as part of the larger family group, or with others from the same village, and live in labour camps in construction sites. No instances of single women were found amongst the rural to urban migrant contract construction workers. Where single women were present on construction sites, such as in Dhaka and to a certain extent in Kathmandu, they lived in the surrounding areas and did not live in on-site labour camps. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, no women were seen at any of the construction sites studied.

In the few instances where ‘social networks’ appeared to play no significant role, particularly in the Melamchi Water Supply Project in Kathmandu, workers said that they heard about the project either directly through the media, for instance leaflets and the television or radio, or by virtue of being a local<sup>13</sup>:

*“I knew about this project through media and being a local resident ... The previous Chinese company’s interpreter was my tenant and he had helped me get the job earlier. Later, I was recruited by the Melamchi Board and then was referred to this CMC Company by the Melamchi Board”* (Migrant worker, Kathmandu, Nepal).

*I had heard about the Melamchi project through FM radio as well as TV. One day I saw a vacancy notice in the newspaper for a Grader Operator at this site. I did not ask anyone for help — I just filled out the job application and submitted it at the project site”* (Migrant worker, Kathmandu, Nepal).

### 5.4.3 Contracts and payment methods

Contractors sometimes encourage labour migration by providing migrants with advance payments to cover, for instance, migrants’ travel costs. This advance is later deducted from their salary (usually the first month, depending on the amount). The probability of getting additional advance payments when they are needed is dependent on the level and nature of the personal relationship that a worker has with the employer. However, this is not the only way migrants arrive in the city. Many rely their own or their family’s savings to migrate.

Payment for work completed is calculated on the basis of either a daily wage or piece rate. It is normally paid at the end of the week or the month. Modes of payment vary - from money deposited directly into bank accounts, specifically set up for the purpose of paying wages - to cash payment.

Delays are not uncommon. The construction company pays the contractors depending on the work and the agreements they have reached and are not concerned with how much contractors pay labourers.

The recruitment process for some skilled workers (one Nepali and one Lahore site) came closest to the standard anonymous job search. Most workers have diplomas at the very least and find jobs via adverts in the newspapers. However, once jobs are secured, workers can then refer their family members when vacancies occur. Thus, while anonymous hiring is possible with white collar jobs, it by no means precludes hiring through referrals. In Lahore, personal referrals are seen as advantageous and a way of: overcoming informational bottlenecks (see for example Montgomery, 1991; Munshi, 2003); improving joint productivity through coordination if workers are already known to each other; and incentivizing senior workers to train junior ones. In Nepal, however, irrespective of the recruitment connections, workers had to ‘clear’ i.e., pass through various stages of the selection process, including an informal interview, a satisfactory trial run of the job they would eventually hold, and a medical examination.

With the exception of one Nepal site (the Melamchi Drinking Water Project), where the employer was a large international firm, most workers said that they did not have signed contracts. This is consistent with earlier findings in India (Soundararajan, 2013). While this means that future work is never assured and is dependent on whether labour contractors have other projects lined up,

maintaining good relations is mutually beneficial for both the labourer and contractor, as the labourer feels that as long as there is work they will have a job, and the contractor can trust the labourers and the quality of their work.

The use of identification cards or similar measures varies between and within South Asia. For example in Dhaka, unlike the ready-made garment sector, construction companies do not provide workers with ID cards. Contractors, with either direct or indirect connections to workers, only keep a written note or record of their names, the name of their contact and their wage in the labour roster. Other demographic information such as age, address or any other relevant information is only sought, if the new worker has not been referred by an existing labourer.

In Pakistan, some contractors called an attendance register in the mornings, but only few of the actual workers on site were present — an unreliable system, at best. Some of the private Chennai sites issued ID cards and had a daily electronic log-in system, while the public housing project had a more unofficial register. Given that there was found to be no systematic process in place, either for the registration of inter-state migrant workers, or for issuing ID cards, there is little scope for tracking the movements of migrant workers to and from the other states, and is therefore very difficult to put a figure on the total numbers of migrant construction workers in Chennai or the state<sup>14</sup>.

It could be argued the lack of formal contracts (and information tracking systems) benefits those workers who do not want to be tied down. They do not require a notice period to leave and can move to another contractor if wages, working or living conditions are considered to be better elsewhere. Movement of labour between contractors was found in Kathmandu, Kabul and Dhaka, but it was unclear how such moves were negotiated. On the other hand, the lack of a formal written agreement means there is no professional responsibility towards workers if they fall ill<sup>15</sup>. There are no paid vacations or sick leave, no assurance of compensation in case of accident or death and child labourers can be hired with greater impunity. Moreover, once 'employed' under these conditions, whilst keeping a job can be fairly simple, so too can be losing it. Not showing up, disobeying contractors' instructions, clashing with co-workers, stealing construction materials, damaging property, or breaking rules (e.g., drinking where not allowed) would all warrant dismissal by the contractor. It is not surprising that, in this context of impermanence and flexibility, internal migrant workers with few connections to the host cities and/or with strong links to their places of origin, are used by contractors as a major source of labour supply. It is also unsurprising that the entry level occupations in the sector, in all five city cases, was seen as a transitory stage in the migrants' working history and for this reason, in most countries, workers above 40 years of age, were an exception.

While the sector appears to be the textbook model of a flexible labour market, workers were hardly anonymous. Building and labour contractors hire transient migrant contract workers predominantly on personal knowledge of a worker; the vast majority of workers were working with contractors they knew from prior work. The paradox of construction work is that despite its highly precarious and flexible employment practices, there is an intricate network of informal 'care' and help that keeps the network and labourers afloat. Loyalty and trust are key to these arrangements and, in the context of conducting interviews and research, can actually work to the investigator's detriment, as reports of exploitation, wrong-doing, discrimination or other forms of injustice, are likely to be concealed, for fear of reprisal or breaking the code. This was evident in some of the interview scenarios, where responses were more or less open depending on whether employers or security personnel were around. In some cases, where project managers selected interviewees for the research team, it was impossible to ascertain why or under what conditions the identified individuals had been chosen, and how this may have influenced their responses. Finally, in another case,

interview meetings had to be secured outside the work-sites due to workers' expressed reservations about potential intimidation or reprisal by their employers, were they seen to be talking to members of the research team.

## 5.5 SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS IN THE LARGE-SCALE CONSTRUCTION IN THE FIVE CITIES

Construction has been known to be the first stop for young, low skilled, uneducated and marginalized migrant workers. While a large percentage of the surveyed workers were illiterate or had low levels of education, many of the Nepali, Afghani and Pakistani low-skilled construction workers had higher than expected qualifications (see Chapter 5 for more on this). Against the backdrop of a lack of other employment opportunities, their education levels raise important points about the possible 'de-skilling' of workers, in those urban centres.

### 5.5.1 Manual versus non-manual/ Skilled versus non-skilled

The vast majority, however, did not have any formal training and had acquired their skills on the job. A few had familial links that had apprentice-like relationships, but even for those with kin or village networks who facilitated their entry into the sector, they tended to acquire skills on the job, and over a long period of time. Informal mechanisms were therefore the standard routes for skill acquisition. In Lahore, this reality translated into an employer's preference for hiring individuals with existing relationships to other workers, as this was perceived to: speed up the learning process; provide quality assurance; and avoid potential conflicts. While this benefits those with existing kin or social networks in the sector, it effectively marginalises those who may be seeking work on their own. It also raises questions about the role of close networks, which whilst they can be favourable for getting work initially, they create dis-incentives for employers to provide training.

While it is true that over the past two decades significant numbers of women have been employed in unskilled construction work, particularly for brick-splitting, mixing cement, sand and bricks and for carrying construction materials onsite (Dalmia, 2012), their presence has significantly and visibly diminished, with the advent of mechanisation. The women working in construction in Chennai, Kathmandu and Dhaka (although there were significantly fewer in Dhaka) were all unskilled and working as manual 'helpers' to carry heavy loads, or as cooks, or doing minor tiling labour. Even though wages, in theory, tend to be determined by capabilities and quality, women were paid less for the same 'lifting' based on their sex. The cultural meaning placed on this discriminatory practice is explored further in Chapter 6

## 5.6 WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS

This section analyses the wages and working conditions in the five cities. The depth of information about wages and working conditions varies according to the city both because of the ease with which it was available and the capacity of each city research team to collect it.

### 5.6.1 Wages

The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> researched three categories of transient migrant contract construction workers: skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. Given the informal nature of the employment relationship, there was no fixed wage amongst workers in any particular skill category (Table 5.5). Dalmia (2012) found this to be the case as well in her study of female contract construction workers in New Delhi, India.

**TABLE 5.5** | *Average/mean wages of construction workers surveyed per city*

City	Salary/Wage Ranges, Aug- Feb 2014
Kabul Currency Afghan Afghani (AFN)	Unskilled (daily wage): From AFN. 114-500 Skilled (daily wage): From AFN. 546-3000
Dhaka Currency: Bangladesh Taka (BDT)	Foreman, 500 tk. - 650 tk. Mason, 450 tk. - 550 tk. Mechanic: 400 tk. -500 tk.(Skilled); 350 tk. - 450 tk. (Unskilled) Operator: 300 tk. - 350 tk. Helper: 260 tk. - 330 tk. Lowest salary found was BDT 280 (£2.35/€3.18) per day Highest salary found was BDT 450 (£3.78/€5.11) per day
Chennai - Currency Indian Rupee (INR-Rs.)	Welder or Mechanic, IRs 300-650 Mason or Tiler, IRs. 500-1100 Mason – Bricklayer or Plasterer, IRs 200-600 Fitter – Shuttering or Bar-bender, IRs. 300-450 Carpenter – Joinery or False Ceiling, IRs 250-600 Painter, IRs 300-600 Unskilled helper – Male, IRs. 200-400 Unskilled helper – Female IRs. 150-350 See Table 5.6 for details of wages for a range of construction worker groups.
Kathmandu - Currency Nepali Rupee (NPR-Rs.)	Minimum of Rs. 4,500/mo Max Rs. 40,000/mo Mean, Rs. 16,822.58, median Rs. 15,000
Lahore Pakistani Rupee (PKR-Rs.)	Lowest (unskilled trainee mason): Rs 200/day (5,200/month) Mid-range (mazdoor): Rs 350 to Rs. 500 per day (Rs 9,100/month) Highest (mason): s. 600 and Rs. 800/day (Rs 20,800/month) White-collar (surveyor, IT assistant): Rs 800/day (Rs 20,800/month) Mean wage: Rs. 7000 per month in 2011 (£45.12, €61.02)

*Source: Country partners from empirical data collection*

Skilled construction workers (e.g., masonry, tiling and painting) are better paid than unskilled workers, who in turn earn more than unskilled workers. Furthermore, wages are also differentiated according to whether workers live on-site or not (i.e., they are paid less if they have on-site accommodation) and whether expenses (such as food) are included in the contractors' calculations. For this reason, at times, it can be quite difficult to compute average or median wages for each skill category of workers in any particular city. Table 5.5 illustrates the wage 'ranges' by broad skill category in each of the five cities.

Transient migrant construction workers do not receive recreational or holiday allowances. There is no sick leave. If they do not work, they do not get paid. In this sense, their situation is not vastly different from that of a floating daily labourer. The only significant difference is that they do not need to look for new employment each day.

The Chennai study contains more detail on wages by most skill categories than is the case for the other four cities. Figure 5.6 provides information on the lowest and highest wages commanded by trade and (or) skills for: local construction workers; long-term resident migrant construction workers;

and transient migrant contract construction workers - employed - either in civil projects (private residential and government institutional), or in the Chennai Metro Rail infrastructure project. These groups are also differentiated by type of residence and sex. Female construction workers are only represented in the unskilled category; even then, not in the Chennai Metro Rail project, as families and women were not allowed to stay in the labour camps housing male workers.

It is clear from Table 5.6 that local workers command the highest wages (at the lower and upper end of the range) and transient migrant contract construction workers in the Chennai Metro Rail project the least. Among migrant workers, 'long-term resident construction migrants' fared better than transient migrant contract construction workers. The Chennai study notes that:

*“The respondents [long-term resident migrants] living in urban settlements or peri-urban villages are the best paid inter-state migrant construction workers in Chennai ... this is because of their ability to negotiate relatively favourable terms of work with employers or labour contractors of their choice. Their agency may be in part strengthened on account of their preference for migrating with their families and choosing to live in self-selected rental accommodation as against in the labour camps provided by the promoter-contractor. Also, their preference for smaller projects – though not exclusively – where wages are higher but work may be non-continuous, can inadvertently help to safeguard them from the ill-effects of over-work in the long term”* (Chennai, research team).

The networks required for finding work and housing are unavailable to transient migrant contract construction labour, leaving them with little choice but to live in labour camps attached to large-scale construction projects.

Generally speaking, if travelling to work was a necessity (from a nearby labour camp or a nearby neighbourhood/rented living space) the labourers paid their own costs. In Dhaka, no transportation facilities were provided to the labourers who were working off-site in far-away locations. They would have to either walk to work, or travel by bus at their own cost. Only in the Chennai Metro Rail project were migrant workers transported to and from the work sites in buses organised by their contractors.

**FIGURE 5.6 | Daily Wages for a 8 Hour Working Day by Skill and Sex for: Local construction labour; Long-term Resident Migrant Workers and Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers worker – Civil Contracts and Infrastructure, Chennai 2014.**

Skilled/Unskilled Male/Female	Trade Designation or Skill	Construction Project Type		Petty Construction Projects		Civil Large-scale Construction		Chennai Metro Rail Infrastructure				
		Residence		Urban Settlements and Peri-urban Villages		Labour Camps		Labour Camps				
		Local labour Daily Wage in Rs. per 8 hrs	Highest	Long-term Resident Migrants Daily Wage in Rs. per 8 hrs	Lowest	Highest	Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers Daily Wage in Rs. per 8 hrs	Lowest	Highest	Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers Daily Wage in Rs. per 8 hrs	Lowest	Highest
Highly-skilled Male	Heavy Vehicle/Crane Operator	800*	1000**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Welder/ Mechanic	750	850	300	300	400	400	500	500	650	650	650
Skilled Male	Tile-laying Mason	850	1000	-	-	700	700	-	-	-	-	-
	Mason/ Plasterer	650	750	400	650	300	600	400	400	550	550	550
	Fitter/ Bar-bender	650	700	350	350	450	450	-	-	-	-	-
	Centering	650	700	350	350	300	450	300	300	600	600	600
	Carpenter-Joinery	700	750	250	250	300	600	300	600	350	400	400
	Electrician/ Plumber	600	700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Semi-skilled Male	Painter	550	600	500	600	500	600	500	600	300	300	300
	Scaffolding Erector	550	600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unskilled Male	Male Helper	450	500	250	400	200	380	200	380	250	300	300
Unskilled Female	Female Helper	300	400	200	350	150	300	150	300	250	300	300

Source: Chennai Research Partner

(\*) Includes dearness allowance of Rs 100 per day; (\*\*) Includes dearness allowance of Rs. 200 per day.

(Average 2014 exchange rate 1US\$= Rs 60; 1GB£=Rs 90; 1€= INR

The Chennai study also gathered information on wages in the migrants' places of origin to provide a comparison with wages earned in large-scale construction projects (Table 5.7).

**TABLE 5.7 | Daily wages in Migrant's Place of Origin by sector in 2014**

State	District	Daily Wage or Income in Rs. for work in			
		NREGS	Agriculture	Fishing	Construction Other
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>					
	Srikakulam	100-200	40-100 (female), 100-300 (male) + paid in kind (in some cases)	100-200	
	Vizianagaram	50	30-100 (female) + paid in kind/ 60-150 (male)+ paid in kind		
<b>Orissa</b>					
	Malkangiri	200	60-100		
	Gajapati	100	160-200		bamboo weaving- 100  unloading of coal from rail wagons 60
	Ganjam	165- 200	130 (females), 200(males)	100-300	
	Balangir	50-200	female-100, male- 150		
	Khurda		150		
	Kalahandi	120			
	Rayagada		100-120		
	Sundergarh	100	100-120		Rourkela steel plant - 160-170 for 12 hours;
<b>Jharkhand</b>					
	Palamu, Singhbhum, Ranchi	200	50-100		
	Dumka	100			
	Garhwa	120			
<b>West Bengal</b>					
	Bardhaman	100	120		
	Murshidabad	100	100		
	Maldah	120	paid by kind and 3 meals a day		

**TABLE 5.7 (continued) | Daily wages in Migrant's Place of Origin by sector in 2014**

State	District	Daily Wage or Income in Rs. for work in:			
		NREGS	Agriculture	Fishing	Construction Other
<b>West Bengal</b>					
	Bardhaman	100	120		
	Murshidabad	100	100		
	Maldah	120	paid by kind and 3 meals a day		
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>					
	Basti	100			
	Gorakhpur		120		
	Unnao	130			
<b>Bihar</b>					
	Kishanganj				250
	Purnia	172			150
	Gaya	150			
	E. Champaran	263			teacher in a private school-12000/mth.
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>					
	Balaghat	65 - 165	110		
<b>Assam</b>					
	Bongaigaon	100			tea picking-140(females), 100(males), all facilities provided
<b>Haryana</b>					
	Kurukshetra		100/day		

Source: Chennai Research Partner

It is evident from Table 5.7 that construction, at the unskilled level, pays more than wages in the migrant's place of origin. Furthermore, large-scale construction provides a more 'regular' daily wage with some 'guarantee' of work for the period that transient migrant contract construction workers are hired.

### 5.6.2 Wages and Gender Differentials

Although wages are meant to be determined according to the capability of the work that an individual can perform and *not* their sex, women in Chennai (Table 5.8), Dhaka and Kathmandu earned much less

than men in all the project sites<sup>16</sup>. No unskilled female construction workers were employed in the Chennai Metro Rail Project.

**TABLE 5.8 | Male and Female Unskilled Construction Workers Daily Wages for an 8 Hour Working Day for: Local construction labour; Long-term Resident Migrant Workers and Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers worker – Civil Construction and Infrastructure, Chennai 2014.**

Construction Project Type	Petty to Medium Construction Projects		Petty Construction Projects		Civil Large-scale Construction		
	Urban Settlements		Urban Settlements and Peri-urban Villages		Labour Camps		
Residence	Local labour		Long-term Resident Migrants		Transient Migrant Contract Construction		
Labour Category	Daily Wage in Rs. per 8 hrs						
Sex	Unskilled Work	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest
Unskilled Male	Male Helper	450	500	250	400	200	380
<b>Unskilled Female</b>	<b>Female Helper</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Male-Female Daily Wage Ratio</b>		<b>1:0.67</b>	<b>1:0.80</b>	<b>1:0.80</b>	<b>1:0.88</b>	<b>1:0.75</b>	<b>1:0.79</b>
<b>Hourly Wage</b>							
Unskilled Male	Male Helper	59.34		31.71		24.72	
<b>Unskilled Female</b>	<b>Female Helper</b>	<b>43.75</b>		<b>25.41</b>		<b>15.32</b>	
<b>Male-Female Hourly Wage Ratio</b>		<b>1:0.74</b>		<b>1:0.80</b>		<b>1:0.62</b>	

Source: Chennai Research Partner

Irrespective of the kind of project or whether female workers were local, long-term resident migrant or transient migrant contract workers, they were paid less than men for unskilled work. In terms of hourly wages, it is clear that women in large-scale civil building construction projects are significantly underpaid in comparison with independent female construction workers or those in large-scale civil construction projects.

### 5.6.3 Wages: Frequency and Levels

While wages are accrued daily, they are paid on a monthly basis thereby partially formalising what is, in essence, an informal arrangement. In the Nepal case of the large company infrastructure project, the firm had set up bank accounts for their workers where salaries were deposited once a month. In all other cases, workers were paid in cash once a month and any advances were deducted from these monthly payments.

The variation in wages, for a given category, also depended on the type of employer<sup>17</sup> (whether directly hired by a company or a petty contractor) and the extent of salary negotiation between the worker and the petty contractor (for instance about the quality or speed work is, or appears to have been, completed). So while the salary is supposed to be a daily wage, there seems to be elements of piece rates as well, the quality of which is judged subjectively. At times, personal relations also influenced payment, not just financial but also in the form of 'gifts' or other intangibles. In Pakistan,

for example, on-site white collar workers (surveyors or IT assistants) were found not to have higher wages than the highest manual labourers, but they did have separate and better living conditions, that would add a premium to the salary. Other non-wage advantages include food, health support or time off (paid or unpaid). Maintaining good relations with, and loyalty to, existing employers can also help secure (though not guarantee) future project work. Intangibles can therefore be both a variable and highly subjective part of the wage equation.

Wage differentials are also tied to demand and the availability of certain skills at a particular moment in time. If certain required skills are scarce, then remuneration is higher. Daily wage rates may increase temporarily, if there is a shortage of construction labour in cities when workers return to their villages, either for harvest season or for Ramadan breaks<sup>18</sup> (CSSR, 2004). Moreover, in cases like Afghanistan, the evidence suggests that that skill shortages and low-skills in the national labour force, have led to sourcing for construction labour, from Pakistan (International Relief and Development, 2012; Yusufzai, 2004). Notwithstanding such anecdotal evidence, the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> did not find overseas construction workers. However, returnee Afghani refugees from Iran formed part of the 'skilled' category, specifically Hazaras' who had returned without their families from Iran, with acquired skills in plastering and tile/mosaic installation, which is relatively new in Kabul. This is consistent with previous research (Metcalf et al., 2012) who found returned refugees from Iran to have greater skills, experience and contacts, as well as being better able to access profitable and higher skilled work, such as pipe laying or welding.

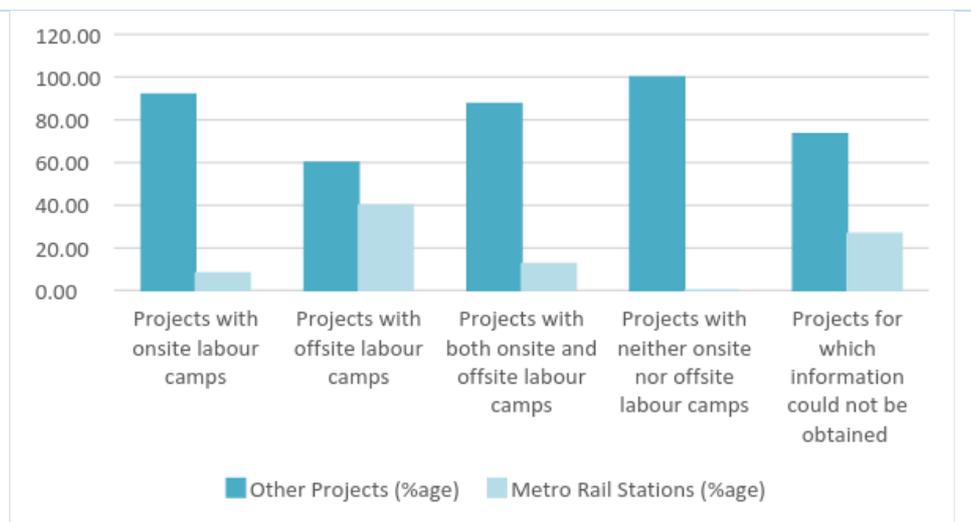
Finally, the low wages of seasonal migrant workers are the result of: instability of demand, segmented labour markets, the unregulated nature and dominance of labour contractors and the vulnerability of workers (Ministry of Labour, 1991, cited in Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003:7). Therefore, despite the rapid growth in construction labour supply, mobility and its associated wage rises can be slow and dependent on external economic forces. Alternatively, urban wages can be pushed down, for example, by the growing influx of people into cities — thereby limiting the potential offered by increasing income rates and the amounts that can be sent back as remittances (ODI, 2008).

## 5.7 EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS: LIVING AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Labour conditions are generally described as difficult, dangerous and demanding, as well as poorly and irregularly paid, and highly insecure (see Premchander et al, 2014 for comparative work in Bangalore; and Bhattacharyya & Korinek, 2007 in Delhi). Yet while conditions can be extremely harsh, requiring unpaid or low-paid overtime, workers preferred construction work over unpaid household and agricultural work in their villages. This was echoed by respondents across all south Asian cities researched, albeit in relation to future aspirations and desires to move out of the sector and/or back to their villages, where that seemed possible and within their reach.

### 5.7.1 Living Arrangements

The layout of the large-scale construction site (e.g., high-rise with little floor-space versus sprawling low-rise developments) and the kind of employer (sub-contractor or company) often determined the kinds of employment options and conditions offered to workers. With only a few exceptions in Dhaka, Kabul and Lahore, where workers rented, workers were typically housed by their contractor within labour camps on-site or off-site, or in semi-built rooms, within the partially completed construction project, they are working on.



**FIGURE 5.4 | Onsite and Offsite Labour Camps of Projects, Chennai, %**  
Source: Chennai country partners

In a given project, there can be several different arrangements depending on: the contractors (sometimes, there are multiple contractors operating on site, with their respective 'gangs'); the kinds of workers (there are often spatial differences mapping on to the hierarchies of workers' positions); and the size of a site (if there is not enough space, workers may be housed in various places, on and off-site). This was 'free' in the sense that no explicit deductions were made from the workers' wages, but in India, salary comparisons between those living on and off-site suggest otherwise. Developers and contractors prefer to have workers living in camps on or off site (see Fig.5.4 for Chennai example) because of: the assured availability of the requisite numbers of workers, including for more than one shift, if necessary; the lower wages payable, ostensibly on account of the expenses incurred, by the developer-contractor, on the temporary sheds, water, electricity and sanitation; and the enhanced control over the workers' freedom to negotiate or demand their rights under law, especially in terms of wages, safety in work and compensation, in case of accidents.

The conditions in the camps were often so awful; it would be difficult to imagine worse. Consistent with Soundararajan's findings (2013), provision of worksite facilities such as crèches, drinking water, latrines, accommodation and first-aid by employers were also found to deviate from statutory norms.



**PHOTOGRAPH 5.1 | Appasamy Offsite Labour Camp, Semmencheri, Chennai, India**

When living on-site, the contractors usually provide some, or all, basic utilities, such as toilets, electricity and water (see Table 5.9 for Chennai); in some cases, workers have to build their own sheds,

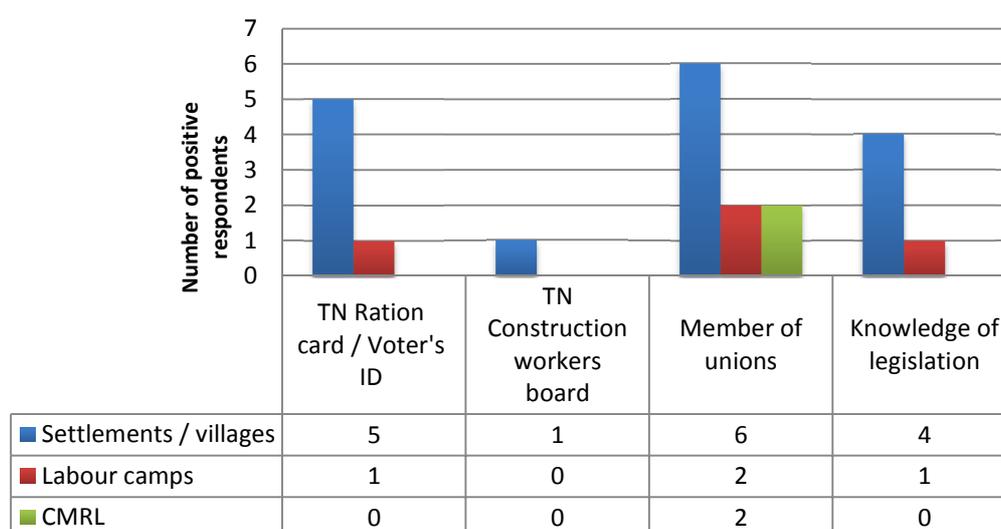
purchase or carry their own water and bring their own blankets, food and sources of entertainment. Living conditions vary, but are usually cramped. Sometimes, they lack basic amenities like beds, as well as proper roofing or waste management systems (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of the personalisation and embellishment of these austere spaces). The Chennai Metro Rail (CMRL) campsites are an exception. The CMRL's status as an international large scale project has resulted in its contractors making special efforts to provide better quality accommodation, canteens and free health check-ups for workers. It could be argued that the provision of better living conditions is an attempt to attract workers to the CMRL project over others given its harsh and strenuous work conditions.

**TABLE 5.9** | Amenities available in Labour camps of projects, Chennai, %

Amenities	Available	Not Available	No Information
	%	%	%
Drinking water	60.56	2.11	34.32
Washing water	50.70	4.23	45.07
Toilet	51.41	5.63	42.96
Electricity	55.63	2.82	41.55
Crèche	14.79	38.73	46.48

Source: Chennai city study

Migrants in India have little access to basic entitlements, particularly cheap (PDS) food, health services, education, shelter, voting and documentation (e.g., BPL cards) (Agnihotri et al., 2012; also emphasised in Faetanini & Tankha, 2013; Deshingkar & Anderson, 2004; Sivaramakrishnan et al., 2007) (see Figure 5.5).



**FIGURE 5.5** | Chennai, India

Count of respondents with access to welfare services across categories of residence, Chennai, India

Source: Chennai empirical data

Permanent migrants are likely to be able to acquire the documents needed to access these services over time, but temporary migrants are unlikely to be able to do so, due to differences in language, segregation from host populations and lack of access to channels of influence<sup>19</sup>.

In the labour camps, the prospects for the formation of unions are almost non-existent and the chances of word getting out in case of accidents extremely low. Many of the workers - especially women - remain confined to their camps, out of fear of venturing into the city, where the language

and customs can be alien to them. Though the freedom of movement - to go on leave - or the choice to quit their jobs is not denied, and subject only to the settlement of any cash advances or loans taken out by the workers, (although not necessarily applying to the dues owed to the worker by the contractor), the workers often find themselves cornered and manipulated by a web of petty contractors or agents, construction managers, contractors and promoters, who consciously establish and perpetuate these conditions.

If sub-contracted, workers usually had to buy and prepare their own food, but in both Dhaka and Chennai, a cook was often provided, either from the workers village (Chennai) or the local host neighbourhood (Dhaka, Kathmandu). In some cases, cooking was a collective enterprise with tasks distributed equally and in rotation amongst members of the group (Kabul). In others, 'the best cook' was chosen amongst the workers to perform that duty (Dhaka). Cooking took place in workers' rooms and quarters, or sometimes in canteens (Chennai, Kathmandu and Dhaka). Either way, the provision of food by the company or contractor always implied associated wage deductions. Workers' skills and the length of worker-employer relationships could also determine or influence the nature, or arrangements, of food provision. For instance, some skilled Afghani respondents who had worked with a company for a long time received a packet of cheese for breakfast, whereas short-term daily waged workers received only bread and tea.

### 5.7.2 Health and Safety

Apart from a few cases, the labour conditions on the construction sites did not comply with the minimum national standards of labour law. In Chennai, the research found that irrespective of whether projects were public or private, substantial investments attracted large numbers of migrant workers and produced near uniformly poor working conditions for workers - who were accorded a very low priority and appeared to merit only passing consideration.

Research revealed that in all cases, irrespective of posters or announcements that may have indicated otherwise (see photographs 5.1 and 5.2), health and safety were not accorded a high priority by employers (see Figure 6). At one Pakistani site, a respondent said that "every mason has fallen of scaffolding at least once in his lifetime". In Dhaka (and other cities), where labourers did not have formal contracts or ID cards, fear about the physical dangers of construction work was tied to fears about their anonymous status. As a 21-year old labourer explained, "no one knows who we are, even when we die". Petty contractors do not tend to provide protective apparel, such as shoes and helmets, but on the rare occasions that they are provided, costs may be deducted from salaries. International or large construction companies were more likely to provide them but even then, workers can often choose whether or not to use them.

Easy to implement and highly visible practices, seemed to be preferred, to executing more difficult work-safety practices, at most worksites. For instance, 64 respondents from eight sites in Chennai, India, confirmed that they were provided with safety equipment. However, when the research team undertook site visits, it became apparent that the Tamil Nadu Building and Other Construction Workers (TNBOCW)<sup>20</sup> rules, among others, were not actually being followed, with respect to safety nets, safety railings, lighting, hazardous materials for instance. The lack of adequate: safety equipment, lighting, precautionary measures taken while handling, training and the presence of a safety officer were concerning. The mere provision of safety equipment did not render either the working environment or the working conditions safe. This point was underscored by the accidents that interviewees reported to the research teams.

Similarly, CMRL workers interviewed at various stations also reported that safety equipment was provided, if required. Equipment included helmets, boots, gloves, jackets, welding glasses and harnesses. They did not report of accidents (although there have been a few serious ones leading to the loss of life). However, of the 38 CMRL workers interviewed, 24 reported working 12 hour shifts daily, and 23 (60%) said they did not receive a weekly holiday. The long working hours that CMRL workers were routinely engaged in, apart from being illegal under the TNBOCW Rules, created both the environment and potential for accidents, which often occur when workers are over tired and exhausted. Some interviewees mentioned experiencing work related stress from extended working hours.

When asked about the adequacy of safety practices on site, several workers in Chennai indicated that they were both resigned to, and had accepted that, risks were part and parcel of construction work, as the following quotes illustrate.

"Nothing can be done; this is a dangerous line of work" (Worker, CMRL Koyambedu, Chennai).

"They (accidents) happen. When they do, the company gives us money. But they happen a lot. Anyone can make a mistake and fall" (Worker, Vaniyanchavadi, Chennai).

"They (accidents) happen all the time. If something serious happens, you get paid compensation and get sent back home quietly." (Worker, Semmencheri, Chennai).

Instead of demanding safer work sites, workers often seemed to have internalized a poor safety ethic, and accepted the lack of priority accorded by employers to their safety, as the norm. With no formal health insurance in place for any of the interviewed workers across the five countries, if illnesses or accidents occur, the nature of support by employers (for instance, financial or time-off) is variable and often mediated by the nature and length of the personal sub-contractor - worker relationship. Compensation for illness or death is usually decided on a case-by-case basis.

### 5.7.3 A day's work

Depending on the country, a typical working day can begin anywhere between 5.30 a.m. (in Afghanistan, for morning prayers) and 8 a.m. (in Dhaka). The labourer can have between one (lunch) to three breaks (including teas), and shifts last between 8-12 hours. Free time is generally scarce as workers are often compelled to work overtime in short 2 hour bouts, or in multiple shifts. Many worked 7 days a week in order to earn more wages. We found that despite official rules, overtime was usually paid at lower than legal wage rates. In Nepal, the overtime wage-rate seems to vary between sites and professions, and ranged between 0.5 times to 1.5 times the regular rate. In India, the legally stipulated hourly overtime wage is twice that of the normal hourly wage.

While workers generally felt able to ask for leave at any time it suited them, there was an implicit understanding that they would keep the 'pace' of work in mind i.e., they wouldn't leave when the pace was particularly fast and all workers were needed on site. The number of days that a worker could stay away would often depend on how close he was to the petty contractor. One Lahore mason said his petty disliked absences of more than four to five days, which would incentivise workers not to leave for too much longer than that. But freedom in migrant construction work is a relative term.



**PHOTOGRAPH 5.1** | Kathmandu, Nepal  
*'Safety First' signage in the Melamchi Water Supply project*



**PHOTOGRAPH 5.2** | Kathmandu, Nepal  
*Workers precariously working on scaffolding in a residential project*

#### 5.7.4 Everyday freedoms and constraints

Workers were free to leave work sites, but security personnel and guards were a distinctive and (variously) intimidating feature in all projects studied. Though the freedom of movement - to go on leave - or the choice to quit the job are not denied and subject only to the settlement of any cash advances or loans taken by the workers, but not necessarily applying to the dues owed by the contractor to the workers, the workers often find themselves cornered and manipulated by a web of petty contractors or agents, construction managers, contractors and promoters, who consciously establish and perpetuate these conditions.

Walls and other physical barriers also act as material and symbolic separators, that made movement outside such borders seem out of place. While none of the country research partners reported that they found bonded labour, working for loan repayment (for travelling or monies loaned for other purposes, lent by contractors to workers) was not uncommon; under such conditions, the

argument of free will and rational choice becomes more difficult to sustain<sup>21</sup>. Still, we only came across very few cases of workers who had been cheated out of their salaries, or defrauded by petty contractors (whether personally connected or not).

What the research did encounter in Pakistan, for example, were contradictory narratives of worker mobility. Whilst workers reported with confidence that they could work with any contractor they wished to, most workers had, in fact, only worked with a handful of contractors. Moreover, in one instance, where a sub-contractor denied researchers' access to interview workers, they appeared visibly afraid of him. Even though the fact that they were in fear cannot easily be explained, we would not want to immediately frame their fear as 'bonded' labour<sup>22</sup>. Instead, we would posit that in an environment where there are no fully specified contracts and neither contractors nor workers approach the judicial system for settling disputes, networks - identity based or otherwise - provide informal mechanisms for enforcing commitments.

## 5.8 LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS<sup>23</sup>

"Construction work in South Asia is about 90% informal, with most of these workers falling outside legal and social protection" (Murie, 2003: 12). Following India's First and Second National Commission on Labour, Monteiro (2006) and Verma (2002) use the term 'unorganised' rather than informal to describe construction work. They consider that 'unorganised' best captures: the dependence and critical contributions of construction work, in relation to the so-called organised economy; and the negligence and destitution the sector's workers face. Our research echoes these findings, and also found legal and regulatory violations in all countries.

In Dhaka, for example, despite rules that state that "no adult worker shall ordinarily be required or allowed to work in an establishment for more than eight hours in any day: Provided that, subject to the provisions of section 108, any such worker may work in an establishment not exceeding ten hours in any day"<sup>24</sup>, researchers found that when there were not enough workers, contractors ignored such rules and there were often no regular or fixed working time/hours for many workers. Moreover, whilst the Bangladesh Labour Rules, 2006 states that it is the right of every labourer to get weekly holiday, the study did not find even a single construction project where labourers (appointed as day labourers) received weekly paid holiday. Poverty and illiteracy may have contributed to their not asking for their entitlements. Employers also prioritise their project deadlines over the labourers' entitlement to holidays.

Even though the Afghan government has established a specific Ministry to regulate issues relating to work and the workforce, welfare and civic services appeared to be non-existent for Afghan labourers. None of the workers interviewed received any services or aid. Since labourers lacked knowledge of their rights or entitlements, they rarely made demands or expressed grievances. None of the sites visited had medical facilities for labourers, in case of injury or need. If there was an accident on the construction site, labourers had to travel to private or government-run clinics for treatment. Since the Afghan government is not a party system, political parties do not have much leverage with regard to pressuring the government to allocate services for workers; labourers themselves do not get involved in politics or become members of political/workers parties and/or unions. In the case of a temporary inability to work, labourers do not get assistance from government or their employers.

None of the women interviewed had any knowledge of the legal requirements their employers were meant to comply with. They assumed that their husbands or *thekedars* were aware. For them, it was difficult to even imagine that they had any legal rights at all (Dalmia, 2012: 250).

The central piece of legislation for construction workers is India's 'Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act 1996 (BOCWA)', which provides safety, healthcare and social security provisions for registered workers. In 2012, an update to BOCWA was proposed in the Rajya Sabha, which would remove the requirements for labourers to prove they had completed 90 days construction work in the previous six months, as well as an upper age limit for registration (Soundararajan, 2013). The original 1996 Act required employers to provide temporary accommodation, drinking water, toilets and decent conditions of work, such as reasonable working hours, overtime pay, child care centres and canteens. It applies to construction or building firms employing 10 or more workers. BOCWA stipulates state governments should establish a welfare board to provide medical payments, pensions, housing loans and funds for educating children. This is intended to be funded by a 'cess', collected by states under BOCW Welfare Cess Act 1996. Southern States outperformed other states in terms of cess collection and utilisation - for instance in Tamil Nadu 44% was used.

The registration of workers with BOCWA State boards is variable and for the most part poor. Only 12% of workers nationally are registered and a number of states, including Maharashtra, have no construction workers registered at all. Many other states have less than 10% registered (including Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Punjab). However, in a few states - Kerala (99%), Tamil Nadu (75%) and Madhya Pradesh (68%) - surprisingly high numbers of workers are registered. Non-registration with Boards means that levels of injuries remain unknown. Non-registration also means that workers are unable to access schemes, such as the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana health insurance scheme for Below Poverty Line people, intended to benefit construction workers, as it draws on the database from State Boards under BOCW (Soundararajan, 2013: 22).

Registration requires documentation, which is often difficult to acquire (i.e., photos, proof of age certificates and certificates of employment, from their employers, trade unions or labour inspectors). The latter is only available for workers who have completed 90 days of construction work within the state in the previous 12 months. Availability of documents, as already noted, presents a challenge. Added to this, language barriers can also present difficulties for registration (Soundararajan, 2013). Soundarajan suggests that the solution to this, would be to require that responsibility for registration should rest with employers, rather than the workers. The 'Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1979)' provides protection for migrant workers travelling across state borders. However, as with the BOCWA, migrants are required to be registered (Rogaly et al., 2002).

Other important laws include the Contract Labour Act, 1970, and the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 (Soundararajan 2013). The Maharashtra Mathadi, Hamal and Other Manual Workers Act, 1969 intended to cover contract workers in the informal sector provides an example of legislation that could reasonably adopted in other states.

That said, many aspects of policy (ranging from voter registration to the distribution of transfers) remain predicated on a supposedly 'sedentary' population. A number of key social protection provisions in India are tied to the individual's residence, which poses particular difficulties for migrant workers (Deshingkar & Start, 2003). There are also stark differences between different states when it comes to the registration of construction workers, and the amount of money spent on social

protection provisions for them. Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh appear to be particularly effective. Whilst this lack of effective access for migrants to state services and social protection is documented, it is not well developed as an area of analysis (Agnihotri, Mazumdar & Neetha, 2012; Deshingkar & Anderson, 2004; Deshingkar & Start, 2003; Sivaramakrishnan et al., 2007; Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003).

Various pieces of legislation are in place for the protection of labourers in Pakistan (several of which are adaptations of those implemented before the partition of India and Pakistan). However, despite the fact that construction workers form 8% of the labour force and involve some of the lowest paid workers, who also regularly face hazardous conditions, it is striking that there are hardly any laws in place, specifically for them. Construction is also one of the most neglected sectors in the country, in terms of safety, maintenance, regulation and training (ILO, 2001; Farooqui, Arif and Rafeeqi, 2008). The Social Security Ordinance 1965, for example, does not apply to most construction workers due to the informal and temporary nature of their employment. The minimum wage law does prescribe a piece rate minimum wage for bricklayers, however, the reason as to why bricklayers have been given this consideration, and others have not, is unclear. Furthermore, the one law that is designed specifically for labour, the 'West Pakistan Labour Camp Rules 1960', appears to have been copied from a law developed for a completely different country context, where each labour camp occupant has the right to 40 square feet of space. Given the fieldwork observations, this intention, whilst laudable, was very far from the reality on the ground.

The legal status of workers in general has become quite unclear, with the passing of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which devolved many federal powers to the provinces, including Labour Laws. This means that, technically, the provinces are not obliged to honour any commitments made by the Federal government, such as the ratification of ILO conventions. The Punjab Industrial Relations Ordinance (IRO) 2010 (GoP, 2010), for instance, abolished the right of workers to unionize, in establishments where the number of workers is fewer than 50, though under the IRO 2002 (GoP, 2002) the minimum number of workers was 20. Furthermore, the number of union representatives who are not workers has been reduced from 25 per cent to 20 per cent, thus weakening the role of the Collective Bargaining Agent; an outcome that allows employers to deal with workers directly, thus shifting the balance of power in favour of the former. It seems therefore, that the Punjab government is keen to promote the province's business freedom by weakening collective workers' rights and bargaining power.

## 5.9 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In Afghanistan, the withdrawal of international troops and the decrease in external aid is likely to reduce the construction activity and demand for migrant workers, that has been a characteristic since 2001. Yet, given the broader context of a national economic depression and rural unemployment, refugees and internal migrants will continue to arrive and casual labour markets are likely to become increasingly saturated. Kabul will have to continue to cope with the hundreds of thousands of jobless settlers in its underserved areas (Kantor, 2008; Metcalfe et al., 2012). These trends suggest that returned refugees from Iran, with greater skills, will continue to dominate the better paid activities in the sector but, with a potential oversupply of their labour, their wages may also decrease in the long-term. While competition for jobs increases overall unemployment will rise.

In all other countries, trends in economic expenditure and investment suggest the continued prioritisation of investment in construction, especially infrastructure projects and therefore continued

demand for migrant workers. In Pakistan, for example, the government's use of infrastructure projects as a vote-winning mechanism can be used to predict their future priorities. Expensive infrastructure projects are likely to continue to outweigh environmental and cultural concerns.

For employers, this flexible labour supply is the ideal mobile labour force for ensuring that the cyclical activities of construction are attended to, at the lowest price possible. This is ensured through the absence of written records or contracts formalising employment arrangements, as well as through the avoidance of statutory responsibilities. It may well be the case that such arrangements are circumscribed by social norms and other obligations between worker and recruiter.

It is also important to note how occupational health and safety (OHS) has been reduced to easily observable features - hard hats, boots, high visibility vests, harnesses, protective eye glasses and so on. There is little observable change in OHS in terms of site safety, training, the presence of first aiders, and protection when handling toxic materials. More importantly, intangibles such as very lengthy working days and lack of holidays are more likely to be the cause of poor OHS outcomes even if the visible OHS equipment is available.

One of the questions that the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> sought to answer was why rural to urban migrants make the journey, at times a long one, to take up work in construction despite the: toil and the risk to health and life, that work in large-scale construction, especially infrastructure involves; wages that are lower than local wages; lack of overtime payment, in many instances; and poor living conditions with little access to basic services. There are several reasons why they do so. While Chapter 6 discusses many of these, in this chapter a few reasons are identified.

Firstly, despite the informality that pervades construction, and the precariousness and exploitation that working in construction involves, casual, unskilled and skilled construction work is still considered advantageous, because it provides additional, higher or more stable average monthly incomes than the alternatives - usually, farming or intermittent employment. Of most importance is the observed 'assurance' of work, over sustained periods, which large-scale construction is able to provide. Construction also accommodates the seasonal need for employment opportunities better than other sectors of the urban economy; at times, even self-employment may not be as accommodating. Construction is a relatively easy entry point for unskilled labour, made more attractive by reassurances that work will be available and that there will be no need to 'search' for it. In India, and to a certain extent Nepal and Bangladesh, it also allows for the participation of women, thereby increasing household income. Even if rural wages were to approximate wages in large-scale construction at some point in time, migration for work in large-scale construction will continue to remain attractive, unless there are similar assurances of the regularity of work at their places of origin.

Secondly, the research suggests that the argument that migrants consider the costs and benefits both at their place of origin and also their destination prior to making the decision to migrate (Lee, 1966), is at work in the urbanisation-construction migration nexus, in the five cities in south Asia. Potential migrants have experience of the benefits and especially the costs at their place of origin. They are also aware of two key benefits in construction at their destination – better wages and assured work. Even if they are aware of the negative points, such as poor housing conditions and woefully inadequate levels of water and sanitation provision, the fact that they engage in rural to urban migration for work in large-scale construction can be explained through understanding their main reasons migrating. Those who migrate to 'accumulate' are perhaps more willing participants in the extractive processes that construction capital subjects them to. Those, for whom migration is a 'coping' mechanism, seem to have little choice.

Thirdly, the dependence on the labour-contractor for work also has its pluses and minuses. The ability to obtain cash advances, the entry to work in large-scale construction labour markets, often the only person to turn to in cases of need, are some reasons why the links between the labour-contractor as ‘employer’ and the rural-urban migrant as ‘employee’ remain strong. Roy (2007: 972-73) notes:

*“[h]istorians have explained the presence of such a figure by the needs of capital for intermediaries, or needs of labour for familiar relationships in an unfamiliar environment. The significance of the labour agent for economic history, however, seems to go beyond these specific needs. The universal presence of a labour agent prompts several larger questions. Was the labour agent an institutional response to an economic challenge? Were modern forms of agency rooted in older modes of labour organization? Whereas the scholarship has discussed gains for employers, were there costs too?”* (Roy, 2007: 972-73).

There is no doubt that there are costs to the developers and clients of large-scale infrastructure projects that use subcontracted labour, obvious ones being delays and poor workmanship. It could be argued that developers and clients compensate for these costs in two ways. First, they are able to move this burden onto the labour-contractor, as the latter not only recruits and supplies labour, but more often than not, supervise and remunerate their workers. This is done by the labour-contractor withholding payments for delays and shoddy workmanship. Secondly, given that the supply of labour, especially low skilled, is often far in excess of demand - the reserve army of wage labour - developers and clients are unlikely to be held hostage by labour contractors threatening to withholding labour. This is further reinforced by the fact that labour-contractors are themselves in competition for work and not organised as a collective group. One can only speculate how the collective organisation of labour-contractors may affect their relationship with construction capital.

The findings from the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> support that “[t]here is indeed a case to suggest that the insertion of an agent in modern enterprise was not a totally new system, but an extension of contemporary models of labour organization, such as the institution, of village headman and the putting-out master-artisan. Historical sources do suggest examples of the headman being absorbed in supervisory roles in plantations, whereas the handloom weaver elite enjoyed elitehood inside the textile mills” (Roy, 2007: 977, also see Picherit, 2014). As a number of commentators have suggested, informal labour markets (large-scale construction being no different) are closed labour markets with access only possible through an intermediary. While the contemporary labour contractor may not always be a former village headman, their knowledge of “missing markets, meaning a context in which the employers did not know where labour was available at what wages” makes them indispensable for the foreseeable future (Roy, 2007: 974).

In these contexts, employed internal migrants can continue to count on flexible and insecure sources of contracted waged work. That said, the economic impact of such migration, the costs incurred - expenses otherwise not covered by either their employers or the public sector - mean that their already unbalanced income patterns (vis-a-vis a more permanent migrant), will remain and most probably, in the absence of other forms of support (public or private), limit their opportunities for social mobility.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> (See also Appendix E for a statistical analysis of the pattern of growth of the construction sector in the five South Asian countries).
- <sup>2</sup> PwC estimates that the ‘total construction market in India for FY2014 was US\$157 billion, an increase of US\$4 billion over FY2013. Infrastructure accounts for 49 percent, housing and real estate 42 percent and industrial projects 9 percent’ ... [and that] ... [a]n estimated US\$1 trillion is being spent on infrastructure over the five years to 2017 and there is increased investment in industrial projects by the government; <http://smartcity.eletsonline.com/pwc-forecasts-boost-for-indias-construction-sector-in-2015/>. Also see, <http://www.ibef.org/industry/infrastructure-sector-india.aspx>
- <sup>3</sup> Alokozay Beverages bottling plant
- <sup>4</sup> In this informal system, an owner is responsible for the land purchase, linking with public infrastructure (such as electricity, sewage, drinking water) and construction of the house
- <sup>5</sup> As contracts became more valuable, there has been a perceived increase in corruption in awarding of contracts. Financial and technical scrutiny over implementation is low, and militarisation and the presence of armed protection have increased, providing an implicit threat of force to support the enforcement of agreements (Lister and Pain, 2004). As Afghan companies with political connections and non-Afghan companies with previous relationships to international agencies gain clout, medium-sized Afghan companies with lack of comparable experience, accesses to plant and credit or funds for security deposits are increasingly being excluded.
- <sup>6</sup> In Lahore, there are two important unique elements in the acquisition of land: (1) the “file” system introduced by the DHA as a gimmick for purchasing land (a promise of a plot once the residential colony is established) which engineers prices, creates artificial scarcity and encourages speculative investment, and the Deputy Collector’s rate (the “official” rate at which land transactions are recorded, regardless of the actual value of the transaction) which facilitates ‘whitening’ of black money .
- <sup>7</sup> There is an annual demand of about 60,000 residential units plus 200,000 units of backlogs and replacement supply only 8,000 to 10,000 units each (REHAB, cited in Khan & Barua 2009)
- <sup>8</sup> The Times of India, ‘Office space has no takers builders bank on housing’, by TNN, May 10 2012 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/Office-space-has-no-takers-builders-bank-on-housing/articleshow/13073290.cms>
- <sup>9</sup> For a recent exception, see S. Premchander et al (2014).
- <sup>10</sup> In Dhaka, there is one at the eastern side of the foot over bridge, Azimpur in Uttara, Dhaka (locally known as a Sromik Bazar or Sromik Hat) where thousands go to daily. Another is located at Kosaibari, Rail Gate, Uttara where about 500 to 100 workers go to daily.
- <sup>11</sup> See K. Naraparaju (2014) for functioning of daily labour markets in Navi Mumbai.
- <sup>12</sup> See V. Rajni (2007) and V. B. Athreya et al (1990: 158) for a discussion of these ‘proto-unions’ in agricultural contract labour in Meerut, India.
- <sup>13</sup> This is because locals are in a company priority list as per a compensation and resettlement plan.
- <sup>14</sup> When an 11-storeyed building under construction in Moulivakkam collapsed like a pack of cards on 28 June 2014, it took down with it 61 workers and injured 27, almost all of them migrants from Andhra and Odisha. None of them had been registered by their employers or the Labour Department of the State government. This was by far the worst accident in a construction project in Tamil Nadu and it focused attention on the plight of inter-state migrant workers in the sector. While the sample survey of migrant workers in the State is yet to be completed at the time of writing this report in late December 2014, the Commissioner of Police, Chennai announced plans in November 2014, to make a database of migrant workers in the city. So it now appears as if the police will be the first to register the migrant workers in an overt attempt at negative profiling. It is not clear what percentage of crimes have been traced to migrant workers in the last ten years

but a couple of incidents in the last 3 years have served to make all of them suspect in the eyes of the city's inhabitants .

- <sup>15</sup> Sometimes the contractor deducts the medicine cost from the labourers' wage at the end of the month, but this differs from one contractor to another.
- <sup>16</sup> Many of the workers and contractors interviewed in Nepal, Bangladesh and India said that women are generally considered as being less capable or unable to work long hours. See Chapter 5.
- <sup>17</sup> For instance, direct company hires tend to imply less wages due to the 'pace' associated to the work whereas petty contractors tended to offered a piece rate which means he has to work his team hard if he is to earn a profit. The company is under no such compulsion so is much more lenient. In Pakistan this led to surprising anomalies like a mason earning more than a surveyor (but less than a welder), despite the fact that a surveyor, as an educated worker, was higher up in the social hierarchy.
- <sup>18</sup> See: S. Shafique, 2007
- <sup>19</sup> Cross-state access to social protection has been a key argument for the UID / Aadhar Identity programme in India, although other more localised schemes (TN / Karnataka) also exist.
- <sup>20</sup> [http://s3.amazonaws.com/zanran\\_storage/www.tn.gov.in/ContentPages/4886727.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/zanran_storage/www.tn.gov.in/ContentPages/4886727.pdf)
- <sup>21</sup> For a discussion on the differences between forced and coerced bonded labour, see Breman 2014.
- <sup>22</sup> As in the CSSR 2004 study
- <sup>23</sup> See Appendices F to I for country level regulations
- <sup>24</sup> Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**6**  
**Migrant Pathways and Labour in Urban Construction Projects**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 6

**MIGRANT CHARACTERISTICS, PATHWAYS AND ASPIRATIONS: LABOUR IN LARGE-SCALE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN FIVE CITIES IN ASIA****6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The five hundred transient migrant contract construction workers interviewed for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project exhibit certain common features with independent migrant construction workers, in terms of age and education levels attained. However, they differ from them in that they work and live in the construction site where they are employed.

**6.2 TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS: RECORDING WHO THEY ARE**

This section contains an analysis of the primary data collected from the 500 or so transient migrant contract workers interviewed for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project. The data provides an understanding of who these migrant construction workers are in terms of: their place of origin; age and education, gendered dynamics and how their experiences and aspirations govern their agency as migrant construction workers.

**6.2.1 Migrant Construction Workers Trajectories**

Why do individuals, groups and households migrate from rural to urban areas to work in large-scale urban construction projects? How can the narratives of debt for marriage, farming, housing and health; high input costs, failed crops or poor returns on harvests in agriculture; unpredictable climate and extreme weather events; conflict and displacement; lack of alternate/sufficient work; increase in monetization of the economy and costs of goods and services in the face of inadequate relief or the withdrawal of support from the state be read as outcomes of enclosure of natural and cultural heritage, promoting migration. Although these narratives are, at a macro level, common to all the countries, for each country they are highly nuanced; varying in extent and intensity as a result of country specific socio-political, geo- environmental, and levels of consumption in the urban. Hence the question of where migrants are from (their place of origin) and why they migrate is invariably tied to the conditions at their places of origin and the alternatives available, both near and afar. Migration is also influenced by gendered, familial and personal expectations. The degree and strength of their relationships at places of origin plays a key role in whether their migration cycles are seasonal, circular or a combination of the two. Their ability to move frequently (if so desired) is also integrally connected to: their financial capacity (amount of savings, ability to get loans from contractors, friends or family members); the broad cultural norms; and the institutional culture of the construction sector (laxity with times and assurances of work, despite long departures for harvest or festivities). Finally, the nature of their 'contractual' arrangements and degree of personal relations with their 'employers' (Chapter 5) also play a critical role in the form and frequency of their migration. Muzammil's story illustrates these combined factors:

*"Muzammil found his first job in Karachi in 1982 when he was just 9 years old. His brother had already been working there and he found his job through him. He worked in a bungalow in Karachi's Nazimabad area (middle and upper middle class) as a Chowkidar, at a monthly wage of Rs. 100. He stayed in Karachi for 8 years, shifting 3 employers in 3 years but then staying with the last one for 5 years. When he visited his village (in around 1990) he got engaged and it turned out that his brothers in law were working in Lahore. They found him a job in a shoe factory in Lahore. He switched a couple of jobs within the next few years before he went back to his village, got married and started farming his own land. But he was dissatisfied with village life and came back to Lahore after a couple of years. He phoned a previous employer who got him the job at Bahria Orchards where we met him"* (Muzammil, Lahore, Pakistan).

## 6.2.2 Where are transient migrant construction workers from?

Secondary data on migration is available for all the five countries, albeit drawn from different surveys that vary in terms of the how recently they were conducted. Official data, especially censuses, only come into the public domain several years after they have been conducted – a case in point is India which has just released migration data from the 2011 census at the end of 2015. The key question for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project is the extent to which its findings about the places from which transient migrant contract construction workers originate differ from official data sources. An analysis of the places of origin of transient migrant contract construction workers, in each city, has revealed some interesting similarities and differences between transient migrants and other migrant construction workers. For example, a feature common to both groups is the presence of higher status social groups (castes) in large-scale construction whilst a difference between them, is variation in the distance between their places of origin and destination.

### 6.2.2.1 Afghanistan: Kabul

As construction tends to employ a large proportion of seasonal migrants, information on seasonal migration in Afghanistan is relevant. According to the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2013 (CSO, 2013), seven per cent of the population aged 14 years and over were seasonal migrants (the figure for women was 0.3%). Seasonal migration from rural areas at five per cent is almost three times the figure from urban areas (1.6%), with more than three times as many men (8.9%) seasonally migrating from rural areas compared to their urban counterparts (3%). Apart from differentiating between rural and urban migration, the NRVA 2011-12 (Central Statistics Organization, 2014)<sup>1</sup> report does not provide disaggregated information about the migrants' places of origin.

**TABLE 6.1 | Regional origin of out-migrants in Afghanistan (NRVA 2011-12, Central Statistics Organization, 2014) and region by in-migration in U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> Kabul.**

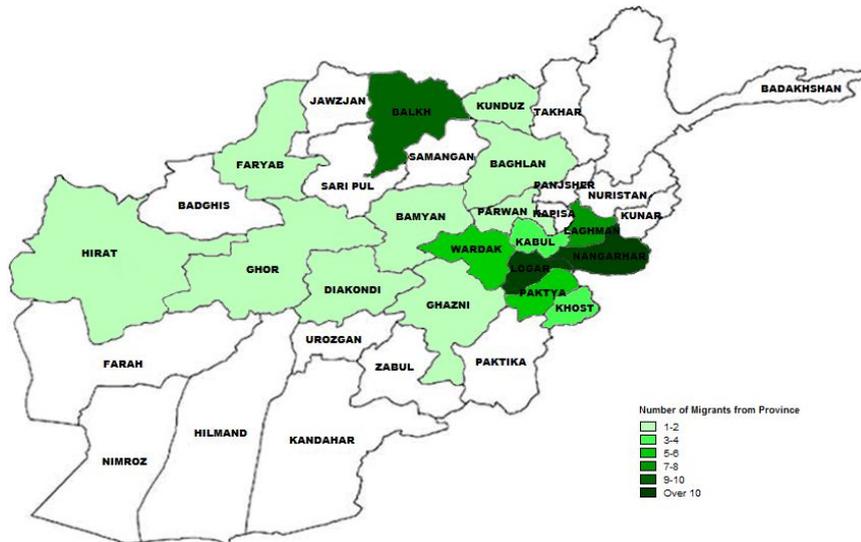
Region	Internal (%)	External (%)	Total (%)	U <sup>C</sup> Mn <sup>SA</sup> (%)
Central	15	15	15	50
East	25	11	17	
North	8	6	9	27
Northeast	15	6	8	
South	22	38	28	-
Southwest	7	8	7	13
West	7	14	14	
West-Central	2	2	2	4
Kabul	-	-	-	

Source: Ghobadi, Koettl and Vakis, 2005, and Kabul case study primary survey data

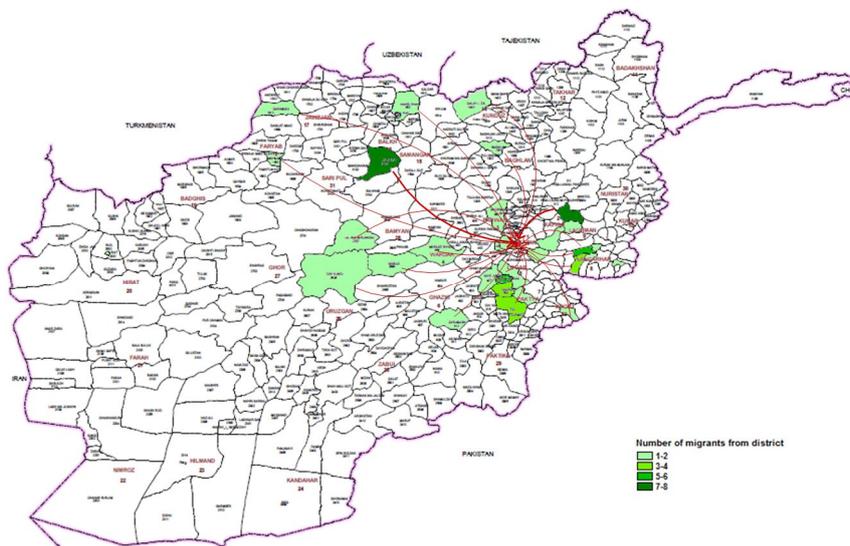
In a report entitled Moving out of poverty - Migration Insights from Rural Afghanistan, Ghobadi, Koettl and Vakis (2005) draw on three data sources to analyse the proportion of out-migration - both internal and international migrants - from seven regions (Table 6.1). In order to enable a comparison of where migrant workers in large-scale construction in Kabul originate, primary data from the Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> case study is juxtaposed with the data from the NRVA 2011-12 (Central Statistics Organization, 2014). A few similarities as well as certain striking differences can be observed. Around a quarter of all internal migrants in both data sets – NRVA 2011-12 (25%) and Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> (27%) - came from the North and Northeast regions. However, 10 per cent of migrants came from the Central and Eastern

regions (50%) in the Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> case study in comparison with the NRVA 2011-12. Furthermore, whilst there were no respondents from the South and the West, there were twice as many from the Southwest region in Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> as compared with the NRVA 2011-12. Both sources of data do not contain the necessary detail to allow for an explanation to be offered; this warrants further research.

A mapping of primary data about places of origin by province and district for the Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> case study is presented in Figure 6.1 and 6.2.



**FIGURE 6.1 | Province of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Kabul**  
 Source: Dhaka city study



**FIGURE 6.2 | District of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Kabul**  
 Source: Dhaka city study, Map by Panayiota Kastritis, Source: Dhaka city study

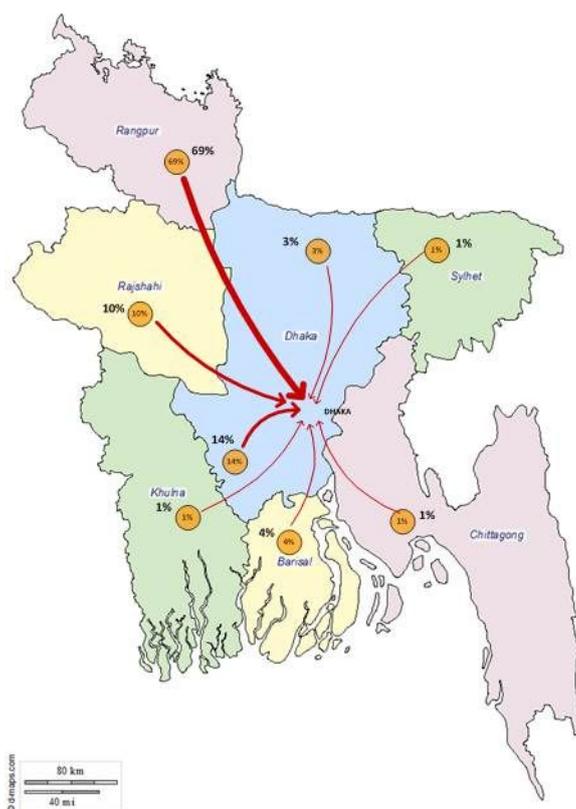
Since 2004, half of all recorded in-migrants in Afghanistan resided in Kabul (Central Statistics Organization 2014). It is important to note that the composition of Kabul’s population is different from the other U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> cities, in that Kabul has a vast number of internally displaced people (IDPs). Returnees from Iran and Pakistan for example, also add to Kabul’s IDPs population. In this context, it is

perhaps surprising that only six per cent of respondents were actually from Kabul. One possible explanation for this, drawing from observations in the literature, is that labour markets in urban areas are ‘closed labour’ markets where contacts, rather than proximity, determine access (see Chapter 2).

### 6.2.2.2 Bangladesh: Dhaka

According to an analysis of the 2011 Bangladesh Census data on internal migration by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (GoB, 2014), just over one-fifth (22.24%) of internal ‘lifetime’ migrants in Dhaka division were from the same division. A relative minority were from Rajshahi (3.59%) and Rangpur (3.13%) divisions. Lifetime in-migration is almost twice (16.42%) that of outmigration (9%) from Dhaka division. Secondary data on in-migration to Dhaka division indicates that 54 per cent are intra-division. The proportion of inter-divisional migration to Dhaka, in descending order, is: Khulna (12.5%); Rajshahi (11.2); Rangpur (10.5%); Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet which accounts for the remaining. Furthermore, 32 per cent of all internal migrants in Bangladesh are recent migrants (less than 5 years) with another 20 per cent having migrated in past 5-10 years.

It is estimated that the probability of inter-division migration to Dhaka division is the highest for Rangpur (0.49) followed by Chittagong (0.34) and Rajshahi (0.33). While this may explain the predominance of internal migrants in the Dhaka U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> study from the Rangpur division (69%), it does not explain the figure for Rajshahi (10%). It is important to reinforce the point that official data on migration does not capture seasonal and circular migration flows.



**FIGURE 6.3 | Divisions of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Bangladesh (%)**

Source: Dhaka city study | Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding

In Bangladesh, Rangpur (69%) and Rajshahi (14%) were the two main geographical divisions from where workers in large-scale construction in Dhaka originated (Figure 6.3). In answer to the question



### 6.2.2.3 India: Chennai

Migrants constituted 32 per cent of India's urban population in 2001 according to Census data and 35 per cent, according to data drawn from the 2008 NSS survey.

**TABLE 6.2 | Trend in Migration Rates in Urban Areas, 1981–2008 (migrants per 100 persons)**

Census and NSS Years	Census			NSS		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Census 1981/ NSS 1983	33.2	40.8	36.8	27.0	36.6	31.6
Census 1991/ NSS 1993	26.3	36.2	31.0	23.9	38.2	30.7
Census 2001/ NSS 99/2000	32.0	39.4	35.5	25.7	41.8	33.4
Census NA/ NSS 2008	NA	NA	NA	25.9	45.6	35.4

Source: Bhagat, 2014 (notes as cited in the original - Migration rates exclude Assam for 1981 and Jammu and Kashmir for 1991 where the census was not conducted).

In both the data sets for the years 2001 (Census) and 2000 (NSS), female migration was higher than male migration, most probably associated with marriage; an increase of almost five percentage points as recorded in the NSS 1999–2000 survey.

**TABLE 6.3 | Distribution of Migrants in India by Streams of Migration (%)**

Streams	Male			Female		
	2001 Census	1999–2000 NSSO	2007–2008 NSSO	2001 Census	1999–2000 NSSO	2007–2008 NSSO
Rural to Rural	36.3	32.3	27.1	72.4	70.3	70.0
Rural to Urban	34.2	34.3	39.0	13.5	14.4	14.8
Urban to Rural	6.2	10.7	8.9	4.1	5.2	4.9
Urban to Urban	23.0	22.6	24.8	9.9	10.1	10.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Bhagat, 2014 (note as cited in the original: Census of India 2001; NSSO, 2010. Rural-urban unclassifiable is excluded).

From Table 6.3 it is evident that females outnumber males by more than two to one in both the Census and NSS data. This ratio is reversed in rural to urban males, indicating a greater propensity for single males to migrate. This is also the case with urban to urban migration.

**TABLE 6.4 | Migration into the Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) - 2001**

CMA vs Migration into CMA (2001)	Males	Females	Total	% Total
CMA (total Population)			7,040,582	
CMA (Migrant Population)	855,103	753,196	1,608,299	22.84
Migration into CMA (2001)	Males	Females	Total	% Total
Elsewhere in the District	138,235	124,844	263,079	16.35
Other Districts of Tamil Nadu	549,214	471,981	1,021,195	63.50
Other states	155,413	145,307	300,738	18.70
Outside India	25,360	22,360	23,287	1.45

Source: Transparent Chennai, April 2006

Migrants accounted for 23 per cent of the population of the Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) in 2001<sup>2</sup> - a total of 1.6 million people out of a total CMA population of 7 million. Of the migrant population, intra-district Tamil migrants accounted for 16% of all migrants; the figure for inter-district migrants is 64%. Census data from 2001 indicates that 19% per cent of migrants to the CMA migrated from other States. It is interesting to note that all respondents in the Chennai U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> were inter-state migrants. No intra-state migrants were recorded in the research; only three Tamil migrants were found amongst the 84 independent migrant respondents, residing in peri-urban settlements and villages (Table 6.5).

Over two thirds of all migrants to Chennai are from the three States: Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (32%) and Odisha (33%). West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar account for just under a third (29%). Disaggregating this information into independent and dependent migrants, (the latter group of transient migrant contract construction labour working in large-scale construction projects in Chennai), approximately half are from the southern coastal States of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha (48%), whilst Jharkhand (11%), West Bengal (12%) and Uttar Pradesh (12%) together account for just over a third of all migrants. Of note is that the proportion of independent migrants from these States is lower in comparative terms, thus suggesting the primacy of accessing employment via labour contractors.

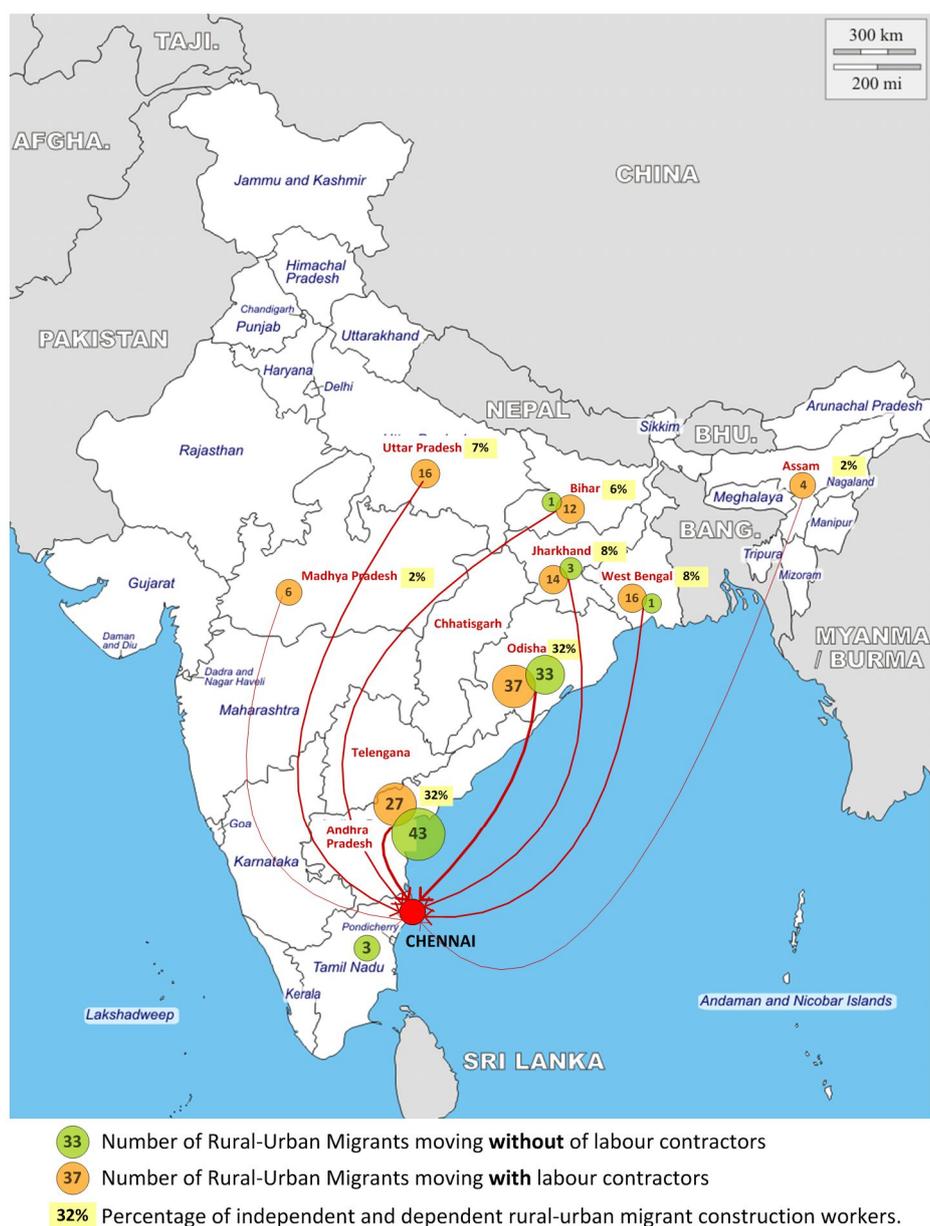
**TABLE 6.5 | State-wise Distribution of respondents by employment relationship and categories of residence, U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> Chennai, India**

State of Origin	Total N <sup>o</sup>		Independent migrants		Dependent migrants					
	1	2	Settlement and Villages		Labour Camps		CMRL Labour Camps		All Labour Camps	
			3	4	5	6	7	8	5+7	
Andhra Pradesh & Telangana*	70	32	43		27	29			27	20
Coastal Odisha	51	24	23		24	25	4	11	28	21
Western Odisha	19	9	10		7	7	2	5	9	7
Jharkhand	17	8	3		3	3	11	29	14	11
Bihar	13	6	1		4	4	8	21	12	9
West Bengal	17	8	1		10	11	6	16	16	12
Uttar Pradesh	16	7	-		12	13	4	11	16	12
Madhya Pradesh	6	3	-		6	6	-		6	5
Assam	4	2	-		1	1	3	8	4	3
Tamil Nadu	3	1	3		-		-		-	
Question Not Posed or Answered (QNPA)	1	-	-		1	1	-		1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Chennai Case Study

Note: \* only one respondent was from Telangana.

Figure 6.5 provides information about where the 216 migrant respondents originated. More than two thirds (64%) of independent and dependent migrant construction workers migrated from Tamil Nadu's adjoining States - Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Migrants from Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh combined were the next largest sending states (29%).



**FIGURE 6.5 | Places of origin of rural-urban migrant construction workers (independent and dependent)**

Source: Map <http://d-maps.com/m/asia/india/inde/inde17.gif>

It is worthy of note that as distance to the destination from the migrants' place of origin increases, the destination in this case being Chennai, the numbers of independent migrant construction workers decline: Jharkhand (3), West Bengal (1) and Bihar (1) comprised 5 per cent of the 84 migrant respondents who did not migrate through a labour contractor.

#### 6.2.2.4 Nepal, Kathmandu

In Nepal, 57 percent of all migration was within the country and 50 per cent of all migrants were between the ages of 15-29, with men accounting for three quarters of all migrants. Just over half of all migrants were married (55%) with the share of females who were married four per cent greater than the male migrant group. Of those who migrate internally, the share of rural to urban migration is 18 per cent (Sharma et al, 2014). The highest proportion of internal migrants originate from the Central Region (37%) followed by the Eastern (23%) and Western (21%) ones. The Mid-Western and Far-Western regions account for 10 per cent each (Sharma et al, 2014).

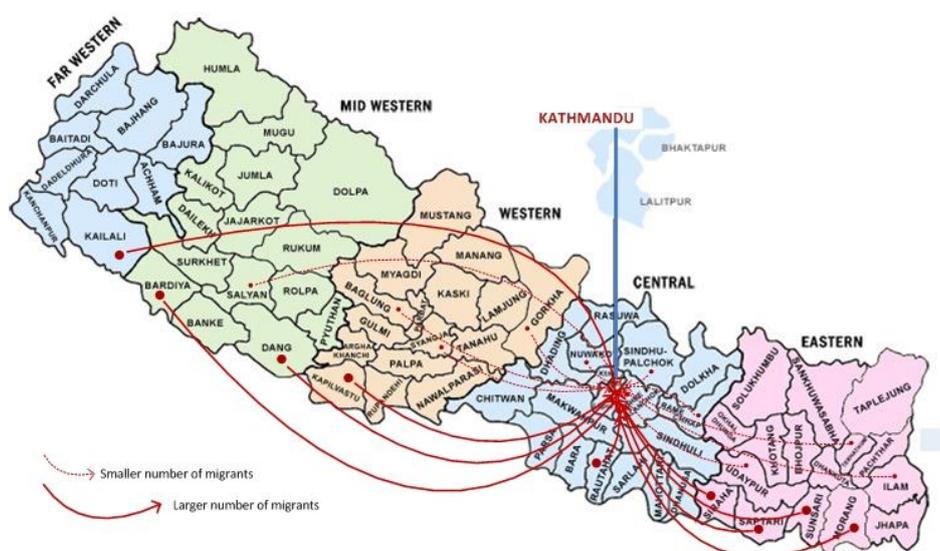
**TABLE 6.6** | *Distribution of transient migrant construction labour in Kathmandu by Region*

Development Region	N <sup>o</sup>	%
Eastern	27	40%
Central	17	25%
<b>Kathmandu</b>	7	10%
Mid-Western	9	13%
Western	7	10%
Far-Western	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Kathmandu case study

The Kathmandu U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> case study found that of the 82 respondents interviewed, 11 were from India (Bihar). The places of origin of the remaining 68 respondents (three did not provide information) are set out in Table 6.x. The proportions of migrants from the different development regions of Nepal is different from that found by Sharma et al (2014) – for instance, migrants from the Eastern Development Region at 40 per cent is higher than the 23 percent; the reverse is true of migrants from the Western Region. Once again, this links to the argument that this research makes, namely that Labour Force Surveys do not capture transient migrant contract construction labour, as they work and live on site. The Kathmandu U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> case study is unable to compare data about the migrants' place of origin with the study of 150 migrant construction workers in the same city by Adhikari and Deshingkar (2015), due to a lack of available information.

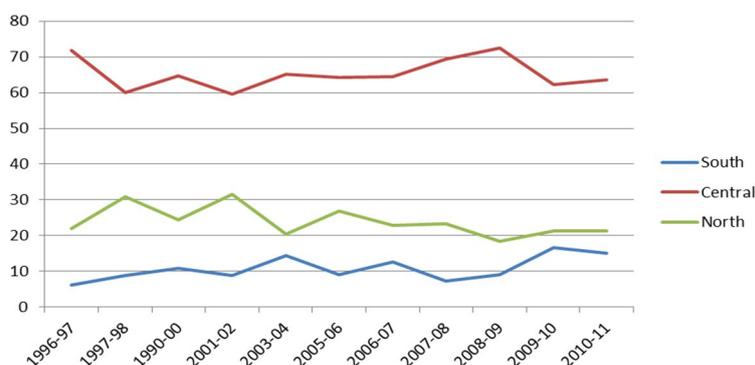
Figure 6.6 visually represents the districts from where migrants' originate in each of the five Development Regions to work in large-scale construction in Kathmandu. The small proportion of workers from the case study city (10%) is similar to the other countries, but a quarter of all migrants have moved within the central region and is not dissimilar to migration within the Punjab to Lahore in Pakistan, albeit a smaller proportion. Distance seems to constrain the propensity to migrate with the number of migrants declining the further the Development Regions are from Kathmandu.



**FIGURE 6.6** *Districts of origin of migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction in Nepal*  
Map: <http://lkamal.com.np/wp-content/uploads/map.gif>

### 6.2.2.5 Pakistan, Lahore

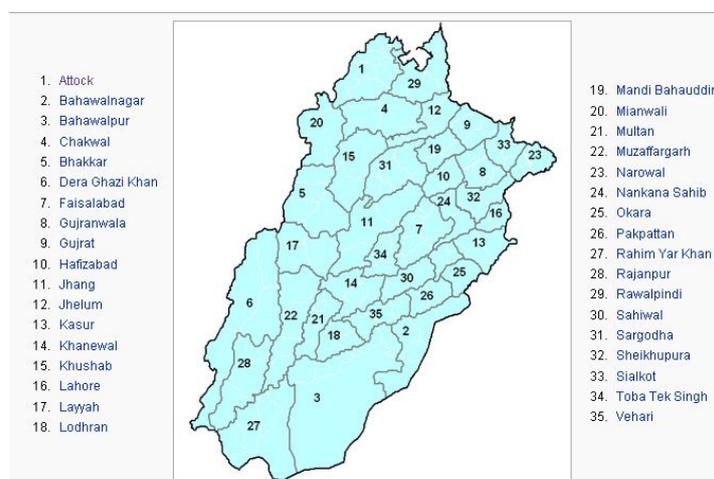
Based on calculations from various years of the Pakistan Labour Force Surveys (PLFS), Figure 6.7 charts the stock of migrants into Lahore disaggregated by their area of origin. In 1996-97, about 20 per cent of the migrant stock was from the North Punjab, 70 per cent from Central Punjab and less than 10 percent from South Punjab. Parts of South and North Punjab are among the poorest regions of Pakistan. Despite Lahore being the most prosperous city in the Punjab, it does not act as the preferred destination for migrants from the south and north of the province; some of the poorest regions in the country.



**FIGURE 6.7 | Migration flows into Lahore by regions of the Punjab**

Source: Rashid Memon’s own calculations from various years of the Pakistan Labour Force Surveys (PLFS)

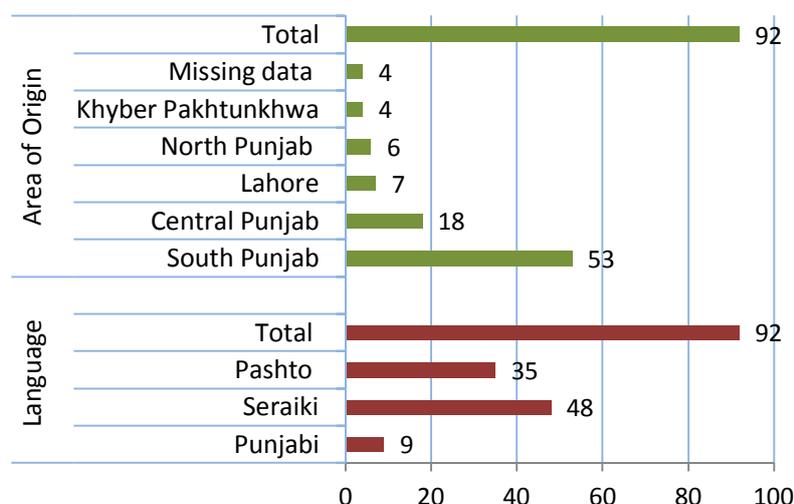
Over the 15 year period, the most popular destinations for those who migrate from South Punjab is Karachi (18%) followed by Rawalpindi (13%), Lahore (11 percent) and Peshawar (7%). In comparison, the popular destinations for migrants from North and Central Punjab are Lahore (14%), Rawalpindi (10%), Karachi (9%), Gujranwala (6%) and Peshawar (3%). Although distance is often taken into account when migration decisions are made – especially with reference to seasonal and circular migration – the data from the PLFS indicates that despite the proximity of Lahore to migrants from South Punjab, they are choosing the destinations of Karachi, Rawalpindi and Peshawar which are much further away. It may well be that kinship based networks in Lahore, with stronger connections to central Punjab, are a key determinant of who finds a livelihood in Lahore.



**FIGURE 6.8 | District Map of the Punjab, Pakistan**

Source: Nomi887 - Wikipedia en anglès, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6570531>

That said, of the 92 transient migrant contract construction workers interviewed in four large-scale construction projects in Lahore, 53 (58%) were from South Punjab. Migrant construction workers from North Punjab were a minority – just 6 (7%).



**FIGURE 6.9 | Area of Origin and Language in four large-scale construction projects, Lahore, Pakistan (number)**

*Source: Lahore case study*

Two observations are of significance here in light of the difference in places of origin, between respondents of this research and those captured by the PLFS. First, it seems apparent that the migration trends extracted from the PLFS are unable to fully capture the nuances on the ground. As noted earlier, the PLFS is conducted in the residences of workers and not in places where transient migrant contract construction labour work and live. This observation is reinforced by the fact that the PLFS records only 41 construction sector migrants into Lahore over a 20 year period. The five sites that were chosen for research in Lahore contained an estimated number of 1600 workers. Second, the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project has brought to light the migration flows of a marginalised group of invisible construction migrant workers from South Punjab. Moreover, the ‘place of origin’ finding from this research suggests that Lahore is much more open to migrants from South Punjab than the LFS suggests. It is also interesting to note that the economic ‘marginalization’ of south Punjabi migrants does not appear to reflect social marginalization.

### 6.3 ETHNICITY, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

As noted in Chapter 5, since migration decisions and jobs are acquired most often through networks, many workers were connected in some way to the labour market, prior to finding their jobs. This connection could be a personal kinship or village level connection, or a geographical connection – someone they knew from the same village or sub-district. Generally speaking, ethnic and kinship ties not only facilitate information sharing about available jobs, but they can also sometimes help access credit, a key livelihood strategy, as average incomes do not meet the average cost of expenditures for basic needs (Beall and Schütte, 2006).

Although information on social grouping (caste) and (or) ethnicity was collected, the circumstances under which the interviews were conducted (see Chapter 3) meant that it was not possible to investigate this aspect in any depth. That said, some U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> partners came across

respondents from certain social groupings or ethnicity that was expected. Moreover, the workers interviewed for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> project came from diverse geographic areas and ethnic groups which sometimes also had an impact on how workers grouped and lived together

The religion and ethnicity of respondents in Kabul is presented in Table 6.x and Figure 6.10. Many of the Shiite-Hazara respondents had migrated from central Afghanistan to Kabul, then onto Iran and back to Kabul. Since the Qasaba residential project had a number of labour contractors, migrants were from different ethnic groups: Uzbek from Mazar-e-Sharif, Tajiks from Logar and Pashtuns from Paktia and Nangarhar.

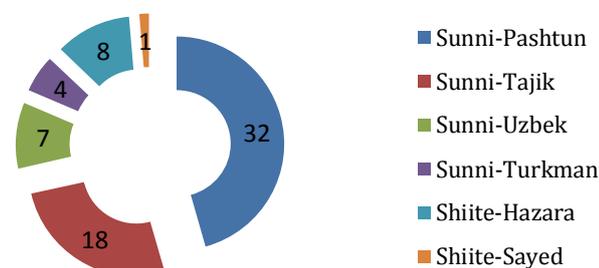
**TABLE 6.7 | Distribution of respondents by ethnicity and religious sect, Kabul, Afghanistan**

Ethnicity and Religious Sect	Number	Percentage
Sunni-Pashtun	32	46
Sunni-Tajik	18	26
Sunni-Uzbek	7	10
Sunni-Turkman	4	6
Shiite-Hazara	8	11
Shiite-Sayed	1	1
Total	70	100

Source: Kabul city study

The largest group consisted of Pashtuns and Tajiks from the neighbouring province of Logar where insecurity resulting from the conflict has influenced migration to Kabul. Uzbeks reported that they had migrated due to unemployment. The Pashtuns from Paktia and Nangarhar has experience of migrating to Pakistan.

Workers in the Qasaba construction site in Kabul lived in groups that included people from the same ethnic group or province. The Lagar group mostly included people who were from the same tribe and province. Most have a history of immigration to Iran, and even to the same province in Iran. Almost all workers in one site were Shiite and from the same tribe as the builder. Second and third generation Hazara labourers found in another site also had a history of migration from the central provinces to Iran, and opted to live in Kabul with their families. A great number of the labourers in the construction sites were either second or third generation migrants to Kabul — often offering a complex answer to the question of their place of origin.



**FIGURE 6.10 | Distribution of migrant construction workers, Kabul, Afghanistan (Frequency)**

Source: Kabul city study

According to the Indian census of 2011 (Gol, 2011), Muslims comprise 14.2 per cent of the population. However, only 12 of the 217 respondents in the Chennai U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> study (6%) were Muslim.

Hindus formed the vast majority (85%) and there was only one Christian respondent. This finding does not support the findings of Vaid (1999) and Anand (2000) who state “recent surveys of construction workers in a number of Indian cities have revealed that they are ... from the lower castes and the Muslim community” (cited in ILO, 2001: 10).

**Table 6.8 | Distribution of respondents by social stratification, Chennai, India**

Social Stratification	Number	Percentage*
Forward Caste	4	2
Backward Caste (BC)	82	49
Other Backward Caste (OBC)	16	10
Scheduled Caste (SC)	38	23
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	27	16
Total	167	100
QNPA	50	

Source: Chennai study partner

Notes: Percentages are given for respondents who answered (total 167); QNPA: Question not posed/not answered.

Table 6.7 presents the social stratification data from the Chennai U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> study. An interesting finding is the presence of ‘forward’ castes (2%), albeit a tiny proportion; 3 of the four respondents had land at their places of origin. Over half the respondents (69%) were from the ‘Backward Castes’.

Other studies on internal migration in India found that Dalits, tribal and lower castes, form the vast majority of workers, who migrate to cities to find work in the construction industry, particularly in time of drought and poor harvest. According to the NSS 2007-08 migration survey: (i) 81 per cent of short duration out-migrants were from the ‘Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC)’; (ii) in excess of two-thirds migrate from rural to urban areas for employment; and (ii) 52 per cent are in the two lowest consumption quintiles (Srivastava, 2011). The rapidly growing construction industry in India has emerged as the main employer of these migrants.

However, in the Chennai U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> study, a sizeable proportion, SC, ST and OBC accounted for just under half (49%) of all respondents who answered the question on social strata. There was also a surprisingly higher incidence of small and marginal farmers migrating for work. Sixty per cent of respondents were landed, the distribution amongst the main socially stratified groups being: BC (48%), OBC (20%), SC (20%) and ST (19%). This is indicative of the growing levels of impoverishment among communities in the hinterland, faced with enclosure in relation to various fronts, chief among them - the loss of livelihoods and access to the commons, besides anthropogenic climate change.

**Table 6.9 | Social Groups of 150 construction migrants in Kathmandu, Nepal**

Social Group	Total	%
Brahmin	11	7.3
Chhetri	14	9.3
Dalit	5	3.3
Janajati	74	49.3
Madhesi	45	30.0
Indian	1	0.7
Total	150	

Source: adapted from Adhikari and Deshingkar 2015.

Note: Chhetri is a Hill caste

In sum, the high incidence of ‘Backward Castes’ and the ‘landed’, as well as the proportion of the landed among ‘Scheduled Castes’ and ‘Scheduled Tribes’ is both significant and new.

In Nepal, a study of 150 migrant construction workers in Kathmandu found that “more than 80 per cent of the workers in the sample were from the poorest and most socially excluded groups – the Janajati (49 per cent), Madhesi Dalits (30 per cent) and Dalit castes” (Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015: 17). The distribution of these workers by social group is in Table 6.9.

It is very difficult to compare data from Adhikari and Deshingkar (2015) study with that from the Kathmandu U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research, because of the manner in which respondents reported the social strata they belonged to. The following observation can assist with placing these social groups in relation to wealth, poverty and deprivation.

“On the whole, the Tarai Brahmins and Chhetris are the wealthiest, as they have the lowest incidence of poverty. The poverty incidence among the Hill Dalits, Tarai Dalits, Hill Janajati and the Muslims is significantly higher than the national average. Almost half of Hill Dalits (48 per cent) are below the poverty line ... There are also class dynamics within all ethnic and caste groups. Some Janajati groups like Newars and Thakalis are very advanced, while many others are disadvantaged. Similarly, some members of higher castes like Brahmins and Chhetris are also poorer, but usually these groups are well off” (Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015: 18).

**Table 6.10| Social Groups distributed among the 63 responses in the Kathmandu U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> study**

Social Group	Total	%
Brahmin	1	2
Brahmin/Kshatriya	10	16
Kshatriya	3	5
Kshatriya/Magar	3	5
Newar	2	3
Newar/Brahmin	3	5
Sanyasi	2	3
Tarai Caste	3	5
Hill Janajati	13	21
Tarai Janajati	23	37
Total	63	

Source: Kathmandu research partner

In Table 6.10, 58 per cent of respondents were from the Hill or Tarai Janajati caste, whilst Brahmins/Kshatriyas made up almost a fifth (18%). No Dalits were found among the respondents. Once again, the period of time over which assurances of work are offered by large-scale urban construction projects may attract social groups, not only with the need to cope, but also others with accumulation aspirations.

In Pakistan, a broad classification of caste hierarchy is: Syed (descendants’ of the prophet), followed by Rajput, Jat (warrior and agricultural castes) and finally Arain (cultivating caste).<sup>3</sup> Three interesting findings emerge (Table 6.11). Firstly, four out of ten construction workers (42%) of the 92 respondents in the Lahore U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> case study were from the Rajput, Arain and Jat higher castes (Table 6.7); and 6 of the 15 were *mazdoors* (unskilled workers). These castes are defined as agricultural castes by the Land Alienation Act (1901) and are therefore generally associated with owning and cultivating land. Equally interesting was that there was only one recorded instance of a respondent from a lower caste, for example, Rehmani (coded as ‘other’). The low representation of Pashtuns was also unexpected.

**Table 6.11** | *Distribution of transient migrant contract construction workers by caste, Lahore, Pakistan*

Caste	Number	Percent
Syed	4	4
Rajput	12	13
Jat	17	18
Arain	9	10
Baluch	7	8
Pashtun	7	8
Others	27	29
Missing data	9	10
Total	92	100

*Source: Lahore case study*

If one were to describe a ‘typical’ transient migrant contract construction worker in large-scale construction in Lahore, it would be “a young, recently-wed, Punjabi or Seraiki man, probably from South Punjab”.<sup>4</sup> The three languages (%) spoken by the 92 respondents in the four sites studied, reinforces the earlier observation about the limited opportunities that Lahore provides migrants from the Punjab (Figure 6.9).

Thirty per cent of the workers interviewed were either from the Muzaffargarh district or the neighbouring district of Layyah - two of the poorest districts in Pakistan. Most workers had travelled extensively and worked in many districts in Pakistan, across the four provinces. For example, a mason, who came from a family of construction workers, had worked in several districts across the Punjab - Kasur, Lahore, Gujranwala and Multan - since he began work a decade ago. However, his story was unusual. He was amongst the less travelled workers. Another worker had not only travelled in Punjab, but also in Sindh and Gwadar in Baluchistan; the latter a very volatile environment. His last job, before he came to Lahore, had been in Gharo, Sindh, where his cousin was a petty-contractor. Indeed, when workers were asked where they had travelled to work, several replied “all over Pakistan”. Travelling to Quetta in Baluchistan was more common than going to Gwadar. With migrant contract construction workers travelling around a large part of the country for work, the term ‘transient’ migrant is a fitting one.

## 6.4 AGE, EDUCATION AND MARITAL STATUS OF TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS.

### 6.4.1 Age

Apart from gender (male dominance), clustering according to age was another common feature amongst migrant workers across the five south Asian cities.

**TABLE 6.12** | Percentage of total population by broad age group, 'both sexes' (per 100 total population)

Country	Broad Age Group in %				
	15-24	25-49	15-49	15-59	65+
<b>Afghanistan</b>	21.2	26.3	47.4	52.0	2.5
<b>Bangladesh</b>	19.5	36.5	55.9	63.6	5.0
<b>India</b>	18.4	35.1	53.5	62.3	5.6
<b>Nepal</b>	20.9	30.7	51.6	58.7	5.5
<b>Pakistan</b>	19.9	31.8	51.7	58.4	4.5

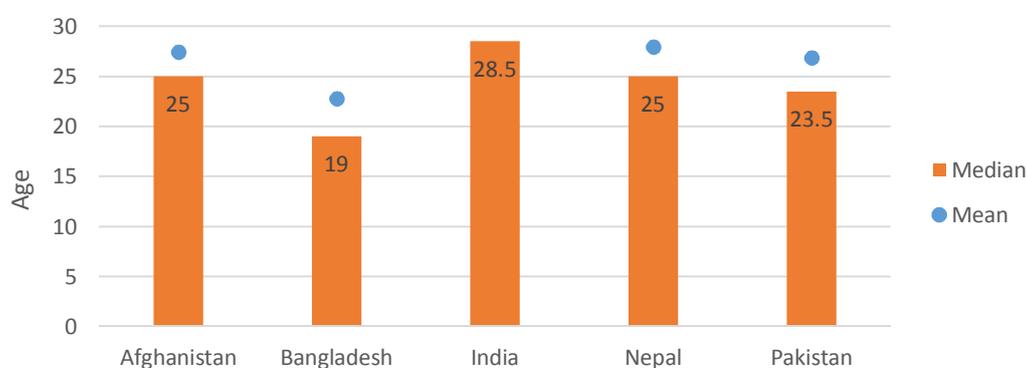
Source: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery/>

**TABLE 6.13:** Percentage of 'male' population by broad age group (per 100 male total population)

Country	Broad Age Group in %				
	15-24	25-49	15-49	15-59	65+
<b>Afghanistan</b>	21.2	26.8	48.0	52.5	2.2
<b>Bangladesh</b>	19.6	35.8	55.4	63.2	5.0
<b>India</b>	18.7	35.1	53.8	62.4	5.1
<b>Nepal</b>	21.2	28.6	49.8	57.1	5.3
<b>Pakistan</b>	20.0	31.5	51.5	58.1	4.5

Source: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery/>

It is estimated that all five countries have a young demographic base for the population as a whole (Table 6.1); this does not differ much by sex for the male population (Table 6.2).<sup>5</sup>



**FIGURE 6.11** | Median and mean age of Construction workers

Source: Empirical data from the five cities

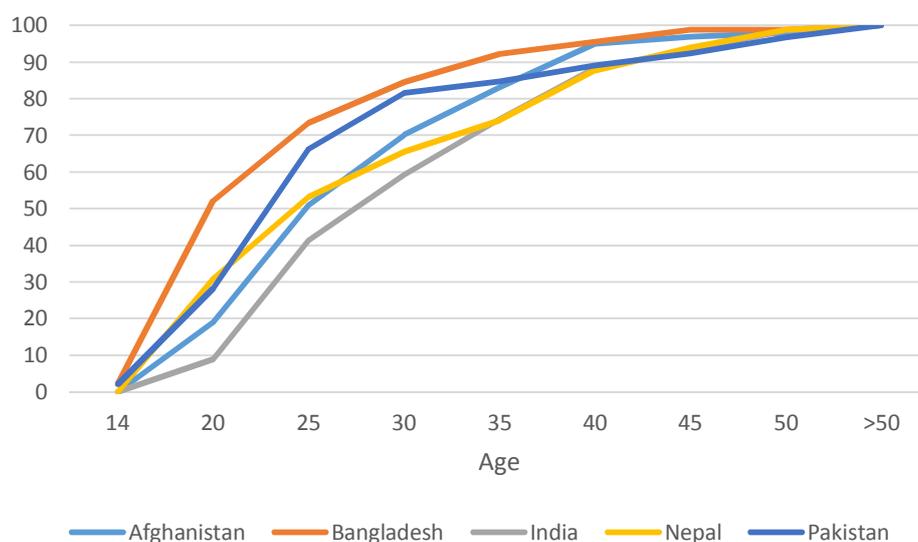
It is not surprising that in the five cities in south Asia approximately half the migrant construction workers were between 20 and 29 years of age (Figure 6.12). In Bangladesh, just under half (47%) were between 18-25 years old, and in Lahore and Kathmandu the average age of a construction worker was 27 and 27.9 percent respectively; similar to Chennai, where the average age was 27 years.

In all countries, the percentage of labourers decreases steadily as age increases. In Nepal, age and skills were positively correlated, as were wages. The older the worker, the more highly skilled and better paid they were.

Despite labour laws prohibiting the use of child labour, our Dhaka and Chennai research teams found child labourers. While researchers in the other country teams did not witness children working, it is widely known that in industries associated with the construction sector — such as brick kilns — child labourers are used.

In Dhaka, the highest number of migratory movements took place in the youngest age group (i.e., between 14 and 25 years of age) – a fact that related directly to their desire to study at some point in time. For example, one young respondent who was studying whilst working had been inspired by his exposure to Dhaka University. His labour shed was located on the Dhaka University campus and the experience of the higher education environment and students had motivated him to study further.

*[the] ... “campus environment of Dhaka University is good, that has attracted me. So, I have started thinking about my dream for admission in this university. Before coming to this area I did not have dream for admission in Dhaka University. I want to live in Dhaka for my education. After finishing my education, I will live in Dhaka for life style and other facilities.” (Male respondent, Dhaka)*



**FIGURE 6.12 | Median and mean age of Construction workers**

*Note: In this figure, the slope of each line indicates the cumulative age distribution (steepest slopes indicate youngest workers, e.g. Bangladesh)*

*Source: Empirical data from the five cities*

Some construction workers had come to work in Dhaka specifically to save money in order to continue their education, a dream tied into their notions of ‘proper citizenship’ and ‘modernity’,

*“If I continue my study I will be a university student. I want to save money for my future study. That is why I want to work for one more year. I want to study and want to be a first class citizen of this country. If it is possible, then life will be the more enjoyable.” (Male respondent, Dhaka)*

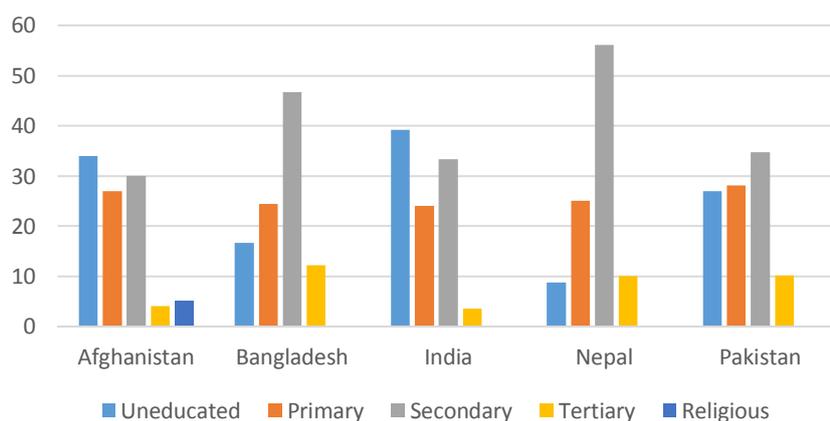
Aspirations of educating their children were also cited by middle-aged married labourers, as their motivation for working in the construction sector, in Dhaka. For instance, one 42 year-old worker with a 15-year old son reported his determination to stay in construction, despite physical difficulties, in order to cover his son's education, for the next five to six years. For some, an exposure to successful public women in Dhaka had changed their views of women in education. They now wanted a different future for their daughters; they no longer aspired for them to be housewives but instead hoped they would become educated working women. As a 36-year old foreman, who had started working at the age of 16 in construction, explained:

*My first wish is to make my children educated. I want to ensure their higher studies. And hopefully someday they will be able to get a honourable job in this society and live with their own dignity. I never thought like this before coming to Dhaka. But I can see, women are working here like men and they are working with dignity. They are earning money and also getting respect from people. Some days, when my daughters will be highly educated and get a honourable job, on that day I will consider myself successful (male foreman, aged 36, Dhaka).*

In Kathmandu, workers with families considered that one of the greatest benefits of their work has been, that since they are able to send remittances, they are now able to better educate their children 'back home', thereby improving their future prospects. Although most of the respondents were educated only up to secondary school level themselves, they valued the importance of education and wanted their children to achieve much more than they had been able to. Whilst almost all respondents stated that they would want their children to become doctors or engineers, they were also concerned at the same time about whether they would be able to afford the expenses required, for them to be able to attain such degrees.

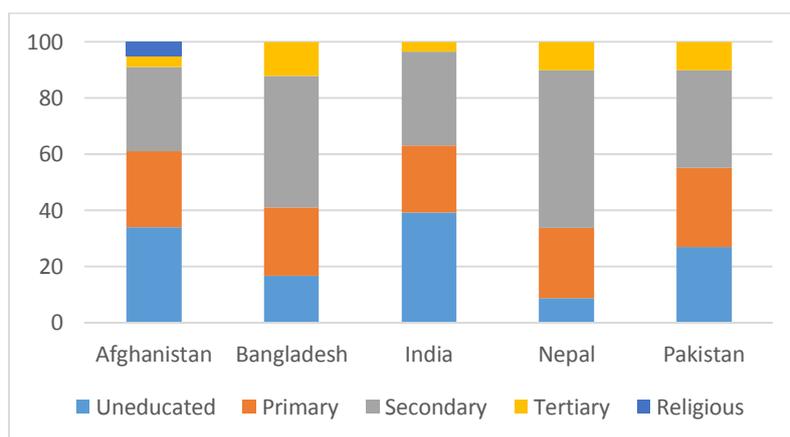
### 6.4.2 Education

Education levels were not as generally low across the board as one would expect, but varied by city, skill level and age. The spectrum of workers' education levels within cities and across sites, ranged from those who were not formally educated, labelled as uneducated on the graph, to those who had completed professional degrees (Figures 6.13 and 6.14).



**FIGURE 6.13** | Compositional share of migrant workers by educational attainment (%)

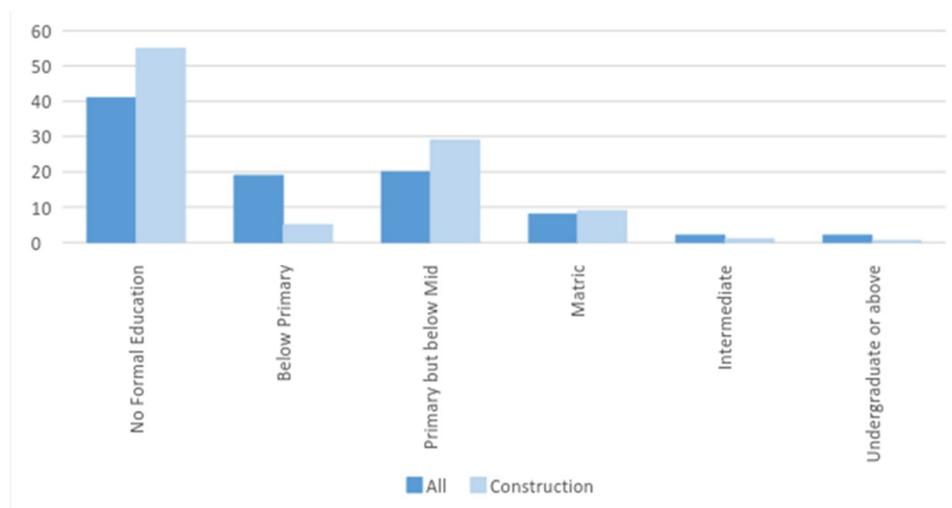
Source: Empirical data from the five cities



**FIGURE 6.14** | *Compositional share of migrant workers by educational attainment (stacked %)*

Source: Empirical data from the five cities

In Pakistan, while half (50%) the workers (in the Labour Force Survey) were ‘uneducated’, a good number had had a few years of education and while uneducated people are over-represented in construction, so too are those with more than 5 years but less than 10 years of education (see Figure 6.15).



**FIGURE 6.15** | *Compositional share of migrant workers by educational attainment (stacked %)*

Source: Calculations by Rashid Memon, PI Lahore, using different years of the LFS. The 15-65 age bracket is the standard in the labour economics literature

Of the twenty-two masons in the survey, the average years of educational attainment were three. This is consistent with the fact that pockets within South Punjab constitute some of the poorest and most uneducated population groups. It is important that the intra-provincial nuances of migration are made explicit in any analysis of internal migration patterns; lumping people together either into the ‘Punjab’ or a larger ‘Punjab/Sindh/Baluchistan’ category is not a particularly robust method.

Amongst the respondents from Lahore, three different attitudes to education, by those with children, were found. Some considered that education was too uncertain; even if one did complete high school, it would still prove difficult to find a steady job, unless they knew someone in the right place. While they had contacts with workers and petty contractors, they did not always have contact with a person who could place their children in a steady job. Others appeared more confident that if they could work and put a sibling through school, it would eventually payoff. Finally, there was a third

group who did not think very highly of formal schooling in the first place. For them, religious education was sufficient.

Despite construction being one of Pakistan's fastest growing industries,<sup>6</sup> the country provides one of the cheapest construction labour forces in the region, with a mean wage of Rs. 7000 per month in 2011 (£45.12, €61.02), as opposed to Rs. 11,000 (£70.90, €95.89) outside of construction.

An important finding of this research, perhaps indicative of increasing urbanization coupled with unemployment and underemployment in key sectors, is that within the construction industry, there are sizable numbers of literate workers. Chennai (India) had the largest number of uneducated workers, followed by Kabul (Afghanistan), Lahore (Pakistan), Dhaka (Bangladesh) and Kathmandu (Nepal). Given that construction employs a significant proportion of unskilled workers, Figure 6.12 indicates that those with primary and perhaps secondary education may be working as unskilled workers. In Nepal, for instance, many respondents who have been classified as working in low-skilled jobs had several years of formal education, with the average years of schooling among the sampled workers being 5.35 years. In all of the five cities, labourers indicated an interest in exploring other work opportunities, especially ones where the tasks were not physical but required putting to use their basic education. In other instances, we found under age workers, whose stories of educational attainment lie at the intersection of two structural forces - gendered responsibilities and environmentally induced poverty,

*"I was good in school and I really wanted to study beyond the eighth grade. But when we lost our land to the floods, I knew I had to help my parents and family, so here I am. (Male respondent, Dhaka)*

A construction worker who had been in Dhaka for 9 years also regretted having to withdraw from school

*"I came from a pious Muslim family of Chakpara village under Durgapur police station, Netrokona. My grandfather had spent 21 years in Saudi Arabia as a migrant labourer. After coming back from Saudi Arabia, he joined as a principal in a local Madrasa (Muslim religious school). My father was also a hafez<sup>7</sup> and worked as a teacher in the same Madrasa. I also started my student life in Madrasa and studied up to class eight. Afterwards, I quit my studies which was, now I feel, the greatest mistake in my life. If I would continue my study, today I could join as a teacher in Madrasa like my younger brother"(Male respondent, Dhaka).*

In Nepal, some reasons quoted for dropping out of school included: financial difficulties, having to walk to school for hours and finally losing interest. For example, when asked about her education, a nineteen year old woman from Sindhuli District responded that she did not continue her education after class 9, because her family could not afford it and she would have to walk 2 hours per day to reach the school. There was also the case of a 16-year-old male who stated that he 'did not want to study.' A few respondents, however, were working to prepare for school examinations. For instance, one of the 16-year-old workers interviewed said that he "will work for two months and then go back home to sit his School Leaving Certificate exam"- a central board examination taken at the end of Grade 10. This is considered to be an important exam that enables transition into high school. Completing SLC is considered an accomplishment due to high dropout rates and poor pass rates. In 2013, only 43.9% passed the SLC exam, out of which 49.4 % were boys and 38.3% were girls<sup>8</sup>.

## 6.5 GENDER AND TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR

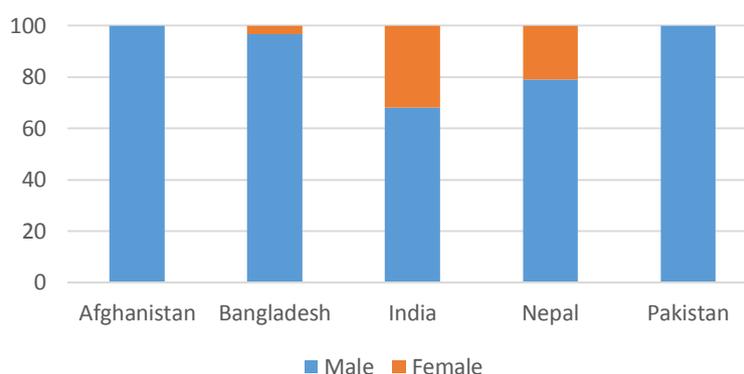
The construction labour market in all five South Asian countries was male dominated (Table 6.15). Afghanistan and Pakistan were the most extreme, with no female workers found at all, and only three

found in the Dhaka case study, pointing towards the highly gendered (masculine) nature of the sector (Figure 6.15).

**TABLE 6.14** | *Distribution of respondents by sex*

CITY	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Kabul	100	100	0	0
Dhaka	87	96.7	3	3.3
Chennai	148	68.2	69	31.8
Kathmandu	64	79	17	21.0
Lahore	92	100	0	0

Source: City research partners



**FIGURE 6.16** | *Compositional share of migrant construction workers by sex*

Source: Empirical data from the five cities

Women constituted 38% of the workers interviewed in India and 21% in Nepal (Figure 6.16).<sup>9</sup> While women were more visible in India than in Nepal,<sup>10</sup> they were predominantly family (rather than individual) migrants.

### 6.5.1.1 Cultural attitudes and gender

Of course, gender is not just a matter of the sex of those employed in the construction sector, but also very much about what it reflects about wider society, including the kinds of attitudes about what constitutes ‘appropriate’ male and female work, according to workers, contractors and employers.

*A study was conducted on the career progress of 440 men construction workers and 440 women construction workers and 51 building contractors to find out the reasons why women in the construction sector were not able to acquire skills for masonry work and how they could be trained to become masons. The findings of the study show that there is an inherent gender bias against women and also the shared general belief that women construction workers are unfit to be trained informally like men in the construction sector even though they have the necessary skills, capability and desire to become masons. Though the contractors are willing to accept women as masons by giving them training and placement in the construction sector, it has been found, the social forces that have perpetuated the concept of women as inferior workers are inimical to any such move (Barnabas, Joseph and Clifford, 2009: 121).*

The comments below from construction workers who were interviewed for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> reflect and reinforce the attitudes underlying why women are not considered suitable for semi-skilled and skilled construction work.

*“This is difficult work. A welder has to face unbearable heat. Sure, women spend a lot of time in the kitchen, but this heat is different” (Welder, Lahore).*

*“We are Seraikis; we don’t let our women work. How would you feel if you were sitting at home and your wife or sister were earning and feeding you” (Mason, Lahore).*

*... “the female labourers are not physically fit for this kind of hard work because construction work is considered as a risky and backbreaking job, where women are not competent” (Dhaka respondent).*

In the city of Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat, India, Baruah (2010: 41) found that, despite “efforts in training and advocacy, women construction workers face challenges on many fronts: ridicule from family and friends, pervasive gender discriminatory practices within the construction industry, and their own diffident attitudes and lack of confidence”. Furthermore, in a study of two construction sites in New Delhi, India, where women worked and lived with their family in labour camps, Dalmia (2012: 255) notes that as a result of being “thrice dependent (on contractor, *thekedar* and male-relatives) women become liminal citizens”. One reason for this comment is that women, even in the same construction site, reported different earnings because they were not paid directly, rather they were paid via their male partners. Wage musters thus only contained information on payment made to men and not women. Moreover, in Chennai, the women themselves seemed to have been socialised into undervaluing the work that they did in the construction sites.

*“The wages of female workers – unskilled helpers – are among the lowest paid to migrant construction workers and reflect the low level of the work she does. Not surprisingly, this problematic rating of the contribution of female helpers to construction work is seen to be fair and appropriate by the workers themselves, both male and female. The women interviewed also seemed to rationalise their low wages by comparing the quantum of work done by them and not with what the men did (Chennai case study, emphasis in italics added).*

It is well known that although tasks that are allocated to female construction workers are manual in nature, these tasks are not that different to the ones unskilled male workers undertake. Thus, even when female construction workers in large-scale urban projects in Chennai were asked whether work on a construction site would be possible, if the work that females did like: carrying bricks, concrete and water; sieving sand; crushing stone or bricks aggregates; clearing debris; and curing cement work such as concrete, are not done in a ceaseless manner by women, they still saw their work as being less arduous than that of their male counterparts.

On all sites where women were active, they were paid less than men, even if they performed the same kind of unskilled ‘helper’ type work. In addition, the Chennai study found that more often than not, the female helpers’ wages were below the statutory minimum wage. Therefore, the deeply held belief that women (a view also held by many women themselves, as the quote from the Chennai case study above illustrates) are less capable or unable to work long hours, and this justifies unequal access to work or training, as well as discriminatory pay. Unskilled female workers work as hard as men and ceaselessly. It is a sad reflection of society at large that despite being more than half of the unskilled helper category (57%) and a quarter (25%) of the 217 workers interviewed, being a helper is the category they enter, and one in which they remain. The fact that very few studies<sup>11</sup> have either located women or focused on their participation in the construction sector, has led to a serious lacunae in understanding their gendered risks and vulnerabilities as well as their opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

### 6.5.1.2 Masculinities, mobility and responsibility

In the Lahore case study, gender was raised in another context. Some men expressed not wanting to settle down in the city because they felt it was too ‘liberal’, with liberal referring primarily to the relatively free movement of boldly or immodestly attired women. As one worker commented about

women workers, “some work to make ends meet and some work to just show themselves off”. It was the public presence of women (‘showing off’) that he found disconcerting. Another interviewee said that since the village is arranged around kinsmen, the entire village is private space - even the farm, whereas in a city, women who are outside their home are no longer in the ‘private village’ but in the ‘public city’ and, he argued, it is not their ‘place’ to be there. This is significant, not only in relation to the cultural narratives that continue to have real effects on women’s movements, and the separation of the ‘rural’ and the ‘urban’ along these gendered geographic imaginaries of appropriate private and public spaces, but also because it points towards an important reason as to why these migrant men are, in the long run, unlikely to want to settle in Lahore. This, in one sense, is where gender intersects with mobility patterns and migrant trajectories. They can continue to be mobile inasmuch the female members of the workers’ families remain within the conservative environment of their village. Gendered beliefs and practices impact on mobility patterns of migration, as can be seen from the Lahore case study.

Construction, importantly, also needs to be understood as a domain where masculinities are played out, represented and reproduced in a number of different ways<sup>13</sup>, both through everyday practices, as well as through the motivations and aspirations that entangle individuals in this line of work.

*“I cannot express in words how I feel [about] my village. I think my village is the most beautiful and pleasant place in Bangladesh. I left my loving family, relatives and friends. I have some responsibilities. I need [a] huge amount of money to support my family and to arrange marriage for my sister. So, I have to help my father. I always miss my family. I want to go back to my village very soon.”* (18 year-old, Dhaka respondent).

Both the weight and pressures felt by men in relation to their gendered responsibilities to their families in particular, and over a sense of pride in ‘making it’, were evident in a number of different testimonials in the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research study. Recall the other Dhaka worker from Chapter 5.

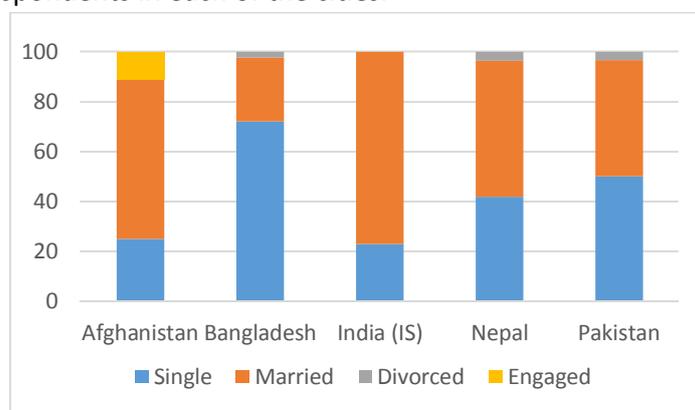
*“My mother is almost 70 years old and often remains sick. So, I need to spend money for her medicine also. I also need to save some amounts for the marriage of my daughter. I also have some of my lands mortgaged; I need money to get those back”* (Male respondent, Dhaka).

Unsurprisingly, in the most conservative country in the study, Afghanistan, more than half the respondents were married and another 11% engaged. There, the question of marriage, unlike other societies, was less tied to economic wellbeing and more a function of extended family dynamics, coupled with societal pressures and expectations. Marriage takes place at an early/young age (reflecting the profile of the workers) and while the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research study did not gather data specific to the correlation between marriage and move to urban areas for job opportunities, the researchers noted that pursuit of work - in skilled or unskilled jobs - became a more pressing priority for non-urban men, once the family had arranged his marriage, due to the associated needs and costs. The data generated by this question is therefore indicative of broader societal trends. The rate of married workers in Pakistan also exceeded 50%, but more often than not, they did not have children. Given an average family size of 10 and an average dependency ratio of 5 (i.e., 5 non-working persons to 1 employed person) this would suggest that these workers are part of the joint family system’s support network. On the other hand, most of the men working as construction labourers in Nepal were the primary and the sole breadwinners for their families. In a patriarchal society like Nepal, it was thus accepted and also widely prevalent that while the men would be responsible for income generation, wives would be at home engaged in agricultural work, household chores and managing the household. Of the few women who were engaged in construction work, they were there initially as wives of their male workers and eventually took up work as construction labourers. In Nepal or India, where a significant proportion of women are engaged in construction, no single women were found.<sup>14</sup> In India

77 per cent of the respondents were married and of these, 93 per cent had children. Eighty per cent of those who were married had migrated with their families; however and interestingly, just over half of those with children had brought them with them. Family migrants in Chennai are predominantly from the coastal states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha (78%). Although the proportion of migrant families are roughly evenly distributed between the independent migrants living in settlements (55%) and contract migrants in labour camps (45%), it is not surprising, given the living conditions in the labour camps, that only 50 per cent chose to bring their children with them, as against 80 per cent residing in settlements. This demonstrates the poverty of separation that families with children have to face in addition to low wages and poor living conditions.

### 6.5.2 Marriage

Marriage is not just a cultural maxim for migrant workers; it is a factor that impacts on migration patterns and flows, as well as influencing future pathways. Figure 6.17 provides information on the marital status of the respondents in each of the cities.



**FIGURE 6.17 | Marital status of migrant construction workers in the five cities (%)**  
Source: Empirical data from the five cities

In rural Bangladesh for example, where dowry is common practice, some workers migrated in order to secure enough money for the marriage of their siblings, entrapping them in a cycle of poverty.

*“In my village, culturally we have dowry system, when a girl is getting married; her father needs to spend a huge amount of money for that. We had to give all the furniture for her new home, 1 cycle, watch, and dress for the bridegroom, ornaments of my sister and also organized a feast for 300 people for the wedding. We have sold 1 bighas of land for that. Before that, our financial status was good” (Male respondent, Dhaka)*

A brother who felt responsible for his sister’s marriage and saved money from his construction work for this purpose was planning his return to agriculture to maximise his efforts

*“I will start working again in agriculture. I will try to grow more crops as I need to save money for the marriage of my younger sister. This is my responsibility as an elder brother” (Respondent, Dhaka).*

The underlying gendered, class and ethnic rules and expectations of strict marriage norms are also a push factor in young men’s’ decisions to migrate. This is illustrated in the following case, where a young male worker eloped and married his school friend, without the permission, or indeed the blessing of his family

*“I got engaged in an emotional-romantic relationship with a girl. She was my classmate in the school. But when our family came to know about our relationship, they did not accept [it]. So, one night both of us eloped from our house and came to the city” (Male respondent, Dhaka).*

Tables 6.15 and 6.16 present information on the marital status of transient migrant contract construction workers in each of the five cities by number of respondents and percentages respectively.

**TABLE 6.15 | Marital status of migrant construction workers (number)**

Country	Marital Status (Number)			
	Single	Married	Divorced	Engaged
Kabul	25	64	0	11
Dhaka	65	23	2	0
Chennai (IS)	50	166	0	0
Kathmandu	34	44	3	0
Lahore	46	43	3	0

Source: Country Case Studies

Only a quarter of respondents in Kabul and Chennai were single (Table 6.13). Given that women were not found on construction sites in Kabul, two thirds of migrant construction workers are away from their families. Most of the one quarter of construction migrants in Dhaka (26%) and half of those in Kathmandu (54%) and Lahore (47%) are away from their families - only a few families were present in Dhaka and Kathmandu - but they are pale in comparison to the large proportion of migrants with their families in Chennai.

**TABLE 6.16 | Marital status of migrant construction workers (%)**

City	Marital Status (%)			
	Single	Married	Divorced	Engaged
Kabul	25	64	0	11
Dhaka	72	26	2	0
Chennai (IS)	23	77	0	0
Kathmandu	42	54	4	0
Lahore	50	47	3	0

Source: Country Case Studies

It is worth noting that in Lahore, the only similarity between the Seraiki and Punjabi workers was age - other than that - they differed in a number of ways. The Seraiki worker is married at an earlier age, comes from a larger family with a higher dependency ratio, is less able to read or write and is less educated than his Punjabi counterpart (Table 6.17).

**TABLE 6.17 | Selected variables including marriage across ethnicity**

Variable	Seraiki	Punjabi
Age (mean years)	26.8	26.4
Never married (%)	35.5%	41.0%
Average Household size	6.8	8.4
Dependency ratio	8.0	6.0
Able to read (%)	27%	44%
Able to write (%)	20%	39%
Completed years of education (mean years)	5.0	6.8

Source: Pakistan research partner

Of the 166 married construction workers interviewed in Chennai, 127 (77%) were in Chennai with their families. Seventy two percent of the married families were from the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, though they constituted only 56 per cent of the total respondents and 61 per cent of the married respondents, clearly indicating that the family were compelled to migrate as a

unit. Half of the 38 respondents in the Chennai Metro Rail infrastructure project were married; they have migrated alone as the CRML camps do not accommodate women or children.

Seventy of the 131 migrants with children have brought their children with them to Chennai. The study did not collect information on the ages of children, but given the median age of married respondents with children was 33 years, the oldest child may have a median age of eleven or twelve. Thirty children attended school/crèche in Chennai while 14 did not; four of the latter were infants. A few migrants had grown up children who were working or married. Essentially adults now, they may form part of the inter-generational migration cycle in construction work or other work.

Migration affects children, whether very young or of school going age, in a number of ways. This includes their health and nutrition, education, safety and more. Their access to these is also determined by the potentials or constraints in the places where their parents stay. Those who have migrated with their families and children and live in labour camps face Hobson's choice - leaving children behind may not be a choice; yet the working and living conditions are unfit for sole males, let alone families with children.

Dowry seems to be a persistent issue especially among the Ponthavalur community in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. The marriage expenses are very high in the community. The demands of dowry are based upon the profession the groom is engaged in. Hence there are many migrants from this community who have come to work as labourers in construction sites to repay the heavy loans they have taken against marriage. Inter caste marriages are frowned upon and those who do so are excommunicated from the society.

## 6.6 WHY DO TRANSIENT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS MIGRATE?

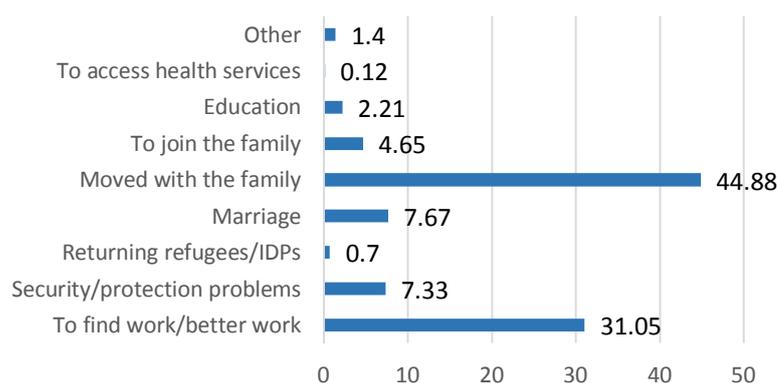
Economic motives are often cited as the primary reason for migration. While this is true, the underlying reasons for migration are numerous; some overlap with others in varying degrees, others are superimposed and act simultaneously in migration decisions. For example, poverty resulting from diminishing and untenable livelihoods is also influenced by aspects such as the: enclosure of rural commons; impact of extractive industries; loss of cultivable land due to river erosion; climate change; and the diminishing productivity of land are some of the factors; which of these has a greater impact is difficult to discern at a general level. Poverty also emanates from land grabbing, conflict (including over resources). Poverty and thus migration is also debt induced, whether this is to meet health expenditure or fulfil social obligations such as dowry as well as being the product of the agricultural cycle with slack periods. The lack of alternative, viable (wages compared to those that work in urban areas offer) and 'regular' employment opportunities closer to places of origin gives rise to migration covering ever increasing distances. However, migration as a mechanism to cope with poverty and vulnerability is not the only reason for the internal movement of populations; accumulation is another one. Investments in housing – repair, maintenance and upgrading – as well as aspirations related to education, status in the form of the acquisition of consumer durables are some of the other reasons for migration undertaken for accumulation. It is not easy to say whether locally available economic opportunities will satisfy the accumulation induced migration, especially if city-bound migration is seen to provide the credentials for respect as the result of working in the 'city' – one migrant construction worker from Dhaka said: "people won't ask what I am doing here. They know I'm in Dhaka. That's all I need to get respect." One of the key reasons why large-scale construction projects in urban areas attract migrants from near and afar is that there it, through an oral agreement, provides opportunities for work over long periods of time.

It is necessary to point out that the focus of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research study is on the working and living conditions of transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale urban construction. Although conversations with the respondents enquired into why they migrated, this was not a main issue to be probed in any depth. For this reason, some of the city studies provide more detail than others

### 6.6.1 Afghanistan, Kabul

In Afghanistan, understanding why people migrate and how migration is changing is complex, not least due to the shifting political scenario and conflict induced insecurity. Whilst insecurity stemming from civil war and conflict has resulted in a huge number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in cities, especially Kabul, migration due to security concerns was relatively small in 2003 (3%) compared to the preceding five years (9%) – (Ghobadi, Koettl and Vakis, 2005). Internal out-migration has declined from 32 per cent in 1998, to 22 per cent in 2003 (Ghobadi, Koettl and Vakis, 2005). The latest figures show a further decline to 16 per cent (Central Statistics Organization, 2014). Economic migration was cited as the main reason; 66 per cent of households in 2003 compared to 50 per cent in the preceding five years (Ghobadi, Koettl and Vakis, 2005). Both security and economic opportunities underpin the reasons for returnees from Iran and Pakistan settling in urban areas as opposed to where they were born. Kabul was the destination for almost half of all recorded immigrants since 2004; some 360,000 people (Central Statistics Organization, 2014). While some of the returnees in the Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> have families in the provinces, they have migrated to Kabul on their own.

Of all individuals within the sample population of the Afghanistan National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (Central Statistics Organization, 2014), only 923 were internal rural-to-urban in-migrants. The rural-to-urban variable captures individuals whose residence at the time of the survey was urban and who originated either from a rural area within the same province or from another province altogether. The reference year for spatial origin was 2004; the year Karzai was elected president. It should be noted that this monolithic temporal frame likely conceals many migration dynamics that may have elapsed during the six-year block, whereby excluding many individuals who did not engage in this singular, unidirectional move and ultimately inadequately capturing in-migration.

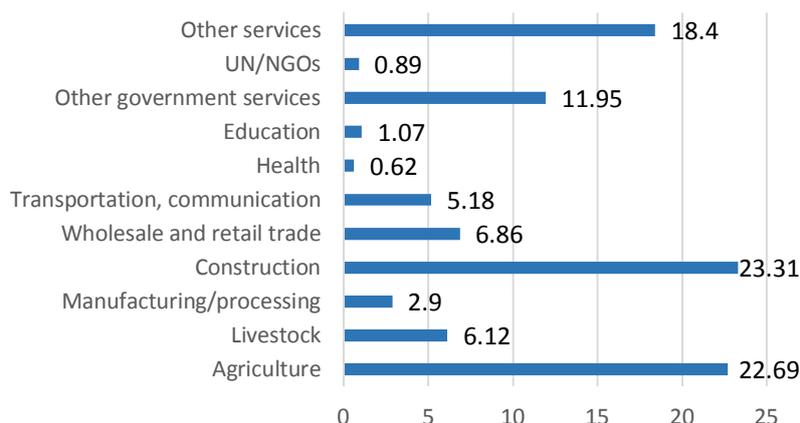


**FIGURE 6.18 | Reasons for migration to current residence (%)**

Source: U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> analysis of NRVA 2011-12 (Central Statistics Organization, 2014) raw data

Figure 6.18 indicates that moved with the family (45%) is the most frequent reason for in-migration into urban areas in Afghanistan, followed by the aspiration to find work or better work (31%). It is important to note, that the raw data does not contain information on what respondents do after having ‘moved with the family’ in terms of labour market outcomes.

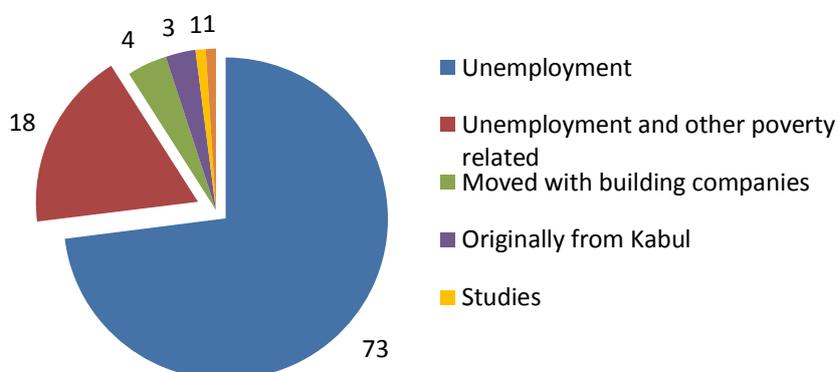
Most seasonal out-migrants were employed in the construction (23.3%) and agricultural (22.7%) sectors (Figure 6.19), followed by ‘other services’ (18.4%) and ‘other government services’ (11.9%) .



**FIGURE 6.19 | Seasonal out-migrants by economic sector (%)**

Source: U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> analysis of NRVA 2011-12 (Central Statistics Organization, 2014) raw data

Most of the transient migrant construction workers in the Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> are inter-province migrants. All of them are male with a median age of 27 years. The overwhelming reason provided for migration to Kabul was unemployment (73%), a figure not that dissimilar to males in the comparator age group shown in Figure 6.19. Unemployment as well as unemployment and other poverty related reasons given by respondents in the Kabul U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> study is presented in Figure 6.20.



**FIGURE 6.20 | Number of respondents reporting reasons for migration, Kabul**

Source: Afghanistan research partner

### 6.6.2 India, Chennai

The Chennai U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> study asked: what causes a person to migrate from their village to the city to work as a wage labourer in extremely harsh and difficult conditions found in large-scale urban construction projects? What causes entire groups of people from other states to do the same? What reasons can be attributed to immediate events, and what effects can be understood only through longer timelines?

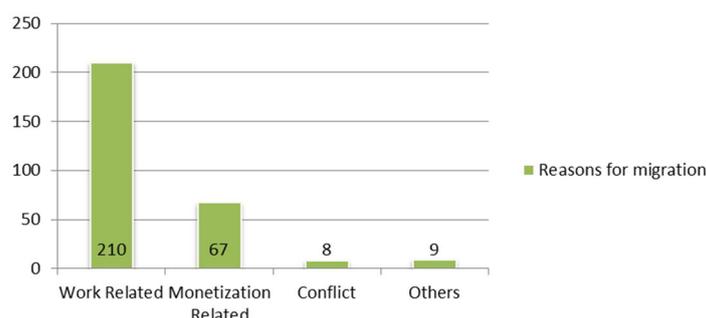
As noted earlier, given the difficulty in associating migration to one particular reason, it was not surprising that respondents provided multiple responses – 294 reasons from 217 interviews (Table 6.18 and Figure 6.21).

**TABLE 6.18 | Reasons for migration, Chennai, India**

Category of Reasons	Reasons given by respondents for Migration
Work related	lack of employment opportunities, better wages in place of destination, better conditions of work, decline of traditional occupation, perennial migration
Monetization related	agricultural losses, debt, money required for education, inflation of prices
Conflict	displacement due to projects, family conflicts, caste conflicts
Others	extreme climate events, to explore other places

Source: Chennai research partner

Figure 6.21 indicates that work related reasons were three times as many as monetization. Each of these reasons is now briefly explored.

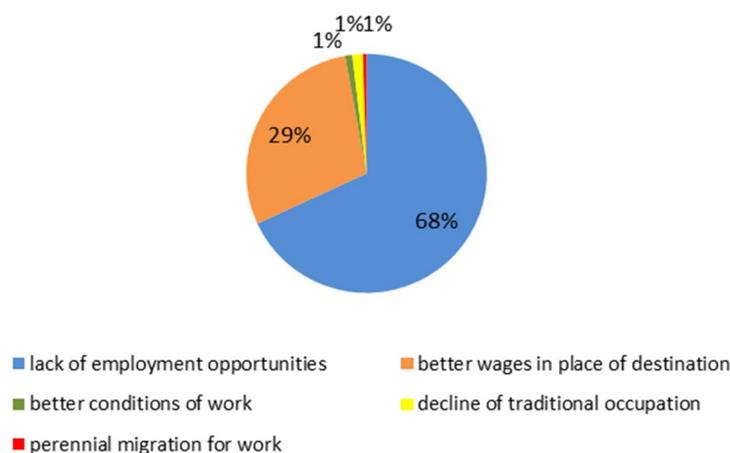


**FIGURE 6.21 | Count of reasons for migrating**

Source: Chennai research partner

### 6.6.2.1 Work Related

Work related reasons for migration is cited by 68 per cent of respondents (Figure 6.22). Forty per cent of the respondents said that agriculture has been on the decline over the past 20 years.



**FIGURE 6.22 | Work Related Reasons**

Source: Chennai research partner

Work related reasons can be attributed to indirect and direct enclosure as the two quotes below illustrate.

A migrant from Andhra Pradesh, says: “Compared to before, agriculture has come down. Most people from my village and from Srikakulam generally live outside in cities like Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai, in search of better income. The Vamsadarariver floods the fields during rains, destroying all our crops. Earlier, agriculture was profitable. This is no longer true.”

SB from Madhya Pradesh says that there has been an “irregularity in the pattern of rainfall for the last 10 years. And this year there is drought.” VK from Jharkhand feels the same way: “We have land but the rains have been failing for the last ten years. We have had too many losses. Now it has all become dry, since in Jharkhand we are having a drought.”

MK, also from Jharkhand also feels agriculture in his village is not the same as before. There is less rain now and he says everyone has to use an electric motor pump for water; like many others, he believes that agriculture is a rich man’s occupation.

“My grandfather owned 36 acres of land. This was acquired by the government for setting up of the Rourkela steel plant, without paying the promised or the proclaimed compensation. 30 odd villages have lost land to this plant. And in each village about 20 families owned similarly sized lands (thus giving us an approximate idea of the massiveness of the land acquired). Today my family back home farms on 2 to 3 acres of land” (probably land that was acquired and not used during construction)

It must be noted that fisher folk, potters and weavers also bemoaned the impact that indirect and direct enclosure is having on their livelihoods.



**FIGURE 6.23 | Mineral-Bearing Districts of India**

Note: Mineral-bearing districts continue to be among the most backward districts of the country, in spite of the immense wealth they generate.

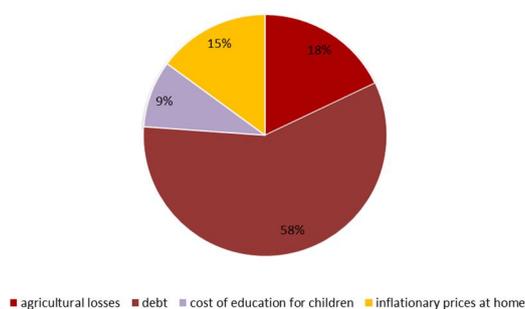
Source: Anon, 2003, ‘Identification of districts for wage and self-employment programmes’  
Report of the Task Force, Planning Commission, New Delhi

Mining is also having an impact on livelihoods (Figure 6.22). Most migrants were from areas that were amongst the most backward regions in the country, and roads, electricity, houses, and manufacturing operations are all severely lacking in most of the villages of the respondents. What was similar though across these regions was that they were close to, if not proximal, to mineral rich areas that have either historically or recently been extensively mined. The hilly regions upstream of the

Odisha and Andhra districts are forested but also bauxite rich and Jharkhand and Bihar are famous for coal, uranium and iron ore and have been mined by state owned companies for many decades. 6.6.2.2

### 6.6.2.2 Monetisation related

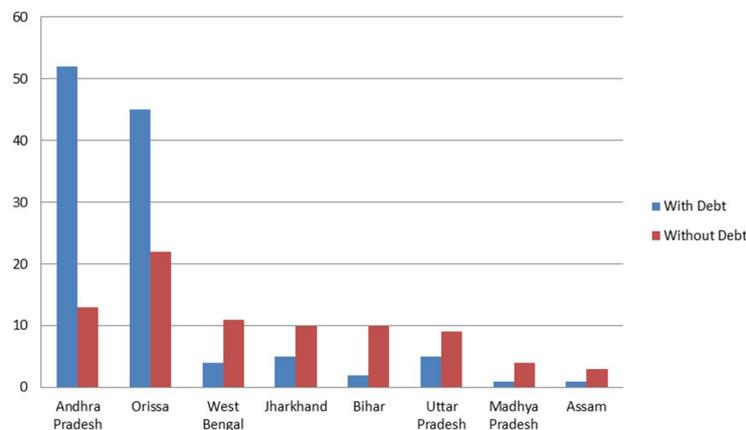
Indebtedness was mentioned by multiple respondents as a key aspect of their lives; 58 per cent of respondents reported being indebted (Figure 6.24).



**FIGURE 6.24 | Monetisation Related Reasons**

Source: Chennai research partner

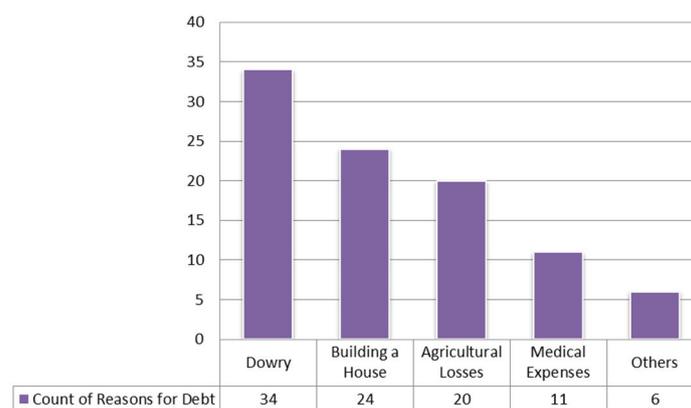
Figure 6.25 indicates the number of respondents with and without debt. It is interesting to note that those migrants with debt and who are overrepresented amongst all respondents in Chennai are from Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Amongst the migrants from West Bengal, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, a significant proportion said that they were not indebted. This could indicate migration for accumulation rather than coping.



**FIGURE 6.25 | Debt by state of origin**

Source: Chennai research partner

Figure 6.26 shows the number of times a reason was stated for indebtedness. Five respondents responded with a combination of reasons and each reason has been counted separately for these cases. Though dowry is an age old custom, the process of monetization has hardened this practice and has pushed several migrants into taking huge amounts of debt that takes up years of their hard work to compensate. The Chennai research team heard reports of dowry in the form of vehicles, furniture, gold etc. being given. This practice of asking for products in the form of dowry is clearly a direct result of monetisation and exposure to the market economy. The category others include reasons such as education, alcoholism and business losses.



**FIGURE 6.26 | Monetisation Related Count**

Source: Chennai research partner

Building and repairing of houses using naturally available materials has become impossible because of enclosure of commons like forests. There were several instances where people complained of being unable to access resources that have been available to them for generations. Respondents said they were instead forced to buy materials from outside which lead to debt. The preference for concrete houses was also said to have led to needing greater initial investment and an increased need for capital, leading to debt.

Agricultural Loss was the third most stated reason for being in debt. In several cases, the reason for this loss was extreme climatic conditions. Sometimes these climatic conditions could be traced to results of mining, flooding due to a dam and other reasons linked to an extraction economy. At other times, the loss was due to the high input costs that made it uneconomical to practice agriculture on a small scale. Monopoly over seeds, increasing costs of fertilizers and pesticides have caused agriculture to be highly uneconomical for small and marginal farmers.

It becomes apparent from the narratives of the respondents that often for a migrant family a disease for any single member becomes a creeping disease for the whole family in the form of monetary demands. Often, those who do not have high monetary incomes are prone to take loans from creditors at high interest rates under the need to often provide just basic health care services for them or close family members. To repay these loans then, they migrate to other places. The loss of traditional ways of maintaining health using naturally occurring medicines as well as the proliferation of private doctors (quite often quacks) have made people indebted on account of their health. Further adding to this is the deterioration of health that is seen in migrants post migration. Years of being a construction worker increases, the possibility of illness also increases drastically. The migrants are then again forced to take debts and or spend their savings for treatment.

**Table 6.19 | Landed and Landless across States of Origin (Count)**

	Coastal Districts (Andhra Pradesh & Odisha)	Central and East Indian Districts (Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh & West Bengal)
Landed	72	44
Landless	64	16

Source: Chennai research partner

To conclude, clearly it is not just the landless that migrate. Nearly half of those from the coastal region are land owners, while nearly 73 per cent those from central and eastern regions are land owners (Table 6.19). While this points to the falling ability offered by the cultivation of small and

marginal holdings as avenues for a viable occupation in both these areas the larger proportions of landed among the central states can be explained by reasoning that their migration is more supplementary in nature and primarily for cash incomes. The same reason probably also explains the lack of debt in those who migrate from these areas – when the incomes from their traditional occupations such as agriculture prove to be insufficient, or during the non-seasonal agricultural months, migrants from the central and eastern regions look for a supplementary income and migrate to urban centres for construction work.

### 6.6.3 Nepal, Kathmandu

Most of the 82 respondents said that they had a small amount of land and a house at their place of origin; a tiny minority said that they were landless. Almost all the respondents were seasonal migrants, returning to their places of origin during the agricultural season for the cultivation of paddy, wheat and seasonal vegetable. There is a high demand for labour in construction due to emigration. In sum, there is no discernible reason(s) for migrating to work in construction in Kathmandu. The interviewees did not speak of factors such as land grabbing or restrictions on common property resources such as forests that leading to livelihood vulnerability. Furthermore, none of the respondents mentioned incidents of disease or hunger; neither did they mention inter-ethnic, caste or communal tensions.

Indications are that rural to urban migration for work in large-scale construction is for accumulation. This is borne out by the four most common answers to the question, what will the savings be used for: (i) for [future] household expenses; (ii) for children’s education/future; (iii) for old age security; and (iv) to start a business. Accumulation is made possible by the fact that wages in construction are much higher than the typical rural wage – “international migration has led to a significant loss in the economically active workforce and to an increase in wages because of a shortage of local manpower” (Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013: 24). Donini, Sharma and Aryal (2013: 26) note that “construction workers with no specific skills in Kathmandu earned about NRs 500 per day, whereas the wage was around NRs 200–300 in small towns and villages outside of Kathmandu”. The Kathmandu U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> respondents reported monthly median earnings of Nepali Rupees (NRs) 15,000 and median savings of NRs 7,500.

In Kathmandu and Lahore, family did not play as significant a role in the workers’ decisions to migrate, as might have been expected. Only a few had any direct family members previously involved in the construction sector. Migration, from rural to urban, as well as urban to urban, was a common pattern among the respondents. An often cited reason proffered by respondents about their multiple migrations, was that they either move around in search of projects, or move with the contractor/employer, when their existing project ends. Not surprisingly then, the current construction project was not the first construction project for the majority of respondents.

## 6.7 RELATIONSHIP TO HOST CITY

In Lahore, workers (mainly men without families) create a world that is familiar to them within the constructions sites. In fact, the presence of relatives or villagers either on a site, or employed nearby, is a key attraction for others to seek work at that site. In the absence of television, visits to friends and kin living nearby (working, for instance, in a brick kiln factory) were very common. While their movements were not explicitly restricted, the construction sites were not always well connected to the public transport system. DHA and Multan Road were very well connected, while Dream Gardens was not. In Bahria Orchards, workers had to walk for a couple of kilometres before they reached the main

road artery, which was well served by public transport. As such, the Lahore U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> found that migrants did not interact with the citizens of Lahore. In one site, a road construction project, the workers quarters were amidst the houses of the residents, but these workers worked twelve-hour days, seven days a week and thus did not socialise even with the locals in their neighbourhood. That said, a shopkeeper across the road who served as the worker's local bank told us that many workers deposited their money with him for safekeeping – afraid they might lose it during work. Despite a deep similarity between the Punjabi and Seraiki languages, one worker, when probed about why they did not tend to mingle with local residents, blamed the language barrier. Given that this man was working in DHA, an elite residential colony, language was possibly a euphemism for class and cultural disparities.

In almost all of the surveyed sites in Lahore, workers used their recreation time to socialise and play games with each other, rather than paying social visits to locals. In Lahore and Kabul, shrines were visited – spaces which are by definition inclusive. In Bangladesh, the workers who had come from mainly rural areas – tended to have complicated relationships with the city and found it difficult to adapt to the new cultural environment, due to their strong bonds and connections to their hometowns. While many said they did not like the city for its rushed, crowded and polluted environment, they felt compelled to move and stay there for financial reasons. As a 39-year-old labourer noted, “In village there is peace but no happiness, in city there is happiness but no peace. In search of happiness we come to cities”. By “happiness” he was referring to financial affluence.

In Nepal, most workers said that there was no reason for them to interact with locals. The only interaction they had was when making purchases from the local shops, after which they returned to the camps they lived in. As one female respondent who worked at the Cancer hospital explained,

*“We do not have a relationship with the locals because we are new here. The relationship with other workers is good, but the people around are still not in talking terms”.*

A common response from the workers was that there is nothing to talk about with the locals. There were only a few instances where interactions with locals were mentioned; one worker employed as a Concrete Pump Operator at Classic Towers mentioned that he did converse with the person living in the house near the construction site, since that individual also worked as a consultant preparing the blueprints for the building. Another respondent mentioned that local people in the vicinity of the labour camp called them to offer them some work for example, to build or plaster a wall.

They undertook such extra work in their free time. The contractors did not seem to mind. Importantly, it was also observed that the workers in fact did not have time to interact with the other city dwellers because once the construction work is finished, they usually move on with their contractors or companies to the other sites, where there is work. This would also include inter-city travels to places like Biratnagar, Chitwan, and Dhangadi and meant they had much less time to develop bonds in one particular place in the city.

## 6.8 MIGRANT POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITIES

In construction, worker support and representation is poor: in India, NSS data for 2009-10 states that only 5.5 per cent of workers belonged to a welfare association or union, 82 per cent reported that there were no unions in their area of work, and 4 per cent did not know whether there were or not (Soundararajan, 2013: 22). Dalmia (2012: 250) suggests that this is because construction sites are distributed across the city, workers move frequently and come from different states, “do not feel that

they are citizens of the city”, and fear “losing their jobs and being thrown out” by the police because their papers are from different states.

In Lahore, it is not surprising that workers did not speak about their rights or affiliation to organised unions, since the Punjab Industrial Relations Ordinance (IRO) 2010 has abolished the right of workers to unionize in establishments, where the number of workers is fewer than 50, though under the IRO 2002, the minimum number of workers was twenty. The number of outside representation in a union has been reduced from 25% to 20% and has removed the role of the Collective Bargaining Agent, allowing employers to deal with workers directly, shifting the balance of power in favour of the former. It is quite clear, therefore, that the Punjab government is keen on improving the province’s business environment by weakening collective workers’ rights and bargaining power.

Given that workers’ membership of social and political organizations is so low, political consciousness among the workers is also very minimal. In Nepal, the majority of workers interviewed were not members of any organizations (political or non-political). They were also unaware of their rights and laws that protect them. Some older respondents were aware of basic information regarding their rights, but the younger ones were, in the main, unaware about specific laws and policies relating to the construction sector. Nonetheless, there were three people who mentioned membership/affiliation with a few organizations. The female respondent (one of the three) was a member of the *NagarikSachetana Kendra* [Citizens’ Awareness Centre], *MahilaNetritwaBikash* [Women Leadership Development], and *UdheymiSangh* [Entrepreneurs’ Association]. One of the two men was a central committee member of the Workers Union and the other a member of *Akhil Nepal KrantikariNirmanMahasang* affiliated with the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-M). Four respondents mentioned that they had been members of community/political groups but that they discontinued their memberships after moving to Kathmandu.

In Dhaka, even though a large number of labourers are involved in the construction industry in Bangladesh, there are no Trade Unions to protect their rights, and little awareness of their rights regarding working hours, wages, overtime, holiday and sick leave. The study found that some respondents had not received their wages for over three months, as a result of the country’s financial crisis. Several respondents thought that a Trade Union should be formed to reduce the gap between employers and labourers and to maximize capacity building the labourers. The study only found one organization called “INSUB”<sup>15</sup> that works for construction workers, but only 4% of the labourers knew about it. They saw it as a platform that would help them negotiate regular wages with the companies that employ them but because it is not a formally organized labour union, it only deals with workers at an individual level, resolving disputes and issues of payment irregularities.

## 6.9 DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS

Transient migrant contract construction workers in all five cities expressed broadly similar aspirations, namely to: remain in construction in the short to medium term; return to their villages to start a business (i.e., opening a shop); become a labour contractor; or, as a fall back option, return home to continue whatever livelihood they were previously engaged in, despite the vulnerabilities associated with it.

*“There is still some work here - two to three stories are yet to be constructed. If they pay me well, I will stay here. I also have to go back home in between. Let us see for how much longer this work will continue. After this work is completed, I will go back home and do agriculture/farming. I cannot really say anything about the future. For now, I am doing this. If I get good wages and work then I*

*will stay in Kathmandu and continue with this contractor. If not then I still go and do farming. I don't know.” (Male worker, Kathmandu, Nepal).*

It is interesting to note that some of the Hazara workers, who as mentioned earlier had moved from Central Afghanistan to Kabul, and then to Iran, and back to Kabul where they reside said that the biggest challenge was finding affordable housing for their families. It goes without saying that short to medium term aspirations and plans for the future, depend on the accrual of enough savings to enable migration, either as a coping strategy or for accumulation.

*“I expect to be involved in construction work as long as possible and as I remain physically fit. If I want to do another job, I cannot do it properly and I might get less salary than that in the construction sector. As I am skilled worker in construction activities, I want to do it. In a short time, I will be a rich man. I do not have any plan to continue living in Dhaka with family. But I want to continue working in Dhaka. If I get business opportunity in my village, I will permanently live there.” (Male migrant, Dhaka).*

In the medium term, it is difficult to imagine a scenario where the vast majority of transient migrant contract construction labourers will have the luxury of migrating solely for the purpose of the accumulation of assets, including savings. One group of workers hope that making sufficient savings to set up a small business - such as a shop at their place of origin - will help them replace their need to migrate. In order for such aspirations to become realised, earnings would have to increase. There are five possible options. One, although highly unlikely, is a wage increase for workers, in the current positions that they hold, within the construction labour hierarchy. Although wages are higher in large-scale construction compared with employment opportunities in their places of origin, household expenditure and debt precludes the possibility of any meaningful savings being made. Given that wages are unlikely to increase<sup>16</sup> to allow for meaningful savings to be made, the second option is to deploy more household members in to the labour market. Even this, as witnessed in the case of Chennai, does not really make much of a dent in the consumption and debt repayment cycle. The third and more likely option is to enhance skills, so as to attempt a move up into the next tier of the construction labour hierarchy. The fourth option and one that is dependent on upward mobility in the labour hierarchy is to become a labour contractor. The aspiration to become a labour contractor derives from the lived experience of transient migrant contract construction labourers. Given that labour subcontracting involves the practice of recruiting, deploying, managing and remunerating labour and not just the supply of labour, aspirations to become a labour contractor require that the labourer not only becomes a skilled worker, but also has networks, in order to both recruit labour and more importantly, the networks required to procure work<sup>17</sup>. Not surprisingly, only a tiny minority manage to make this aspiration a reality. The fifth and final option is to look for work in other sectors. Given that migrant labour is largely unskilled, alternative sources of employment will not necessarily mean they are able to command higher wages. Furthermore, if migrant workers become more skilled in construction, they are unlikely to move into other sectors of the urban economy. The rest of these sections discuss some of the primary aspirations expressed by respondents in the five cities and constraints in achieving them.

### **6.9.1 Mobility in the construction labour hierarchy: aspiring to become a skilled construction worker.**

The aspiration of moving from being an unskilled worker to becoming a skilled worker, via the intermediate stage of being semi-skilled worker, is not simply one of gaining the requisite skills but

more importantly a recognition and acceptance of those skills. The informal nature of the employment relationship impedes the recognition of formal vocational training and accounts, in the main, for the very limited success that such training initiatives have had on the upward mobility of construction workers in the construction skills labour hierarchy. Most, if not all, construction workers learn their skills on the job - an informal apprenticeship system - that is heavily dependent on different kinds of networks. Most workers, whether male or female, start off as helpers. This involves moving bricks, concrete, tiles and tools around the worksite, to enable older, more experienced, skilled workers to undertake work they are specialised in. In Chennai, for instance, only approximately 20 per cent of those who start off as helpers, excluding all women, move onto more skilled construction work, but this takes a very long period of time.

The data from Kathmandu indicates that moving from one construction project to another affords opportunities for workers to move up the 'job ladder'. Some workers who began working as 'general labourers' or 'helpers', had, over a number of work moves, moved on to operate complex machinery. For example, one worker who began his career as a labourer in 1988 had learned to operate machinery on-the-job and had become a 'circuit operator' by 1995. Such cases suggest that whilst there are career advancement opportunities for workers in the construction sector with some indication of an increase in earnings with age, there is not a clearly defined path.

### 6.9.2 Mobility in the construction labour hierarchy: becoming a labour contractor.

The trajectory to becoming a labour contractor is beset with obstacles, some of the key ones are: the acquisition of the required skills to become a construction worker and, as, if not more importantly, the recognition of the acquisition of the particular skills - for example, masonry, tiling, electrical or plumbing; the required networks, not only for procuring work but also labour; overcoming disadvantages associated with the social categories of caste and ethnicity. In most cases, evidence from the five cities suggests that labour contractors are not involved in labour, as they only supply contractors. They are petty-commodity actors in that they not only secure the contract from the main contractor, developer or client, but importantly, work alongside the labour that they recruit, deploy, manage and remunerate. Being a labour contractor thus requires a fair amount of start-up capital, in order to be able to cover workers' wages and additional expenditure, such as food and if required living arrangements, until they are paid by the main contractor, developer or client they are working for. The amount of start-up capital is also influenced by the relationship the labour-contractor has with the employer. A longstanding trusting relationship is likely to result in their ability to command a higher advance, thereby reducing the amount of start-up capital required. Although a certain level of education, at least literacy, will help, it is the quality of 'management' skills that determines ongoing success. However, these and other constraints did not stop respondents from aspiring to become labour contractors, as the following quote illustrates.

*"There are a few layers to becoming a contractor and promoting myself - from labourer to head worker or mechanic. After that, if you can show your performance or skill, you would be a foreman and finally you can be a constructor; this is my ultimate goal - to be a contractor."* (Male worker, Dhaka).

Those that do become labour contractors are more than likely to have done so with a great deal of support. In Lahore, for example, a construction worker who had worked his way up from being a helper, to a mason and then to a petty contractor, had managed this transition with family support - financial as well as peer support, as several of his uncles were contractors. Interestingly, in only a few

cases did the researchers in Lahore come across construction labour with the requisite savings levels, setting aside the other constraints that may facilitate the aspiration, in the quote below.

*“I am teaching masonry skills to other workers. I will then form a team of workers and become their contractor [and for good measure] never defraud them of their salary.” (Male mason, Lahore).*

It is important to note that aspirations must be located in the specific circumstances that each migrant worker finds herself or himself in. Age, sex, daily expenditure and debt, the degree of dependence and thus dependence that their family in the village places on them, and whether or not married couples have children, significantly alter the kind of aspirations expressed. The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project did not specifically study the mobility pathways from being a skilled worker to a labour contractor, however, the few conversations that the researchers in Lahore had with labour-contractors about how upward mobility might be achieved pointed to general answers, such as “hard work”. For the reasons outlined in this sub-section, this remains an important area for future research, as it will enable an understanding of where policy may make a difference for those who intend to continue to work in construction.

### 6.9.3 Accumulating savings to investing in a small business

When asked about whether construction was the main occupation that migrants aspired to be in, a number of respondents indicated that it was only temporary, until such time that the objective of their migration had been met. One such objective was to save enough to invest in agriculture or open a small business - shop - in their village.

*“I just want to settle down. I have planned to buy some lands so that I can cultivate crops if it wouldn't possible then I wish to do a small business” (Male migrant, Kathmandu).*

Even though the construction labour market appears to have ‘an open entry point’ for unskilled workers, indications are that it does not result in the social mobility it is considered to offer. In Lahore, only 3 per cent of sons born to low skilled elementary workers are able to become service employers (shop-keepers, for instance). In Lahore, on the whole, very few workers’ families were saving money they remitted for this purpose, putting such goals in serious doubt. Nevertheless, exiting the construction industry, in order to start a new business remains a dream for many construction workers.

Evidence from Chennai illustrates the inter-generational stickiness of construction as an employment category. Of the 211 who answered the question about their aspirations, 50 respondents (24%) were the first generation to go in to construction work - this was more or less evenly distributed across all the Indian states represented. More than a quarter (28%) of the one hundred and twenty one respondents with children and who answered the question of the extent to which work in construction is intergenerational, said that they had children working in construction. Given that a sizeable proportion of respondents migrating for construction work are from across the generations, the lack of mobility in the spaces of migration reflects a lack of mobility in livelihoods.

### 6.9.4 Construction as a stopgap measure.

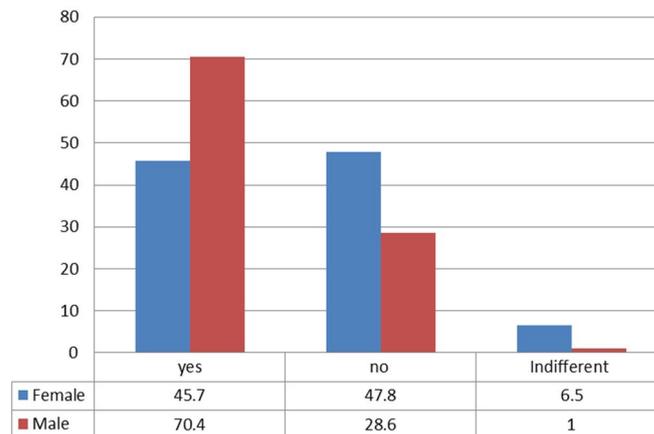
Some construction workers said that they were in construction as a stopgap measure; their ultimate aim was to move into another sector of the economy, when the time was right, or when the opportunity presented itself. Private sector factory work was particularly desirable.

*“I don't like this work because it's dirty and unsafe and you get to sleep in a tent at night. I want to join a textile factory. My maternal uncle works there and will take me on as a helper. I will earn a bit*

*less during the apprenticeship but I will make more money once I become skilled. And it will be a clean job and I will go home to sleep at night. I am just waiting to turn 18; factories don't hire before that.*" (Migrant worker, Dhaka).

*"This work is dirty and tough. Factory work is safer and much cleaner than this. We roam around sand and cement all day. Factories also provide helmets, boots, gloves, and safety regulations are followed properly. I also like driving; I can drive a tractor but I couldn't get a license for it and you need that to get that job."* (Migrant worker, Dhaka).

The question of whether transient migrant contract construction workers intend to remain in construction is relevant when assessing employment mobility among the current generation of construction workers and their children. In Chennai, for example, out of a total of 217 respondents, 140 answered the question about why and whether they liked their current work in the construction sector. Two thirds (90 - 64%) said that they did like their current work because of the regular availability of work and wages, which enabled them to pay off debts and make adequate savings within a short time span, to meet future expenses such as education, marriage and business. However, slightly more than a third (50 - 36%) expressed the view that they did not like their current work, primarily because they were separated from their village, community and traditional occupations. Four respondents expressed indifference.



**FIGURE 6.27** | Preference for current work in construction by gender (%)

Source: Chennai case study

If the same data is disaggregated by gender, almost half (48%) of the female respondents said they disliked the work, in comparison to only 28.6 per cent of all males (Figure 6.27). The fact that female migrant workers are more unhappy with their working and living conditions in the large-scale construction sector may be attributed to a lack of safety in labour camps, separation from the community and their families and most importantly, the strenuous physical work for low pay.

However, of the 94 respondents who answered the question, as to whether they preferred their current or traditional occupations, whilst almost two thirds preferred their traditional occupations (agriculture and fishing), the remainder were in favour of construction. What is interesting though is that if no comparative options were offered in relation to the job satisfaction question, six out of ten (62.5%) of respondents reported that they were happy with their current occupation. This seemed to suggest that since traditional occupations had become unsustainable and untenable, workers were taking a pragmatic view in expressing their satisfaction with construction work; given an equal choice in terms of sustenance, they would have preferred their older occupations.

### 6.9.5 Accumulation of savings: investing in one's own education, or the education of their children

Some single respondents expressed a desire to resume their education, as well as to save for the expenditure that their marriage will entail. Respondents with children had, in almost all cases, indicated their desire to educate their children. Those migrants with children tried to protect them from the harsh effects of migration, by attempting to secure as positive a future as possible for them.

*"How our parents brought us up, we'll bring our children up. We're working here only because we've thought about their future. Hopefully, they'll get a good education and have a comfortable life."* (Male migrant worker, Chennai Metro Rail, Koyambedu construction site).

Almost every respondent who had children talked about how education was going to be the way out for their children, and their conviction, that unlike themselves, they would be sent to study. Since Chennai was the only city with a sizeable population of married construction workers with children, this sub-section draws upon findings from this city study in particular.

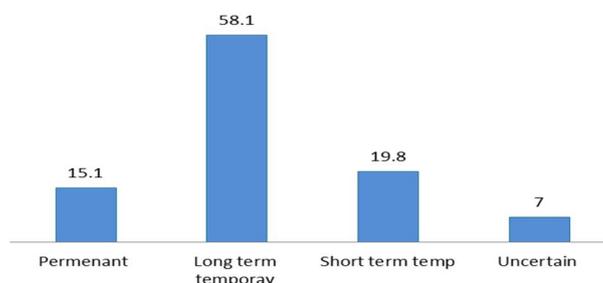
The aspirations of the largely first generation migrants from the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha aspired for their children to access education as a means of escaping the need to migrate for work. In order to achieve this, the calculations that they made as to how many years they would have to work in large-scale construction before they could return home, seems wishful thinking. The reason is that despite their sizeable family incomes (which were significantly larger than those of their counterparts from the central and East Indian districts), the reasons cited for the use of remittances back home suggest that the bulk of monies remitted were used to defray subsistence and consumption expenditure and for repaying debt. Only a very small fraction remained, from which to acquire productive assets such as land, housing or education. This may have important negative implications for the children of migrant workers in large-scale construction, as besides the obstacle that it represents for their children in accessing school education, prospects for inter-generational mobility in livelihoods remain slim.

Moreover, multiple aspects of migrant lives make this a difficult intention to achieve. Most respondents pointed out that almost all their income was spent on meeting daily needs, and acknowledged that very little was used for either acquisition of new capital, or retained as savings. For instance, 69 respondents with children said they sent money back every month but most said the money would be used initially for meeting daily expenses back in their villages, followed by repayment of debt and only after this, savings for childrens' education and marriage expenses, for instance. It was unlikely therefore, that migrant families would be able to suddenly divert income into savings, when such a large proportion was needed just for daily expenditure, especially as the costs of schooling increase with their childrens' age. The more likely scenario is of children completing high or middle school, before being forced to leave, in order to work and supplement the family income.

### 6.9.6 Plans in relation to taking up residence in the city

Some workers in Nepal and Afghanistan were not so interested in returning to their villages. In Kathmandu, respondents seemed to be less concerned about the future than those in the other four cities. A large proportion of migrant construction workers did not wish to stay in urban centres permanently and thought of construction work as temporary. The notion of temporary is an interesting one, as there is no agreed definition of how long temporary is. Many of the transient migrant contract construction workers have been migrating, on a seasonal basis, to work in construction, for several years.

Respondents from Chennai were asked if they planned to continue living in Chennai after their current project was completed and if so, for how long (Figure 6.28). Of the 196 respondents who responded, more than half (58%) said they wanted to continue staying in Chennai for the medium to long term, but not settle in the city. A fifth (19.8%) said that they planned to return to their native village as soon as they had fulfilled the purpose of their migration. Fifteen per cent planned to settle in the city and seven per cent were uncertain.



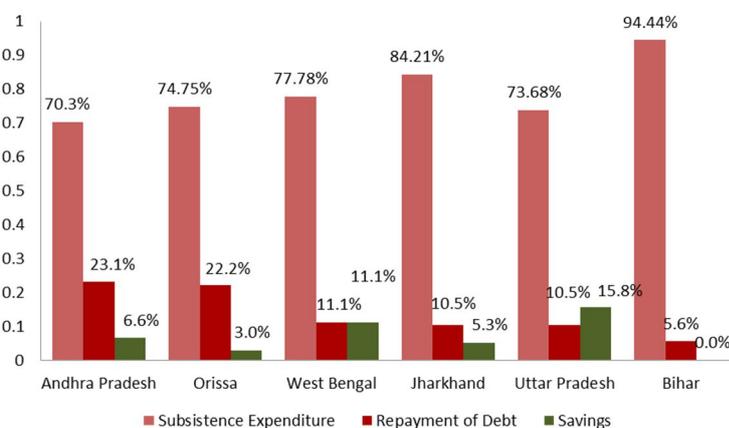
**FIGURE 6.28** | *Migrant workers future plans vis-à-vis of residing in Chennai (%)*  
Source: Chennai case study

Almost nine out of ten (87.5%) of those migrants who said they did not wish to remain in Chennai, wanted to return to their native village, to either start a new business or return to their traditional occupations. The remainder (12.5%) planned to continue migrating in search of better jobs/wages.

Some of the fifteen per cent of those who intended to stay in the city articulated their reasons. Ten reasoned that their traditional occupation back home would not be able to financially support them. Others said they planned to continue living and working here, as they had already lived here for 20 – 25 years and yet more said, living in Chennai provided them with sufficient income to pay off their debts, to earn and save for the future, and to educate and pay for their children to be married. Those who said they would like to return home said they would do so as soon as they have paid off their debts or earned enough to educate their children, arrange marriages for their siblings, or start a new business.

## 6.8 THE GAP BETWEEN SAVINGS AND ASPIRATIONS IS A DIFFICULT ONE TO BRIDGE

Attempts to boost wages through the enhancement of skills, or progressing to become labour contractors, are not ends in themselves, rather an ultimate aim to accumulate savings.



**FIGURE 6.29** | *Reasons for remittance across different Indian states*  
Source: Chennai case study

However, most savings that respondents made were used to meet day-to-day expenditure, repay debt and make essential repairs to their housing. Some indicated that they would like to exit construction, in order to: start a small business; purchase land; buy other inputs for agriculture; build a new house; improve an existing house; educate children (for those who have them). For the aspirations expressed by the latter group to be achieved would require considerable savings, something that is nigh impossible over a short period of time because of the demands made, on remittances, for daily household expenditure and servicing debt (for example, see Figure 6.x from Chennai).

Furthermore, there is also the question as to how much actual remittances are. The majority of workers remitted their wages, less the money they spent on basic necessities (in some cases, such as in Chennai, a sizeable amount of wages - some 15 per cent - was spent on alcohol).

## 6.10 CONCLUSIONS

In each of the five cities, transient migrant contract construction workers in large-scale urban projects originate from different parts of the country in which the cities are located - some travelling long distances. When the data from the five hundred migrants who were interviewed for the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> and other secondary data is analysed in relation to the literature on internal migration, a number of similarities and differences emerge. Some similarities are not surprising: the so-called 'push' factors in rural hinterlands are not that different between countries; neither are the aspirations of migrants. In addition, migrant construction workers share similarities in relation to both age and educational levels. However, one similarity, especially in Chennai, Lahore and Kathmandu is surprising. This is the presence of higher social groups or castes in Chennai, Lahore and Kathmandu (no Dalit workers in the latter), and Saraikis who have taken the place of Pashtuns in Lahore.

Some findings from the five cities are new and interesting. On the representation of social groups and ethnicity, it was surprising to find higher social groups or castes present among the respondents in Chennai (Forward Castes and Backward Castes), Lahore (Syed, Rajput and Arain) and Kathmandu (Brahmin and Kshatriya). Equally surprising was that no Dalit construction workers were represented amongst the respondents in Kathmandu, and in Lahore, Saraiki construction workers appear to have replaced Pashtuns.

Underestimates of the number of workers in construction, especially as illustrated in the case of Lahore, when data from the Pakistan Labour Force Survey was interrogated, reinforces the fact that seasonal and circular migrants in construction are invisible. There was also evidence that migrants in the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> represented social classes that would not normally be categorised as being vulnerable and impoverished. For instance, small and marginal farmers were represented in the Chennai case study. Moreover, one in six respondents owned land at their places of origin. Surprisingly, they included respondents from the social groups referred to as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India. It may be argued that those who own land migrate to work in construction because wages are higher than what is available at their place of origin and thus, migration is not a coping mechanism but undertaken for accumulation. An argument such as this is cast into doubt, as the levels of debt amongst both the landed and landless is quite high. Thus, those with land also migrate because rural livelihoods are insufficient to meet living and other household costs, as well as their other financial obligations.

Female construction workers were not part of the construction labour force both in Kabul and Lahore. Unsurprisingly, they were present in significant numbers in Chennai, although less so in Dhaka

and Kathmandu. Research findings from these cities suggest that, in order to get a more nuanced view of what may be happening in terms of gender relationships and roles, questions associated with family structures and beliefs regarding wives and children, need further investigation. This is more complex to carry out in some scenarios than others and a longer-term ethnographic project would be required, in order to be able to pursue such lines of inquiry in the construction project context.

Irrespective of the specific aspirations held by individual transient migrant contract construction workers, all migrate with the hope of accumulating savings. A number of structural barriers make upward employment and social mobility especially problematic. A key barrier is the lack of affordable institutional credit; narratives of remittance being used to meet day-to-day household expenses and debt servicing, amongst others, means that it is highly unlikely that the aspirations expressed will be realised either in the short or medium term. Rural to urban seasonal and circular migration for work in large-scale urban construction projects will continue until the cycle of debt becomes manageable and the need to meet unfavourable social obligations, such as dowry, disappear.

Buckley (2014: 338) rightly argues that the “building process ... [needs to be seen] ... as a site of intersectional politics”. The research findings from the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> indicate that the intersectionality of politics is indeed important, especially the neglect of seasonal and circular migrants in the internal migration discourse, at the level of the nation state. However, the overarching finding of the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> is that there is an urgent need for a much more nuanced understanding of the ‘intersectionality of circumstance’, namely how: opportunities and constraints, exploitation and agency, wealth and impoverishment; dreams and actualities, come together, to forge particular and differential outcomes. Such an understanding would include, among others, the: (i) specificity of rural livelihood change beyond landholdings; (ii) subtleties between coping and accumulation as mechanisms, for seasonal and circular rural to urban migration; (iii) cyclical nature of large-scale urban construction as a natural fit for the seasonal cycles in agriculture; (iv) contemporary urban built environment, as a proxy for the power of consumption; (v) use of rural migrant contract construction labour, as a disposable commodity; (vi) impact of the demands of large-scale urban construction on the urban and peri-urban commons; (vii) stresses on urban resources and services, such as water, sanitation, waste and mobility; (viii) impact on rural livelihoods, the environment and culture resulting from the insatiable demand for resources, by large-scale urban construction; (ix) large-scale recruitment and deployment of migrant labour in large-scale urban construction projects and the resultant exclusions and deprivations produced; and (x) mechanisation of large-scale urban construction and its impact on the demand for unskilled labour, especially female construction labour.

The issues, challenges and suggestions for policy, presented in chapter seven, are located within and tempered by the findings of the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus research project in five cities in south Asia, discussed in this and the previous chapter.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The NRVA report published by the Central Statistics Organization (2014) was conducted in 2011-12.
- <sup>2</sup> Down from 37% in 1961 (Transparent Chennai, April 2006 [http://www.transparentchennai.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/03/CDP\\_CHENNAI.pdf](http://www.transparentchennai.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/03/CDP_CHENNAI.pdf)).
- <sup>3</sup> It merits mention that in many cases, the Lahore research partner could only get information on the respondent's sub-caste that had then to be matched to the caste. The well-known and comprehensive framework for such matching caste - Rose's "Glossary of the Castes of Punjab and NWFP" – was used for this purpose. For example, the Bhatti sub-caste was matched to the Rajput caste. Similarly, Gill, Khokar and Awan were categorized as Jats. The reason for this matching is that the hierarchal arrangement of the Syeds, Rajputs and Jats is well known. Putting the myriad sub-castes in arrangement is impossible. Nevertheless, there was a large group of castes that could not be matched to these main categories (despite probing) and were thus classified as "others". Finally, it is pertinent to note that the Baluch and Pashtun are not a caste but an ethnic group. This is not to say that there are no divisions within these ethnic groups; those divisions that do exist are tribal identities, which are in horizontal rather than vertical relationships with each one another. Also see, for example, S. Bayly (2001) and W. H. Wiser (1988).
- <sup>4</sup> Rashid Memon, Lahore PI.
- <sup>5</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, custom data acquired via website. <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery/>
- <sup>6</sup> *The News* (2014) 'Construction boom in Karachi before end of year: ABAD', (<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-250223-Construction-boom-in-Karachi-before-end-of-year-ABAD>).
- <sup>7</sup> *A hafez is a professional who memorizes the entire Quran and leads the prayer of Tarabi during the holy observance of Ramadan.*
- <sup>8</sup> Nepal Education in Figures 2014 at a Glance. 2014. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education.
- <sup>9</sup> Chennai was the only city study where resident migrant workers (84 in total comprising 55% male and 45% female) were interviewed. These resident migrants acted as a control group vis-à-vis those residing in gated labour camps to provide a better understanding of the compromises made by the two groups. In the labour camps, 64% of those interviewed were male and 36% female. The 38 interviewees working on the Chennai Metro Rail were all male as women were not allowed to reside in the labour camps housing these workers.
- <sup>10</sup> Women in Nepal comprise 30% of the construction labourers (75% of those are stone crushers) and in India they make about 50% of the unskilled manual labourers (Murie 2013: 12).
- <sup>11</sup> Some exceptions found during this study were Baruah (2010), Aderemi et al. (2006); Greed (2000) and Dalmia (2012).
- <sup>12</sup> In Chennai, for instance, there is a direct relationship between the poorly serviced toilets, with inadequate water or sewage disposal arrangements and the difficulties women face under those circumstances being forced to defecate in the open.
- <sup>13</sup> See: Lin 2013; Ness 2012; Datta et al 2008.
- <sup>14</sup> In Chennai, there were 4 families were headed by women (widows) and one abandoned by her husband. They all live with other family members and (or) children.
- <sup>15</sup> Imarat-Nirman Sramik Union Bangladesh, A root level Labour Union of Bangladesh.
- <sup>16</sup> This is not that different from the debate, for example in the UK, about the need to move from a minimum wage to a 'living' wage.
- <sup>17</sup> It is important to note that, apart from financial constraints, social grouping in terms of caste and ethnicity plays a critical role in realising the aspiration to become a labour contractor.

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**7** **Policy Issues,  
Challenges and  
Suggestions**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 7

**CONCLUDING POLICY ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS RELATING TO TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR****7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Those with an interest in identifying policy interventions to benefit internal migrants in construction are confronted with the wider question of the merits and demerits of labour subcontracting in construction from both the ‘contractor’ and ‘worker’ point of view. Some of the benefits that accrue to contractors from sub-contracting migrant construction labour is: labour becomes a variable rather than a fixed cost; and labour costs are reduced by not paying a range of associated socio-legal dues (Wells, 2006). In addition, the use of migrant labour diminishes the space and thus the opportunity for collective action aimed at improving working and living conditions. Wells (2006) also notes that whilst construction labour would prefer permanent employment, informal subcontracting based on an unspoken ‘understandings’ that there will be continuity of work as long as the contractor has work, is better than being a day casual labour. This point will be discussed further in the conclusion.

As far as the  $U^C Mn^{SA}$  research project is concerned, many of the findings specific to transient migrant contract construction labour are not that dissimilar to construction labour in urban settings in general. These include, for instance, below minimum wage payments, gender disparities in wages for unskilled labour, poor working conditions and difficulties in being able to organise. However, their circumstances – namely that they work and live on construction sites – gives rise to policy challenges that are distinct from those that confront local and long-term resident migrant construction labour.

This chapter begins by outlining the specific challenges confronting transient migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction. This is followed by a discussion of secondary data limitations and other challenges, as well as the interventions of the ILO and UN-Habitat, insofar as they relate to the  $U^C Mn^{SA}$  research focus. After highlighting how pro internal migrant policy proposals exclude transient migrant contract construction labour, the chapter concludes with policy suggestions, that take into account the specificity of this migrant group in large-scale construction.

**7.2 KEY FINDINGS AND CHALLENGES FOR POLICY**

This section summarises the key findings of the  $U^C Mn^{SA}$  research and draws attention to how they differ from the challenges faced by local and long-term migrant construction workers.

1. Migrant contract construction labour in large-scale construction is ‘*transient*’ when compared to local and long-term resident construction migrants. Although it could be argued that all construction workers are transient, in that they move from one project to another, local and long-term resident migrant construction labour return to their fixed places of residence on a daily basis, which are separate from their worksites. This is not the case for transient migrant contract construction labour, as their worksite and place of residence are not separate. Furthermore, when their labour is no longer required, they either move on to another project or return home until such time that they are recalled or find a new job. This makes them more difficult to track and leads to a completely different set of policy challenges for government and civil society organisations with an interest in labour welfare issues, compared with construction workers resident in urban areas.
2. The term ‘contract’ does not refer to a ‘formal written’ arrangement but the dependent relationship that transient migrant construction labour have with their employer - the labour-contractor or the general building contractor. The labour-contractor has more than a ‘direct’

recruitment role – he (in all cases) also approves the entry of others, brought in by workers he has previously recruited. He is responsible for managing the work that is undertaken and handing out wages. In order to ensure labour continuity, he also provides workers with a cash advance when necessary and decides whether to hold back wages when migrant construction workers return to their places of origin, for festivals or during the harvesting season. In sum, the labour contractor is a major ‘gatekeeper’ of employment opportunities in large-scale construction.

3. In order to ensure a captive workforce that serves the interests of construction capital, transient migrant contract construction labour are housed in on-site ‘gated’ labour camps (sometimes off-site camps although access to and exit from these camps are still controlled by various security mechanisms). The proximity of this captive workforce to the construction site makes them readily available for work beyond the stipulated working hours per day, often without the payment of overtime. The housing of transient migrant contract construction workers in labour camps makes them, by and large, ‘invisible’ to the outside world and ‘hard to reach’ by non-state actors. This is not the case with local and long-resident migrant labour.
4. Instances of minimum wage legislation violations are hidden from view as a result of their invisibility and the transience of this labour category. Moreover, transient migrant contract construction labour has no easy way to report such practices when compared to their local and long-term resident migrant construction labour counterparts. Furthermore, the dependence of migrant contract labour on their labour-contractors for work often makes them fearful of raising issues in relation to minimum wage and overtime violations or working condition deficits, for instance. Civil society organisations with an interest in labour welfare, particularly wages and living conditions, find it difficult to physically access migrant contract labour, as ‘employers’, more often than not, find their interest in labour welfare ‘threatening’. This threat is less for civil society with an interest in education or health; interventions in these areas are not only perceived as ‘non-threatening’ but are often welcomed.
5. Wage parity between female and male unskilled workers is an issue that extends beyond large-scale construction and transient migrant contract workers. Local and long-term resident migrant labour have the ‘option’ of choosing not to work for the wages offered; women that accompany their spouses to work in large-scale construction projects have little choice, other than deciding not to offer their labour and seek work elsewhere. This is a luxury that is unavailable to them, as their residence in labour camps prevents them from seeking work at other construction sites or other parts of the informal economy.
6. Unfortunately, the policy of enhancing construction skills has not proven successful. The networked and hence closed nature of access to employment in construction supersedes entry on the basis of any vocational qualifications. Almost all respondents interviewed for the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> learned their trade from others working on site – the apprenticeship system is alive and well. Wages are not solely determined by the possession of certificates, even for trades such as welding, electrical and plumbing or the operation of machinery. That said, it is easier to work with clients and labour contractors in large-scale construction projects to improve skills and thus wages, than it is with a plethora of small contractors, who employ local and long-term resident migrant construction workers.
7. Working conditions relating to health and safety are problematic in the construction sector as a whole. This research found that while many larger national and international construction firms,

are paying more attention to occupational health and safety issues, this is not the case across the board. The challenge lies in obtaining information about injuries and deaths, as information such as, for instance, details about workers' postal addresses at their places of origin and next of kin are not easily accessible. Policy interventions in the field of occupational health and safety will have a greater effect on large-scale construction projects, as they will cover a large number of workers when compared to those in dispersed small-scale construction sites.

8. Living conditions and service levels (water, sanitation and electricity) in the labour camps (on-site and off-site) associated with large-scale construction projects are by and large quite deplorable (with some exceptions in relation to some international construction firms). Sanitation conditions are of particular concern for women and children and enclosed labour camps often do not easily offer opportunities for open defecation or private bathing. Unlike local and resident migrant construction workers who choose where to reside, contract migrant labour are forced to accept whatever is offered, should they wish to work on these projects. The challenge relating to employer provided housing is different from informal housing areas in urban areas: residents often use the latter to protest against the state with the view to reducing deprivations in housing and services. Such social movements are often supported by civil society organisations with a focus on housing. The policy challenge relating to employer provided labour camp housing is how to ensure compliance with existing laws and regulations in relation to minimum levels of provision.
9. Collective organisation vis-à-vis labour in the informal economy is both an important weapon in the arsenal of workers, and also for those with an interest in labour welfare. However, collective action eludes transient migrant contract labour in large-scale construction. Setting aside issues such as fear of employers, or the fact that they are hard to reach, the transient and fragmented origins of migrant contract labour residing in labour camps, serves to reduce any potential benefits associated with collective organising.
10. Deprivations in access to state provided welfare, where it exists, are of particular concern for transient migrant contract construction labour. Transience is in itself a barrier to both single male and family migrants accessing welfare. For the former, split residence between destination and origin makes access to welfare problematic. For the latter, the fact that entitlements are not portable is the main challenge. Furthermore, even if migrant individuals and households were to choose to transfer the location of their entitlements, requirements such as proof of residence pose serious barriers to those residing in labour camps. This is not the case with long-term resident migrant construction workers who, over time, are able to acquire such proof.

### 7.3 SECONDARY DATA LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

The analysis of available country level datasets and the deficits they contain, about information relating to migration, have been discussed in chapter 3. To summarise, these are as follows.

1. Data on internal migration is patchy (more so in some of the five countries than others) and where there is good time series data such as in India, it says little about migration for construction. Construction and mining are bundled together, and questions in relation to migration for work, are very broad. Labour Force Surveys, as an alternative, are also limited as they capture information about workers at their places of residence: transient migrant contract construction labour residing in labour camps, are not captured by these surveys.

2. There is no data at the city level about transient migrant contract labour in large-scale construction. This forms a serious barrier to policy formulation and implementation. That said, the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> has generated figures on the scale of the phenomenon. These are certainly underestimates, as they only manage to capture the migrant workforce at the time of the mapping exercise, rather than ‘all’ labour involved in a given large-scale construction project. This data *does* exist, in whatever form it has been recorded, as workers are hired and wages paid. The challenge is in making this data available to government at the very least. Instruments such as the ‘right to information’ can prove to be blunt, even in the case of government projects, because of the informal chain between client and labour.

These differences, vis-à-vis local and resident migrant construction labour, mean that many of the current policy prescriptions on minimum wages, working conditions, housing and services, entitlements to state welfare and collective organisation, are inappropriate for transient migrant contract construction labour. In addition, data limitations hinder clarity of policy thought. Given that this form of labour is more than likely to be employed in large-scale construction projects, in the short to long term (as they are a captive labour force, and the scale of the projects they are involved in can dampen wages, both beneficial to construction capital), innovations in policy thinking are urgently required. Following a brief commentary on the ILO’s ‘Decent Work Agenda’ and UN-Habitat’s ‘shelter deprivation’, the remainder of this chapter discusses the policy suggestions offered by UNESCO and UNICEF (2013) on the social inclusion of migrants.

#### 7.4 THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO) AND ITS DECENT WORK AGENDA

The ILO, mandated to deal with labour issues, introduced the notion of ‘Decent Work’ in 1999. The 87<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference defines decent work as: *‘productive work in which rights are protected, which generates an adequate income with adequate social protection. It also means sufficient work in the sense that all should have access to income earning opportunities. It marks the high road to economic and social development, a road in which employment, income and social protection can be achieved without compromising workers’ rights and sound standards.’*<sup>1</sup>

The Decent Work Agenda (DWA) is based on four strategic objectives with gender equality treated as a crosscutting issue.<sup>2</sup> These are as follows.

1. Promoting jobs: an economy that generates opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, skills development, job creation and sustainable livelihoods.
2. Guaranteeing rights at work: to obtain recognition and respect for the rights of workers. All workers, and in particular disadvantaged or poor workers, need representation, participation, and laws that work for their interests.
3. Extending social protection: to promote both inclusion and productivity by ensuring that women and men enjoy working conditions that are safe, allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family and social values, provide for adequate compensation in case of lost or reduced income and permit access to adequate healthcare.
4. Promoting social dialogue: involving strong and independent workers’ and employers’ organizations is central to increasing productivity, avoiding disputes at work, and building cohesive societies.

The concept of ‘decent’ work is a powerful one, as it helps highlight numerous work deficits. Its first objective of promoting jobs lies in the realm of national and provincial labour market policies. However, in relation to transient migrant contract labour in large-scale construction, the other three

policy objectives (2-4) are, from an implementation perspective, somewhat problematic for the reasons set out earlier in points 1-10.

Part of the difficulty can be attributed to an insufficient differentiation of ‘informal workers’ in the ‘informal economy’. Even within the comparatively bounded realm of construction workers employed on an informal basis, there are significant differences between local and long-term resident migrant construction workers and transient migrant contract construction labour. Thus, although one can understand the need for objectives to be broad so as to be inclusive, the specificities that characterise transient migrant construction labour in large-scale construction will require a policy subset, even within one that is aimed at construction labour as a whole. It is important to note that one of the many aims of the ILO’s work programme and technical assistance is to “undertake programmes and policies aimed at creating decent jobs and education, skill-building and training opportunities to help workers and employers move into the formal economy” (ILO 2002, Paragraph 37f, p. 25). At the moment and in relation to construction labour as a whole, this comes across as a utopian ideal. It is almost impossible to imagine how transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale construction projects can ever become formal employees, given the seasonal and circular nature of their migration. The key problematic critiqued here is an attempt to move workers into the policy domain of the formal economy, rather than the reverse. This is a fundamental reason why, policy that responds to the last three objectives of the Decent Work Agenda are unlikely to have any impact on transient migrant contract construction labour in large-scale construction. In sum, attempts should be made to develop policies that are sympathetic to this form of labour migration, rather than trying to fit this form of labour migration into existing regulatory and policy frameworks, which have been designed on the basis of formal employment practices.

## 7.5 UN-HABITAT AND SHELTER DEPRIVATIONS

UN-Habitat is the lead UN agency with a mandate for housing related issues. UN-Habitat (2010: 16) defines a ‘slum’ household “as a household lacking one or more of the following: Improved water, improved sanitation, sufficient living area, durable housing and secure tenure.” It goes on to note that:

“The absence of each of these components is categorized as shelter deprivations. A slum household is classified based on the presence of one (or more) of the above five shelter deprivations. Four of these five deprivation indicators (lack of improved water, lack of improved sanitation, overcrowded conditions and non-durable housing structures) measure the physical manifestation of the slum conditions. They focus attention on the circumstances that surround slum life, depicting deficiencies and casting poverty as an attribute of the environments in which slum dwellers live. The fifth indicator – security of tenure – has to do with legality, which is not easy to measure or to monitor, as the tenure status of slum dwellers often depends on the presence (or rather absence) of de facto or de jure rights” (UN-Habitat, 2010: 17).

It is clear that housing for transient migrant contract construction labour, on-site and off-site, is not part of this definition and does not fall within the mandate of UN-Habitat. Thus, transient migrant construction workers are a disadvantaged group insofar as housing is concerned, in comparison to local and long-term migrant construction labour residing in one of many ‘slums’ in urban areas. Understandably, housing is not part of the ILO’s mandate.

## 7.6 A POLICY ‘FOR’ TRANSIENT MIGRANTS IN CONSTRUCTION AND ‘NOT’ A MIGRATION POLICY

It is important to distinguish between a ‘migration policy’ and a policy aimed at ‘internal migrants’. The former is designed to regulate the movement of people. A comprehensive example is the household registration or ‘*hukou*’ system implemented in China.<sup>3</sup> What is less known is that:

“[a]mong 185 countries with available data in 2013, 80 per cent of Governments had policies to lower rural to urban migration, an increase from 38 per cent in 1996’... [Furthermore] ... ‘in 2013, the proportion of Governments that had policies to lower rural to urban migration was higher in less developed regions (84 per cent) than in more developed regions (67 per cent). Between 1996 and 2013, the proportion of Governments with such policies had increased in both more and less developed regions, as well as across major regions” (UNDESA, 2013).<sup>4</sup>

Of course, such policies will not include interventions to address a range of economic, social, cultural, legal and political challenges that internal migrants face when they embark on their migratory journeys; this would defeat the purpose of the migration policy.

On the contrary, what is required is a policy that does not discourage migration<sup>5</sup> but seeks to address the constraints and exclusions that confront ‘migrants’ - individuals, households and groups – whilst considering and embarking on their journeys to the places of destination. Thus far, the only comprehensive attempt made to define a ‘policy agenda for migrant workers’ is the report on *Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India* (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2013). Although its focus is on India, most of the ten key areas it identifies for better inclusion of migrants apply to the other four study countries, albeit with contextual modifications. These ten areas are: (i) registration and identity; (ii) political and civic inclusion; (iii) labour market inclusion; (iv) legal aid and dispute resolution; (v) inclusion of women migrants; (vi) inclusion through access to food; (vii) inclusion through housing; (viii) educational inclusion; (ix) public health inclusion; and (x) financial inclusion (UN-DESA, 2013: 13-52). Whilst this is a welcome step in the right direction, the discussion in each of these ten key areas is based on a view of migration that is independent of labour contractors. Thus, for example, whilst the importance of access to legal aid and dispute resolution cannot be denied, accessing such support (if and when available) is both highly, and more, problematic for transient migrant contract construction workers living in labour camps, than for those living in one of the many ‘informal’ settlements. Similarly, labour market inclusion is not the key issue for many transient migrant contract construction workers who have been recruited for work in large-scale construction projects; questions of labour market exclusion are relevant to those in places of origin, if they wished to and were not able to find work in construction. Little is known about how labour contractors decide to employ some people and not others at their places of origin. The policy issues, challenges and suggestions presented in this chapter are cognisant of the specific constraints within which ‘transient migrant contract construction workers’ work and live.

That said, the report identifies ten key principles for better inclusion of internal migration (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2013: 65). These are not elaborated. These principles, in comparison to the ten key areas, provide a much needed space for a commentary (in italics below) on how transient migrant contract construction labour can be included.

1. Promote positive political discourse and avoid a prejudiced portrayal of internal migrants.

*The promotion of a positive political discourse relating to internal migration for work in construction should include inter-state or inter-regional migrants; often they are viewed as the ‘other’ and are thus vulnerable to discrimination. Blaming migrants for a range of alleged digressions does little to make them feel welcome or safe. The political discourse should also reinvigorate a discussion on the how best to enforce the various laws and welfare measures that exist, as well as discussion of amending such laws and measures to accommodate contemporary changes at their places of origin and destination.*

2. Build awareness for better understanding of internal migrants’ positive contributions to society.

*Building awareness of the contributions that transient migrant contract labour in particular, and construction labour in general, make to society, is critical. Compared to migrants in other sectors of the*

economy (such as petty trade and services) who are linked to the daily lives of urban residents, construction workers (like their counterparts for instance in the readymade garment industry), are hidden from view and lead parallel lives. The contribution of local and migrant construction labour is of utmost significance, as without them there will not be a built environment.

3. Adopt a human rights-based approach for internal migrant inclusion in society.

*Adopting a rights-based approach, as embedded in the ILOs Decent Work Agenda, in relation to transient migrant contract construction workers, is important for their inclusion in society. The potential for 'regular' and 'guaranteed' as well as 'employer provided' work opportunities available to internal migrants, could be used by, particularly those with (but not limited to) a neo-liberal perspective, to argue that the employment created by large-scale construction reduces poverty. Whilst it may be the case that transient migrant construction workers are better off than those without opportunities for alternative work, this does not mean that the rights of workers do not matter. The challenge is to make the ILOs Decent Work Agenda a reality for internal transient migrants.*

4. Develop gender-sensitive and age-sensitive policies and practices for internal migrants.

*Gender and age sensitive policies are of particular importance in the three cities in the study – Chennai, Dhaka and Kathmandu – where women were found on large-scale construction sites, many there with children, as in the case of Chennai. Gender sensitive policies should not only address questions of 'equal pay for equal work'. The presence of women and children on large-scale construction sites raises questions, of equal if not more importance, relating to vulnerabilities associated with poor access to sanitation and to a lesser extent water. Furthermore, women in these construction sites are often isolated and can thus be subject to harassment and violence; for instance, domestic violence becomes more invisible in labour camps, as the families are isolated from the normal relatively open living arrangements of 'informal' settlements.*

5. Create portability of social protection entitlements for internal migrants.

*A number of commentators highlight exclusions resulting from the fact that social protection entitlements are not portable. It is important to differentiate the impact that the lack of portability has on different migrant configurations – such as between individual and family migration. Access to, and the legitimacy accorded to receiving, social protection is based on the person who is named on the relevant document being present. Given that social protection entitlements are often tied to the place of origin, rural to urban migrant families are deprived of access unless the named person, can present himself or herself at the place of origin. In the case of an individual migrating, access to social protection entitlements will depend on whether the individual who has migrated is the named person or not. Although transient construction workers partake in return migration to attend to agricultural duties and other social obligations, the need for them to be present at their place of origin to access social protection entitlements for the household left behind can become onerous. Social protection entitlements need to give serious and urgent consideration to the complexity of migratory flows. In sum, they should be flexible enough to accommodate migrants irrespective of the duration of migration; whether it is individual or household, and regardless of whether migration is temporary or permanent.*

6. Upscale innovative practices for better inclusion of internal migrants.

*There can be no disagreement about the need for upscaling innovative practices. However, the innovative practices identified in the UNESCO and UNICEF (2013) report are not fully applicable to the situation of transient migrant contract construction workers in large-scale construction. In the main, this is due to the requirement that they live in on-site or off-site in labour camps, which restricts their movements outside their working day. Thus, innovative practices for the better inclusion of internal migrant construction workers who live in one of the many 'squatter' settlements or in rental accommodation, and who have the freedom of association outside of the working day are not applicable to transient contract construction migrant workers.*

7. Revise and strengthen data collection techniques for the Census to fill knowledge gaps, especially those related to circular and seasonal migration and womens' migration.

*Addressing the issue of collecting additional and appropriate data for the Census is both very important and urgent. An analysis of existing country datasets reveals that information on migration, irrespective of detail, only provided information on the 'stock' of migrants (how many were not residing in the place of enumeration in a given time frame) and not the 'flow' of migrants (the number of moves between the period of departure and return). As noted in the literature review (chapter 2), circular migration can be part and parcel of seasonal migration. Circular migration may involve the same labour contractor or different ones. Understanding the nuances of seasonal and circular migration is essential to identify 'access nodes of employment' (how and when access to employment is gained), as these would identify where policy interventions are most likely to have an impact.*

8. Mainstream internal migration into national development policy, and regional and urban planning.

*The call for mainstreaming internal migration into national development policy is not new. In 2007, the UK Department for International Development published a White Paper entitled: Moving out of poverty: Making Migration Work Better for Poor People (DFID, 2007). More recently, the International Organisation for Migration has brought internal migration to cities back into the spotlight with the publication of its World Migration Report 2015 entitled "Migrants and Cities, New Partnerships to Manage Mobility" (IOM, 2015). The report notes that it "takes migration enquiries to the city level and helps improve our understanding of the local political economies of migration, and highlights the close connection between migration and urban development. Much of the current discussion about migration trends and migration policy tends to focus on the national level" ...and ... "draws attention to the livelihood of migrants in the cities of the Global South. The existing discussions on migrants and cities are inclined to concentrate primarily on the Global North and the integration of international migrants".<sup>6</sup>*

9. Ensure policy coherence on internal migration and its cross-cutting impacts.

*The benefits to ensuring policy coherence on internal migration and the cross cutting impacts that such coherence will lead to cannot be stressed enough. The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project has highlighted the range of cross-cutting issues, the most important one being working and living conditions.*

10. Ensure democratic participation of internal migrants in society.

*One aspect of democratic participation is the right to vote. Similar to the constraints that preclude access to social protection entitlements, the ability to vote is made difficult by the separation of transient migrant contract construction workers from their place of origin, where their entitlement to vote lies. Participation of transient contract construction migrants in issues at their destination is more problematic due to the temporary nature of their stay. Interventions aimed at their local participation will have to build on cross-class alliances from the outside.*

### 7.6.1 Key Stakeholders

The UNESCO and UNICEF (2013) report on *Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India* identifies a number of stakeholders within three main groupings: government, NGOs and professionals. It is important to include the private sector too, as transient migrant contract construction workers are employed in large-scale construction projects in both public and private sectors. The report mentions development organisations – but does not elaborate on their role. If one is to seriously address pay and working conditions of transient migrant construction workers in infrastructure projects, governments and, in particular, bi- and multi- lateral development actors, must reflect on their accountability and act accordingly.

## 7.7 TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR - POLICY AREAS

It is important to recognise that the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project is in agreement with the broad tenet of the UNESCO and UNICEF (2013) report: it is *'not'* calling for a *'migration policy'* but a policy for *'internal migrants'*. In other words, policy should be *aimed* at the *people who migrate* and *not* the movement of people.

Insofar as rural to urban migration for work in construction is concerned,<sup>7</sup> serious consideration should be given to six key issues.

1. Internal migrants must be disaggregated by the spatial dimension of their migration – origin and destination: for instance, rural-rural or rural-urban. This is essential, because living arrangements and conditions differ.
2. Policy then needs to further disaggregate migrants within each of these spatially differentiated origin-destination migration flows. Such disaggregation would involve differentiating between: (i) those that migrate independently of labour contractors or recruiters; (ii) those that migrate and then find work through labour contractors; and (iii) those that migrate after being recruited by labour contractors. Differentiating migration pathways vis-à-vis labour market outcomes is necessary, as it influences wages, working and living arrangements and conditions.
3. The need to differentiate rural-urban migration for work in construction, according to the manner in which it relates to labour market access, is important. This is because those who migrate to 'join work', as outlined in point 2 (iii) above, have to live in or near work sites; such arrangements are made, either by the labour contractor, or the main project contractor. In comparison, those who migrate to 'search' for work, have to make their own accommodation arrangements. This has implications not only for how housing is accessed, but also for who is responsible for housing and services: the state or the client of a large-scale construction project.
4. The next level of differentiation that needs to take place is between individual and household migration. This has implications for the gendered nature of work and living; the education of children; and health considerations. It also has implications for any discussion of access to state provided welfare, discussed later.
5. Following on from the earlier points, the next level of disaggregation is between temporary and permanent migration. Once again, this is significant from both access to state provided welfare and the nature of housing arrangements.
6. Finally, differentiating between inter-state or inter-province internal migration is essential from a linguistic point of view. Exclusions due to language, predominant in India, have implications for the provision of education, as well as how migrant populations relate to local people.

## 7.8 TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR - POLICY ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

The policy issues, challenges and suggestions discussed in this section, are based on the specificity of the deprivations and exclusions facing transient migrant contract construction workers, in large-scale construction projects, in five cities in south Asia. Furthermore, the suggestions offered are formulated so as to make them relevant to the constraints faced by transient migrant contract construction labour and not the other way around. For instance, far too often, efforts continue to be made to find ways of enforcing existing laws and legislation, despite the fact that such attempts have proved futile.<sup>8</sup> Given that the employment relationship is informal, other mechanisms have to be found if minimum wage

violations are to be overcome. For example, there is little discussion of how labour-contractors may contribute to the solution: better wages for their workers could, for instance, translate into financial gains for themselves. Such incentives, however, would require coordination amongst labour contractors if they were to succeed.

It is important to note that some of the policy issues discussed are not currently relevant to some cities – for instance, the engendering of construction is not relevant for Kabul and Lahore, as women do not work on construction sites. It well may be the case that gender disparities exist in brick kilns or stone quarries and thus warrant attention. The relevance of other policy suggestions will vary in the extent to which government policies, for example on social protection entitlements, have been formulated and implemented. Policy suggestions may usefully be explored via three interrelated strands.

- (i) The core elements of: working conditions – wages, overtime; occupational safety and health; deprivations in housing, sanitation and water; collective action and representation.
- (ii) The drivers of migration on the one hand, and the impact of large-scale construction on the urban canvas (physical as well as green and brown<sup>9</sup> agendas), on the other, in order to locate the urbanisation-construction migration nexus in its widest context. This addresses the issue of assuming that resolving issues relating to the working and living conditions of transient migrant contract construction labour is all that matters.
- (iii) The impact that out-dated and incomplete data, as well as missing information, has on formulating policies relating to transient migrant contract labour in large-scale construction – at the national, provincial and city levels. The collection of such data requires both political will and also more importantly, due recognition of the important contribution that migrant labour play in ‘city-making’.

The *U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup>* research project identifies, with particular reference to transient migrant contract construction labour, several areas of policy concern. These are highlighted for: country governments; civil society; bi-lateral development organisations, such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID); development banks, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB); multi-lateral organisations, such as the World Bank; the United Nations’ UN-Habitat and the International Labour Organisations (ILO); and also organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

This report stresses the need for policy suggestions to be tempered to the realities on the ground. For example, while attempts to ensure that minimum wages are paid is fully justified, suggestions relating to the improvement of wages must take into account potential vulnerabilities that this may generate, given that the relationship between migrant construction workers and their labour-contractors often assumes a patron-client relationship. Thus, the inclusion of labour contractors must be included in any discussion of wage improvements before it can be a realistic part of policy formulation. In sum, policy suggestions need to pay attention to and be inclusive of all actors involved in large-scale construction projects - not only labour - even though the aim may be to ensure the wellbeing of labour - not only ‘decent work’ but also ‘decent living’ - as the latter is integral to work in large-construction projects. Several other realities that need to be given consideration are discussed in relation to specific policy issues, challenges and suggestions; these form the remainder of this chapter.

Political will is critical if the wellbeing of ‘transient migrant contract construction workers’ is to find its way onto the policy of agenda of national and state or provincial governments, let alone policy formulation and implementation. National and regional government (states or provinces) should recognise the significance of migration for construction in general, and the contribution that ‘transient contract migrant construction labour’ makes to the contemporary built environment in particular. Greater acknowledgement of the roles that buildings and infrastructure - roads, water, sanitation and electricity – play, to the contribution that other sectors of production make, to the urban and national economy, is required. Transient migrant construction workers form the bedrock of urban livelihoods and productivity. Their role assumes significance during construction and is then forgotten, as they do

not continue to play a role in everyday urban life, when compared to the provision of other goods and services. Whilst their role reassumes significance when it comes to repair and maintenance, it is then forgotten once again. Construction workers are thus sequentially visible and invisible to urban and rural residents not involved in construction. Their invisibility and lack of recognition needs to be addressed.

### 7.8.1 POLICY ISSUE 1

#### **Transient migrant contract construction labour as a sub-set of migrant construction workers**

The main reason why ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’ should be treated as a sub-set of migrant construction workers is that deprivations relating to: wages, working conditions, housing and services, occur at a given construction site. This is not the case for those migrant workers who move independently of labour contractors, irrespective of how they find work (direct recruitment or through networks of contractors or labour contractors, after they have migrated), who are responsible for finding their own accommodation, and accessing physical and social services, outside the boundaries of construction sites. Thus, in comparison to independent migrant and local construction workers, although transient migrant contract construction labour tends to benefit from unwritten ‘guarantees of regular work’ for the period they are required, they are worse off on many other fronts, in relation to: housing, access to water, sanitation and state welfare provision, where it exists. Policy related documents tend to ignore the housing and basic services dimension, whilst focusing primarily on wages and working conditions. Since issues relating to wages, overtime, occupational health and safety, housing and basic services are not separate in the lived experiences of transient migrant contract construction workers; neither should they be separated in policy discourse.

Thus, in addition to developing policies for internal migrants in general, a policy sub-set for transient migrant construction labour is required, as: this form of migration will increase in the future; and the challenges faced by this subset of internal migrants are different from those migrating independently in ‘search’ of work.

**TABLE 7.1** | *Policy Issue 1 – Recognising transient migrant contract labour as a sub-set of internal migrant construction workers*

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to get transient migrant contract construction labour to be recognised, as a sub-set of construction workers in general, and migrant construction workers in particular?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	The ‘client’ of a given large-scale construction project is one entry point. Clients are: private sector; governments, bilateral and multi-lateral development organisations and banks are, often, also clients. The latter, especially multi lateral development organisations and banks are an easier entry point.

### 7.8.2 POLICY ISSUE 2

#### **Wages, Working Conditions and Social Protection**

The ‘invisible’ and ‘hard-to-reach’ situation of transient contract construction labour, limits the efficacy of existing approaches by non-state actors, in improving their working and living conditions. This includes: the “Decent Work Agenda” of the International Labour Organisation; the notion of shelter deprivations promulgated by UN-Habitat; and the critical work of ‘collective organising’ by civil-society actors. Unlike international construction migrants, transient migrant contract construction workers

are able to switch employers relatively easily. However, depending on their relations with the labour contractor, transient migrants, in comparison with local labour, may find it more difficult to do so.

The housing of transient migrants in ‘gated labour camps’ ensures unfettered access to labour, something that serves the interest of large-scale construction capital. This is what renders them both ‘invisible’ and ‘hard-to-reach’. Transient contract construction workers make trade-offs between: (a) the ‘regular’ supply of work that large-scale construction provides; and (b) lower wages, in comparison to local wages, longer working hours and poor working and living conditions. Questions relating to the enforcement of existing laws and regulations are not only to do with institutional capacity or resources, but also the nexus between the state, land and construction, as a hidden and influential force.

Minimum wages,<sup>10</sup> overtime and, occupational safety and health (OSH) are typically key areas of concern. There is also the need, however, to deal with issues of holiday entitlements, insurance and a range of other social protection measures. The insurance of construction workers is one of the many fundamental tenets of ‘decent work’. Often, questions of insurance come to the fore, as a kneejerk reaction, when major construction accidents occur. For example, between 61 and 65 construction workers died and a large number were injured when an 11 storey building under construction in Chennai, India, collapsed on 28 June 2014. An Indian national newspaper reported that:

“Justice R. Regupathy Commission that inquired into the circumstances led to the collapse of the multi-storeyed building at Moulivakkam in which 55 persons were killed and many injured has made series of recommendations *including a comprehensive legislation for making insurance package compulsory for builders*’ ... ‘The report of the commission ... suggested comprehensive legislation or vitalisation of the existing legislation so that essential features like insurance package creating triangular responsibilities among bank, builder and customer could be made. Introducing penal provisions, insisting upon the construction firms taking up mega projects to deposit a sizable sum in fixed deposit for 10 years are the other measures recommended by the commission” (Hindu, The, 25 August, 2015).<sup>11</sup>

On the social protection front, innovative measures that require contractors to make a contribution - a percentage of the total cost of the project, a ‘cess’ - into a fund that would act as a social protection measure have been attempted in the Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. However, such initiatives have not produced the desired effects, due to both the lack of political will<sup>12</sup> (also see, Nair, 2004) and resulting from this, the lack of enforcement. The idea behind this welfare contribution is a sound one: construction workers work for different clients at different points in time and hence a centralised contribution point seeks to address the challenge of worker mobility. The lack of political will and enforcement lies at many points, a couple of important ones being the point at which planning permission is made and periodic inspection certificates are issued. Governments must be willing to enforce a moratorium on those projects where the appropriate cess contributions have not been made.

**TABLE 7.2 | Policy Issue 2 – Wages, working conditions and social protection**

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How should issues of wages, working conditions and social protection be addressed, given the specificity of the circumstances of transient migrant contract construction workers, in large-scale construction?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Policy thinking can begin with ‘information flows’ addressing questions, such as the following. (i) Who has migrated, where have they migrated to, and where do they migrate to next? Step migration - information on step migration is vital to both the family and the state, if a serious work accident or death befalls a transient contract

**TABLE 7.2 (continued) | Policy Issue 2 – Wages, working conditions and social protection**

construction migrant. (ii) Wage exploitation (including overtime or lack of pay), health and safety and other excesses, hidden from view. Whilst transient contract construction workers have restrictions placed on how often they can leave their labour camps, a large number of them possess mobile telephones. The development of software applications (apps) that enable them to record and register the information flows identified above needs to be given serious consideration.

The use of social media could also assist in highlighting the issues faced by these workers. It is important to promote the message that whilst international construction migrants working in mega-city construction projects certainly deserve the international attention they receive about their exploitation and ill-treatment, there needs to be similar attention given to domestic, migrant construction workers, as they receive comparatively little attention, despite the fact that their numbers far exceed those working in international construction. Interest is only sparked when a major incident, usually causing death occurs.

## 7.8.2a POLICY ISSUE 2A

### Minimum Wages and Overtime Payment

The key reasons given by clients and contractors of large-scale construction projects for housing transient migrant contract construction workers in ‘gated labour camps’, are that migrants face challenges in finding housing at their places of destination; and that it is provided free of cost. Although it may be difficult to disagree with this, the act of recruiting transient migrant contract construction workers, instead of local and long-term resident migrant construction workers, is that workers residing in gated labour camps serves the interest of construction capital; apart from wage differentials between the two sets of migrants, housing them on site removes risks associated with the timely presence of labour and provides a readily available supply of workers, whose working days can be easily extended to include overtime, without having to pay the additional wage that overtime work stipulates. Although the question of whether workers have, and should have, the freedom to decide whether or not to work overtime is an important one, the violation of minimum wage legislation and overtime payment directives is perhaps a more pressing issue, especially if they occur in large-scale construction projects, where governments are clients.

All the five countries have some form of legislation relating to minimum wage and overtime payment. Minimum wage and overtime violations occur in many sectors of the economy – urban and rural – where employment relationships are based on sub-contracting, and the relationships in the chain that follows are informal. Construction is no different. Trade unions working to mobilise construction workers in Chennai, India, argue that the enforcement of minimum wage and overtime payments can be accomplished more easily in government projects. The Chennai research team calculated the numbers of workers who reported minimum wage violations working for both public and private sector clients. The results were: government projects - 36 out of 57 workers (63%); and private projects - 49 out of 103 (47%). This indicates that where the largest violation occurs, the difference between the clients was not hugely different. What is problematic in large-scale construction is that the labour camps are ‘dispersed’, ‘invisible’ and ‘hard to reach’. In addition, enforcement is rare and one cannot rule out collusion (a nexus) between labour inspectors and clients or contractors, where violations exist.

In governmental large-scale construction projects, subcontracting construction to private contractors has resulted in the government offloading its responsibility as *de jure* employers of construction workers. Thus, although governments are clients, they absolve themselves of their responsibilities with respect to labour, by passing it on to the contractor concerned.

If progress is made towards ensuring that minimum wage and overtime requirements are met in large-scale infrastructure projects, as these tend to be ones where the government is the client and financing often involves development banks, hundreds of currently employed construction workers will benefit. Moreover, thousands of workers will benefit in future, as large-scale infrastructure projects will continue to be part of the urban built environment landscape, for some considerable time.

**TABLE 7.3 | Policy Issue 2A – Minimum wages and overtime payment**

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to ensure that transient migrant contract construction workers are paid the stipulated minimum wage and overtime.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Given that transient migrant construction workers live in labour camps with restrictions on their movement, a way has to be found for them to report violations in minimum wages and overtime. One suggestion is the use of mobile telephony through which any violations can be reported. There is the risk here of increasing the vulnerability of workers vis-à-vis their relationship with contractors and labour contractors. Thus, this suggestion has to be buttressed with initiatives of bringing contractors and labour contractors on board.

## 7.8.2b POLICY ISSUE 2B

### Occupational Health and Safety

Work in construction is often referred to as a 3D – dirty, dangerous and demeaning (demanding and difficult are also terms used in place of demeaning). However, construction, like any other work should have ‘dignity’.



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.1 | Kathmandu, Nepal**  
*Precarious working conditions*

The dangers of working in construction cannot be overstated, particularly in light of the many reported accidents - including one during the study – the collapse of an 11 storied building in Chennai on 28 June 2014, resulting in the death of 61 workers.<sup>13</sup> The ILO has a large programme on Occupational Health and Safety. Of particular interest is the reference to workers in the informal economy.

“At the dawn of the 21st century most of the world’s working population earns its livelihood under the vulnerable and insecure conditions of the informal economy. The ILO Resolution on Decent Work and the Informal Economy adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2002 highlights the fact that workers in the informal economy experience the most severe decent work deficits. Among these are unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. The extension of OSH to informal workers and economic units is a major challenge that participatory training methodologies such as the WISE (Work Improvement in Small Enterprises) and WIND (Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development) programmes have successfully addressed in Asia, Africa and Latin America”<sup>14</sup>



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.2** | Lahore, Pakistan ©Rashid Memon

*Transient migrant contract construction worker engaged in a large-scale infrastructure project with no safety equipment*

Ensuring occupational safety and health (OSH) for transient migrant contract construction workers needs to take into account the informal practices used in hiring them and their mobility – which is both seasonal, as well as circular (Photographs 7.1 and 7.2).



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.3** | Chennai, India

*Some large construction companies take health and safety seriously*

As hard hats and boots are safety equipment that is worn by individual workers, it is difficult to envisage transient migrant contract workers freely investing in them, given that there is no regular flow of work. At the same time, it is also difficult to envisage all employers – labour contractors – investing in safety equipment for their labour, as they themselves are not assured of work. That said,

there is evidence of some of the large construction companies investing in basic safety equipment (Photograph 7.3). The seasonal and fluid nature of transient migrant construction workers needs to be considered if any progress is to be made on the OSH front in relation to them.

**TABLE 7.4 | Policy Issue 2B – Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)**

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to ensure that transient migrant contract construction workers are equipped with the necessary safety equipment – especially hard hats and boots.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Steel capped boots are the most problematic and their provision should form part of the contract with the client, who should be held accountable or responsible if they are not provided. The provisions of harnesses are not problematic, as they are easily transferable between workers. Hard hats of the correct size can also be shared, as long as they are cleaned before being passed on to the next worker.

### 7.8.3 POLICY ISSUE 3

#### Housing, Water and Sanitation

Labour camps in all the five cities are characterised by woefully inadequate provision in relation to housing, water and sanitation, and cooking facilities (Photograph 7.4). Electricity provision is less of an issue, as it is often needed before construction actually begins; security is a case in point. Thus the provision of electricity for use by construction workers on-site only requires extension of the initial provision. Inadequate sanitation provision is problematic, and especially for women and accompanying children. The findings support the need to separate the challenges relating to housing from water and sanitation.



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.4 | Dhaka, Bangladesh** © Sunil Kumar  
*Temporary kitchen in a partially constructed building*

#### 7.8.3a POLICY ISSUE 3A

##### Housing

Labour camps in all the five cities are characterised by woefully inadequate housing - constructed in the main using corrugated tin sheets or other temporary material (Photograph 7.5).



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.5** | *Typical labour camp, Lahore, Pakistan*

The labour camp ‘sheds’ constructed using tin (Photographs 7.6 and 7.7) become extremely and unbearably hot in the south Asian summers.



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.6** | *Typical labour camp, Kathmandu, Nepal*



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.7** | *Typical labour camp, Chennai, India*

An emerging trend is the growth of specialist contractors advertising the supply and erection of ‘labour sheds’ made of corrugated tin (see Photograph 7.8 for an example in Chennai). This indicates that the practice of housing transient migrant contract construction workers in labour camps will continue.

[Labour-Shed Contractor](#) ▾  
1



PP Scaffolding Services 

+91-8042909583,  
Chennai

[Send Enquiry](#)

**PHOTOGRAPH 7.8** | Advertisement by a Labour-Shed Contractor, Chennai, India

**TABLE 7.5** | Policy Issue 3A – Housing

<b>Policy challenge</b>	The challenge here is twofold. First, labour camps are temporary and exist only for the duration of the construction project. Moreover, in real estate projects, labour is often moved into unfinished parts of the building, frequently violating existing legislation that prohibits such practice. Second, the provision of housing and services are not in actual fact ‘free’ as might be assumed and even argued; costs for housing are often deducted from wages.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Existing laws and regulations need to be reframed in relation to contemporary practices of labour recruitment and deployment. Exploring the ability of new technologies to deliver improved portable housing is a good starting point. In addition, consideration needs to be given as to who would bear the cost of improved housing.

### 7.8.3b POLICY ISSUE 3B

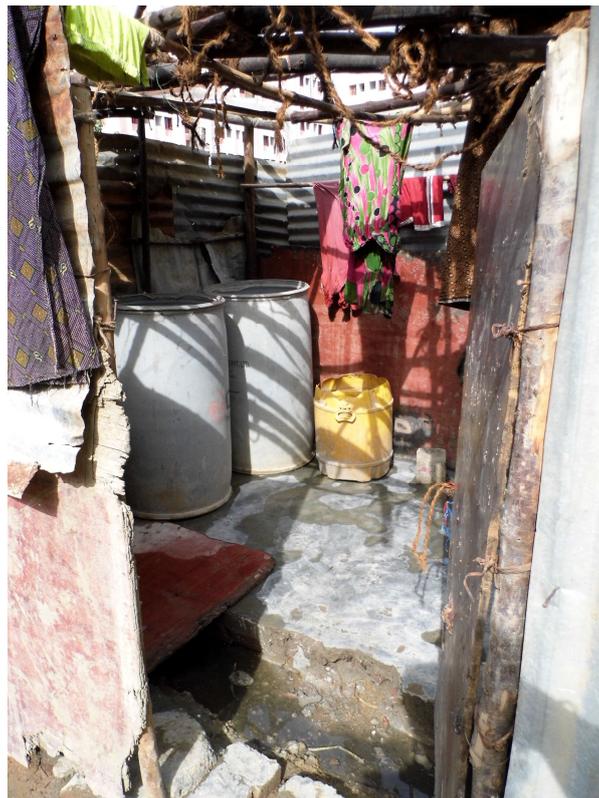
#### Water and Sanitation

Water and sanitation are different in their flows: the former goes ‘in’ the latter is taken ‘out’. This means that the provision of water is less complex than that of sanitation. Transient migrants, by themselves, are not in a position to hold employers to account for poor services and non-state actors are confronted by the constraints that ‘hard-to-reach’ labour camps present. That said, employers recognise the importance of water and do make some attempts to provide it, although the water quality is altogether another matter. At times, minimal provision for bathing is made (Photograph 7.9 and 7.10).

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of sanitation; as a significant proportion of the population are not adequately aware of the public health links between poor sanitation and ill health, there is no impetus to change the status quo. As noted, sanitation involves the removal of waste. In real estate projects, sanitation is one of the last components to be completed; sanitation is not part of infrastructure projects.



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.9** | *Temporary bathing enclosures but no sanitation facilities, Chennai, India*



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.10** | *Temporary bathing enclosures but no sanitation facilities, Chennai, India*

Employers do not seem to be particularly intent on providing adequate sanitation facilities. This is for two reasons. The cost of such provision vis-à-vis project duration; and assumptions that ‘open defecation’ practices are common and accepted among transient migrants. In rare instances where sanitation is provided, maintenance is often the critical issue, as the facilities depend on the use of water, which in turn is in short supply. It is interesting to note that site-offices for white-collar employees have both adequate water and sanitation provision.

**TABLE 7.6** *Policy Issue 3B – Water and Sanitation*

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How to ensure the provision of improved sanitation? Water is less of a challenge.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	The provision of portable sanitation facilities by external actors for a fee is worthy of exploration, as it would address both provision and maintenance, culminating in improved health outcomes.

## 7.8.4 POLICY ISSUE 4

### Gender and Construction

Recruitment, working and living conditions have a gendered dimension that negatively impact on women, especially those with children (Photographs 7.11 and 7.12). Construction as a gendered space did not present itself in construction sites in either Lahore or Kabul, as women were not employed there as construction workers.



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.11** | *Unskilled female construction workers mixing concrete, Kathmandu, Nepal*



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.12** | *Unskilled female construction workers mixing concrete on a large-scale government housing project – the role of the male is to check its standard., Chennai, India*

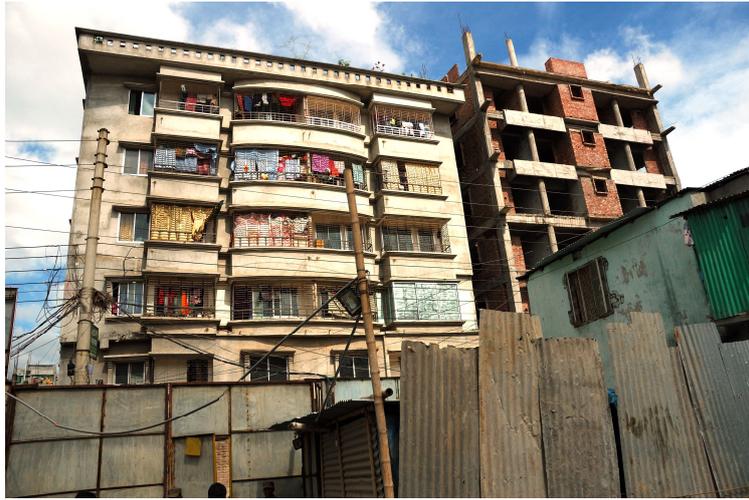
**TABLE 7.7 | Policy Issue 4 – Gender and Construction**

<b>Policy challenge</b>	The policy challenge in relation to sexism, including explicit discrimination and harassment faced by female construction workers, at every stage of the construction process, are both cultural and occupational in nature. They include the: (a) lack of training for both men and women regarding the work, and its gender-specific pressures; (b) traditional masculine networks of ‘word of mouth’ recruitment strategies that disadvantage women; (c) sanitary and health concerns that pertain to women; (d) guarantees of their personal physical security and rights in a male dominated environment; (d) enhancement of their skills and thus wages; (e) guarantees of equal pay; (f) guarantees of maternity leave/pay/rights (the right to return to work, for example); (g) access to education and training; and (h) improved job retention and possibilities for promotion.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	<p>Educating men and women about how eliminating gender pay gaps and valuing women improves both competitiveness and enhances the social and cultural relations of people working within the industry, especially at construction sites. Valuing women in construction will benefit all members of the household. Men, women and children will be better-off economically, socially and culturally.</p> <p>In particular: women should be made aware of the workplace culture and their rights, and at the same time all workers - particularly recruiters and managers - should be trained in equal opportunities and gender-specific issues and pressures. Where family migration is present, accommodation should be suitable for all members of a household and include any additional requisite space; security in both private and public spaces must be ensured, with adequate lighting and formal or informal security mechanisms; training and educational opportunities should be made available to suit their working and parenting schedules (e.g., night-time); part-time work and flexible hours should be offered as incentives; traditional masculine ‘image’ and male figures used to advertise construction work (including health and safety) should be given more consideration and images of construction made gender neutral.</p> <p>Companies that improve standards by investing in the development of equal opportunities at all levels, through developing training courses and improving image-making, could be ranked and (or) rewarded by prizes, publicity and (or) ‘league tables’ that value such achievements. Non-state actors, working on the frontline with migrant workers and their children, should incorporate gender-positive images of women working in construction. Some of these suggestions overlap with other policy sections because they cannot be treated in isolation. For example, suggestions on the use of mobile communications and improved housing and sanitation facilities.</p>

### 7.8.5 POLICY ISSUE 5

#### Accessing Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers

Labour camps render transient contract construction migrants ‘invisible’ because they live in on-site or off-site labour camps, which are often enclosed by walls made of temporary building materials and are dispersed across the city (Photographs 7.13 and 7.14).



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.13** | *Temporary corrugated tin sheets act as walls, making labour camps ‘invisible’, Dhaka, Bangladesh*



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.14** | *Temporary corrugated tin sheets act as walls, making labour camps ‘invisible’, Chennai, India*

Even those labour camps that are not ‘hidden’ from site become ‘invisible’ as they are often mistaken for ‘squatter’ settlements that may either be evicted or regularised (Photograph 7.15).



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.15** | *This labour camp could be easily mistaken for a ‘squatter’ settlement, thus rendering it invisible, Chennai, India*

Labour camps are also ‘hard-to-reach’ because they are off-site (Photograph 7.16) and require the permission, or bypassing, of security personnel.



**PHOTOGRAPH 7.16** | *The labour camps of these infrastructure workers are off-site and hence invisible, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

Civil society organisations, especially those with an interest in labour welfare, are at a particular disadvantage in accessing these workers as they are seen as a threat by developers and contractors alike. In comparison, those involved in education or health are perceived to be less threatening and find gaining access to transient migrant contract construction workers comparatively easy.

**TABLE 7.8** | *Policy Issue 5 – Access to Transient Migrant Contract Construction Workers*

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How best to access transient migrant contract construction labour?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Support for non-threatening forms of access and service provision needs to be considered. The extension of health and education (where applicable) is not only important in itself; it can also act as a conduit for useful information.

## 7.8.6 POLICY ISSUE 6

### Exclusion from State Welfare Provision

In comparison to independent migrants, transient migrants are more likely to experience greater exclusion from state welfare provision because of the temporary nature of their stay.

**TABLE 7.9** | *Policy Issue 6 – Exclusion from State Welfare Provision*

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How best to ensure that, access to state welfare provision where it exists, does not disadvantage the immediate or extended households of transient migrant contract construction labour, as a result of their migration?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	State welfare provision, where it exists or is being planned, must take into account the mobility of migrants; in particular the employer induced constraints on the mobility of transient contract construction labour, and the long distances they travel.

## 7.8.7 POLICY ISSUE 7

### Collective Action and Social Movements

Collective bargaining has long been the bedrock of trade unions. Given that the livelihoods of the vast majority of urban dwellers in the global south are in the informal economy, social movements underpin collective action more often than collective bargaining, as unionisation is more problematic. Thus, demands for the need for improved housing and basic services are directed at the state through territorially based social movements. This is the case, even for those whose livelihoods are based on informal contracts, such as local and long-term resident migrant construction workers.

The contracting and subcontracting of services and thus employment permeates both the north as well as the south. As Wills notes:

“Subcontracting works to break the mutual dependence between workers and employers that have been so central to the labor movement in the past. When a company directly employs the staff on whom they depend, there is the potential to negotiate over matters of work. Each needs the other, and they have to co-operate, to at least some extent. Indeed, in many countries, protocols of labor law have developed to reflect this employment relationship, granting rights for union recognition and collective bargaining on the basis of the employment contract. Yet in relationships of ‘subtracted capitalism’ those with the real power over the contracting process – the ultimate employers of all those involved in any particular supply chain or business operation – are generally not accessible to the workers doing the work. Meaningful collective bargaining, the *sine qua non* of trade union organization, is impossible. If workers are going to “bargain,” they need to find new ways of accruing power and putting pressure on those at the top of the chain” (Wills, 2009: 445).

The suggestion that Wills makes, namely that subcontracted workers ‘need to find new ways of accruing power’ is easier said than done in the case of construction labour, whose worksites constantly change. Furthermore, transient migrant contract construction workers find it even more difficult than local construction workers as: their stay in the city is temporary; they can only put pressure on their own labour contractors, which they are reluctant to do (for example see Ngai and Huilin, 2010); they are made up of groups of workers, with each group migrating from different places of origin and hence they do not feel connected with one another, even though all of them may be facing similar difficulties; and being ‘hard to reach’, they are somewhat out of bounds of civil society support. Thus, others need to represent transient migrant contract workers and voice the exploitations and deprivations that many of them face.

**TABLE 7.10 | Policy Issue 7 – Collective Action**

<b>Policy challenge</b>	Firstly, the length of their employment, which is temporary, reduces the perceived need to organise. Secondly, the lack of community feeling, especially where groups do not share the same language, is another barrier to associating. Thirdly, and most importantly, the labourers fear upsetting their relationships with their labour contractors, as this may have an impact on both their current and any future employment opportunities.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Attempts at collective organising have focused solely on workers. In the case of transient contract migrants, labour-contractors need to be included in conversations. Interventions should convey the message that labour contractors are not the focus of collective organisation; developers and clients are. This would have to involve initiatives at places of origin (as this is the source of recruitment) and be followed up at their destination.

## 7.8.8 POLICY ISSUE 8

### Under-Representation in Official Surveys

Residence at the workplace results in the underrepresentation of transient migrant workers in a range of official socio-economic surveys, which are conducted in residential locations unconnected to those of work (apart from home-based enterprises).

**TABLE 7.11** | *Policy Issue 8 – Underrepresentation of transient migrant contract construction workers in official surveys.*

<b>Policy challenge</b>	How best to include transient migrant contract construction workers in official surveys?
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	Transient migrants should be included in such surveys. Partnerships with non-state actors providing non-threatening social welfare, health and education services are worthy of further exploration.

## 7.8.9 POLICY ISSUE 9

### Datasets containing Information on Migration

Datasets containing migration information varies hugely between countries, both in terms of the extent to which they include questions about construction related migration, and the level of detail they contain, in terms of the reasons for migration.

**TABLE 7.12** | *Policy Issue 9 – Datasets Containing Information on Migration*

<b>Policy challenge</b>	At the national level, the challenge relates to capturing migration flows, as well as second level answers to the reasons for migration. At the south Asia regional level, the challenge is one of the harmonisation of official surveys that contain information on migration.
<b>Policy suggestion</b>	<p>A serious attempt needs to be made at the national level to incorporate questions that provide information on migration flows – especially seasonal and circular migration – a point stressed by UNESCO and UNICEF (2013), among others. Furthermore and with specific reference to the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> the broad answers that a respondent can give as to the reasons for migration – such as marriage, follow the family or join work – do not detail what economic activities out-migrants may become involved in or what work they are joining. The same applies to ‘construction’, which is a very broad category of employment.</p> <p>Attempts should be made to harmonise questions relating to internal migration, across the region wherever possible. Such attempts will depend on national surveys initially recognising the importance of migration and construction.</p> <p>In the short to medium term, consideration should be given to including more disaggregated questions relating to the reasons for migration. Questions on migration for construction should be given particular attention.</p>

## 7.9 CONCLUSION

This policy section has discussed a range of issues confronting ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’. It has identified specific challenges for policy, insofar as they relate to this group of internal migrant construction workers. The suggestions for policy that have been made, take into account the constraints that this group of workers face; for example, restrictions on their movements

in and out of the labour camps where they reside, and their ‘invisibility’ and the fact that they are ‘hard-to-reach’. Policy suggestions are thus tempered to this reality.

A couple of key points worthy of attention are firstly, that whilst legislation on minimum wages and overtime are in place in all the countries and cities studied, the challenge is enforcing them. The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research argues that it is *not* a case of formalising the informal employment relationships between the labour contractors and the workers, rather it is about how best to address the challenges in light of the fact that the employment relationship *is* informal. This is separate from a discussion of whether labour laws are partly to blame for subcontracting out labour for construction (see, Wells, 2006). The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> argues that even if there were changes to labour laws, they would be more likely to benefit local and long-term resident migrant construction labour, rather than ‘transient migrant contract construction labour’, given the seasonality of their migration.

Secondly, there is an issue about the quality of housing and services provided. Legislation stipulates standards for housing and services, for instance, in India, workers should not be housed in buildings that are under construction, for obvious health and safety reasons. However, the subcontracting process makes assigning responsibility for this, difficult. Since contractors are not required to provide housing and services for their workers, it becomes more difficult to hold them to account.

Thirdly and finally, existing suggestions for collective action do not take into account the reality of the constraints that transient migrant contract construction workers face daily, in relation to their movements in and out of the labour camps. Furthermore, their transience in itself accounts for why they do not see any benefit in collective action. Any attempt at improving working and living conditions needs to include contractors and labour-contractors, as key stakeholders.

There should be no doubt about the complexity of the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in the five cities in south Asia. Politics and powerful financial interests are deeply embedded in the nature and form of the contemporary urban built environment. The policy suggestions offered, whilst being tempered by this reality, are by no means easily implementable without the much needed political will.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>
- <sup>2</sup> See, <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/decent-work-agenda/lang--en/index.htm>
- <sup>3</sup> For example, see Li, L., S.-m. Li and Y. Chen (2010). "Better city, better life, but for whom?: The hukou and resident card system and the consequential citizenship stratification in Shanghai." *City, Culture and Society*, 1(3): 145-154.
- <sup>4</sup> UN-DESA (2013), *World Population Policies 2013*. New York: Population Division, UNDESA (<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/WPP2013/wpp2013.pdf>).
- <sup>5</sup> There is a difference between 'policies that do not discourage migration' compared to those that 'encourage' migration.
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2015>
- <sup>7</sup> Some of these points, such as point 6, are relevant for internal migration in general as well.
- <sup>8</sup> As Srivastava and Sasikumar (2005, p. 10) note, "labour laws aiming to protect migrant workers have remained largely on paper."
- <sup>9</sup> The green agenda had its origin in Agenda 21 of the 1992 Earth Summit. UN-Habitat, in its 1996 Istanbul declaration endorsed Agenda 21 and expanded upon it to include what it termed the brown agenda to take into account the links between urbanisation, environment and development. For further information, see: <https://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/publications/dpu-book-3>
- <sup>10</sup> Violations of minimum wage payments are not just an issue for the south and there have been cases in the north as well. For instance, the BBC reported that Monsoon Accessorize (based in the UK) topped the list of the 115 companies that were found to have paid less than the legal minimum wage of £ 6.70 per hour for those aged 21 and over. The report notes that "Monsoon Accessorize's wages dipped below the minimum because it had a policy of offering staff discounted fashions to wear at work. The cost was taken off their wages, taking them below the legal threshold. The company says the issue came to light when the tax authorities reviewed its payroll system, it took prompt action to end it and that basic wages have been raised to prevent any repeat. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-34608028>. Accessed: 24 October, 2015
- <sup>11</sup> See, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/justice-regupathy-commission-report-on-moulivakkam-tragedy-tabled-in-tn-assembly/article7578431.ece>
- <sup>12</sup> See, The Hindu, 13 August, 2011 - Drive to recover building cess arrears, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/drive-to-recover-building-cess-arrears/article2352832.ece>
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/justice-regupathy-commission-report-on-moulivakkam-tragedy-tabled-in-tn-assembly/article7578431.ece>
- <sup>14</sup> See, the ILO Promoting safe and healthy jobs: The ILO Global Programme on Safety, Health and the Environment (Safework) - [http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/magazines-and-journals/world-of-work-magazine/articles/WCMS\\_099050/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/magazines-and-journals/world-of-work-magazine/articles/WCMS_099050/lang--en/index.htm)

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** (UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Chapter**  
**7** **Policy Issues,  
Challenges and  
Suggestions**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## 8

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE URBANISATION-CONSTRUCTION-MIGRATION NEXUS IN FIVE CITIES IN SOUTH ASIA

### 8.1 REFLECTIONS ON THE ORIGINS OF THE U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup>

In the summer of 2012, quite some time prior to the open call for research proposals from DFID's South Asia Research Hub, the PI of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup>, Sunil Kumar and the Chennai research partner, K. Sudhir, visited an education project located within a large-scale private-sector construction site. The visit was facilitated by the Rural Development Trust, a non-governmental organisation providing 'bridging' education to the children of inter-state migrant workers in Chennai, India<sup>1</sup>. The site contained temporary labour, which housed inter-state construction migrants (single males as well as families) from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Paschim Bengal and Odisha. The residents had basic access to water stored in large plastic containers, electricity (and even in a few cases satellite televisions) but little or no access to sanitation. In some instances, cooks accompanied workers to camp and in others workers shared the task of preparing food. During impromptu conversations some migrant construction workers shared stories of how they had been recruited by labour-contractors to work in Chennai. When asked about their reasons for migration, given the evident poor working and living conditions, their responses were unsurprising; they mentioned the negative impact of mining and mechanised fishing on rural livelihoods, diminishing returns from agriculture and the enclosure of the commons. One response, in particular, provided a powerful justification for the decision to migrate: "where we come from, we do not know if we would have work on any given day; here, there is work for six or even seven days". Thus, it is not just the rural-urban wage differential that matters - opportunities for regular work are also important.

This field visit was the stimulus for an interest in the working and living conditions of migrant construction labour, residing in labour camps, in large-scale urban construction projects; a subject that is relatively under researched. An opportunity to pursue research in this area arose when, in 2013, the New Delhi based South Asia Research Hub (SARH) of the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) issued a call for research proposals in one of four areas: urbanisation, migration, violence against women and women's empowerment.

In responding to this call, the premise of the research bid was that existing research on how urbanisation is associated with migration and vice-versa. Attention would be paid to: the economic benefits of, and the need for better management of rural to urban migration, as a livelihood response to vulnerability and poverty, and the challenges that migrants and others face, in working in the informal economy. The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research proposal opted to focus on one specific link between urbanisation and migration; namely, how growth in the levels of private urban incomes (identified here as the 'new forces' of urbanisation) and thus consumption (expressed in the form of large-scale urban construction projects) were giving rise to the demand for migrant construction labour (termed 'renewed forms' of migration) - in short - the genesis of the 'urbanisation-migration nexus in south Asia' research project. With the exception of Chennai, construction was not initially the focus of the proposed research in the other four cities. Rather, the original aim was that the each city (country) research partner would identify and research the most appropriate forms of consumption and associated migration flows. An early review of the project by its 'steering group' recommended that it would benefit from a common theme, so as to be able to draw conclusions and policy recommendations for the region, as well as individual countries. Large-scale construction, broadly defined as 'civil construction' included residential, commercial, industrial and institutional as well as

infrastructure projects. This became the common denominator and is reflected in the title of this research project: ‘urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five cities in south Asia’- U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup>.

In the five cities, the phenomenon of recruiting contract migrant labour and deploying them in urban large-scale construction projects, as well as housing them in labour camps, originated sometime in the late 1980s to the early 1990s. A brief review of the literature on urbanisation, construction and migration revealed that there were studies about the use of migrant labour: (i) in the building materials sector, such as brick kilns and the quarrying of stone and cement; (ii) in petty-commodity or small-scale forms of construction; and (iii) most notably, in rural road construction. Only a handful of studies have investigated the conditions of migrant construction labour working and living in camps – for example, Dalmia (2012) in New Delhi, India, and Adhikari and Desingkar (2015) in Kathmandu, Nepal.

## 8.2 THE COMPLEXITY OF CONSTRUCTION

Unlike many other industrial and manufacturing sectors of the economy, construction has certain characteristics that set it apart and thus mean that it can be more challenging to deal with. The characteristics are discussed in this report.

1. The construction sector comprises of two main parts: (i) the production of building materials; and (ii) the production and assembly tasks required to complete any civil or infrastructure construction project. These are currently insufficiently disaggregated in the secondary data containing information on classification by industry, making it difficult to compare the economic contribution of each of these parts.
2. The employment relationship in large-scale urban construction projects is more complex than in petty-construction projects, simply due to scale. Thus, although there is ‘one’ client (or client group or developer) several specialist contractors, for instance - civil, electrical, plumbing and mechanical - are involved.
3. Each specialist contractor procures both materials and labour. On occasion, some specialist contractors may have small specialist labour teams, whereas others may recruit some workers directly. In fact, the supply of labour by labour-contractors is a well-established form of recruitment, one that is becoming ubiquitous and almost all recruitment, covering the unskilled-skilled continuum, is informal.
4. In large-scale urban civil and infrastructure construction projects, a vast range of skills are required on-site at different points in time. As a result, construction workers are itinerant or transient - once they have completed their task/s, they are deployed elsewhere, failing which they seek other employment opportunities.
5. Finally, construction as a ‘production-cum-assembly’ activity is not static, as is often the case in other industrial sectors of the economy. When a building or an infrastructure project is completed, it is the end of work on that particular project. If the opportunity exists, construction workers move on to another construction project and another client. The labour-contractor as ‘employer’ could either be the same, or new or different to any they have previously worked with and the group of workers under the former or new/different labour-contractor could comprise different individuals. Thus, although subcontracting has been on the increase in other areas of the industrial and manufacturing sector for some time, each finished product (even if it is a component) is the same. Each worker thus, even if they work for someone who has been subcontracted to produce the product is linked to an identifiable employer who does not frequently change; neither does the site of production.

### 8.2.1 Transient migrant contract construction labour and urban civil and infrastructure projects

The unique characteristics that civil and infrastructure projects exhibit vis-à-vis their workforce creates complexities for research. In addition, the requirement for ‘transient’ labour, the informal and shifting nature of the employment relationship, and the ‘enforced dependence’ on the labour-contractor for work as well as housing; generates a complex web of relationships, that is not easy to address in policy and practice, which is not sufficiently nuanced. An in-depth understanding of the complexity of this web is imperative, if policy and practice are to make any meaningful inroads.

1. First, labour contractors in large-scale domestic urban construction projects not only recruit labour, but most importantly deploy, manage and remunerate them.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, despite the informal nature of the employment relationship, there are unspoken agreements about what the ‘contract’ means; the employment relationship is far more nuanced than that involved in hiring casual day labour. Whilst this multifaceted and complex ‘employer-employee’ relationship calls for interventions, these should be implemented with a certain amount of caution, so that vulnerabilities are not created elsewhere in the web of relationships.
2. Who should be held accountable for the payment of fair wages, a decent working environment and proper living conditions? One line of argument is that the client should be held to account; the issue of what happens when the client is government should, in theory, not be difficult to resolve. The challenge is when both public and private sector clients argue that they have fulfilled their obligations by ensuring that the payment of fair wages and the provision of decent working and living conditions have been stipulated in the contracts. This becomes more complex when contractors and subcontractors make the same argument. A mechanism - such as giving written permission for inspection by state and not state actors, as and when necessary, at the time when planning permission has been granted, would be required, to ensure that it is the client who is ultimately accountable and that the ‘subcontracting process’ cannot be used as a convenient escape route.
3. There are three views of empowerment and agency that are useful to note here. Agency in and of itself is not necessarily empowering as Alkire (2005: 222) argues: “empowerment is an increase in certain kinds of agency that are deemed particularly instrumental to the situation at hand. Thus I am choosing to assume that empowerment is a subset of agency, and that increases in empowerment would be reflected in increased agency but not necessarily vice versa”. Alsop (2006) views empowerment as comprising two interrelated components: an expansion of agency (to act on behalf of what one values and has reason to value); and the institutional environment for the rewarding exertion of agency. Finally, for Sen (1985: 206), agency is “what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important”. Transient migrant contract construction workers are not deficient in agency; the extent to which they feel and are empowered is constrained by the ‘informal’ institutional environment of the employer-employee relationship. This is also the reason they feel constrained in engaging in collective action to redress the multiple violations and deprivations they face. When the subject of collective action was broached with some respondents in Chennai, they countered with two questions: (i) who should collective action be directed at; and (ii) why should they engage in collective action when their stay is temporary and its length unknown. Discontent about wages and poor working and living conditions can only be directed at their labour-contractor employer. This is difficult for the reasons discussed in point 2. The temporary nature of their stay in the city, and more importantly in relation to a given project, severely curtails the space, time and energy required for collective action. It is of note

that in most cases, collective action in the form of social movements emanate from the places workers reside, outside the workplace. Transient migrant contract construction workers live in their workplace. This, if nothing else, constrains their engagement. The only realistic option is ‘representative collective action’ from the outside – and it is imperative to add that this requires great caution to be exercised, as the impact of any action that threatens the status quo, is likely to make transient migrant contract construction workers more vulnerable. One way of avoiding increased vulnerabilities would be to bring labour-contractors on board.

### 8.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT: A NEED FOR RECOGNITION

Construction makes an important contribution to employment and to the national GDP. Disaggregating the contributions that construction makes to both these areas, from (i) the ‘building materials’ section of the industry and the actual task of construction, as well as (ii) rural and urban construction, is complex. Seldom do city residents come into contact with resident and migrant construction workers over a sustained period of time. On the occasions that they do, it is often in relation to repair or maintenance. Thus, the opportunity for construction workers to enter dialogue with city residents in comparison with migrants who are domestic workers, or who work in the informal transport sector, is very limited.

There is also insufficient recognition of the contribution that construction labour makes to the built environment – both rural and urban. Urban consumers are largely unaware of the working and living conditions of the construction workers who build: the residences they purchase, in gated developments, the malls they shop in, the factories that produce their smartphones, or the roads they travel on. Urban consumers have much more awareness of inconvenience when their domestic helpers do not turn up, either on time, or at all.

Urban construction workers - local, long-term resident migrant and transient contract migrants – are long overdue for the recognition they justly deserve.

### 8.4 INFORMALITY AND WELFARE: TRANSIENT MIGRANT CONTRACT CONSTRUCTION LABOUR

There is nothing undignified about blue-collar or unskilled work in construction; it is the foundation of city building<sup>3</sup>. It is the - so-called 3Ds<sup>4</sup> - ‘dirty, dangerous and demeaning’ conditions - in which construction workers have and continue to labour that are appalling. Economic theories of demand and supply posit that the undesirability of 3D work, in any sector, would result in a demand for higher wages. However, diminishing livelihood opportunities, impoverishment and the lack of alternative meaningful employment at their places of origin, result in a ‘reserve army of migrant labour’, which underpins their low wages relative to local and long-term resident migrant construction workers.

Local workers and their unions in the global North often protest that the employment of foreign migrant construction workers on lower than local wages is unfair as they do not make the statutory contributions that local workers do. This is why, they argue, that they are able to offer their labour at a lower wage. As a result, governments often intervene with the view to ensure that there is a level playing field when it comes to the employment of foreign migrant construction labour. Although welfare issues are also of significance for rural to urban internal migrants in large-scale construction, governments in the global South are not face with the need to intervene to placate the local population of construction workers for two reasons. First, employment in construction is informal and hence there is no specific wage framework - apart from minimum wage legislation - which local

construction workers can use to make comparisons. Second, and more importantly, the requirement to reside in labour camps does not appeal to most local and long-term resident migrant construction workers. Third, even if local and long-term migrant construction workers were to agree to live in labour camps, their recruitment would depend on whom they know: workers in large-scale construction, building contractors or labour contractors. Paradoxically, the absence of a disgruntled local and long-term migrant construction workforce may actually serve to maintain the inequities persistent in the arenas of wages, working and living conditions.

## 8.5 CHALLENGES IN RESEARCHING THE U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup>

As discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), the project had no baseline data to start with, either in terms of: the extent of large-scale urban construction; or the use of migrant contract labour in urban construction. Thus, the mapping exercise undertaken for this project is the first of its kind, both for the cities and the countries within which they are located. One might have expected the mapping exercise to be straight-forward. This was not the case. Although one could visually map large-scale construction projects, obtaining information about the scale and cost of the projects was not at all easy; information that should have been in the public domain was also not available. The most difficult part of the mapping exercise was obtaining information about the numbers of workers present on any given site. The country teams often found it difficult to get past security. For instance, when the Chennai team approached one construction site and presented themselves as academic researchers rather than government representatives<sup>SA</sup>, the response from security was: “even if you are from the government you will not be allowed to enter!”. At an early stage, even though the researchers were aware of the difficulties in ‘gaining access’ (also see, Dalmia, 2012), there was also no other way to research contract migrant construction labour. Only later during the research, did it become apparent that contractors in some cities, Chennai and Lahore for example, were housing their workers in rental housing. Even in this off-site housing, it was still difficult to interview contract migrant construction labour because of ‘spotters’. As soon as one engaged in a conversation with migrant labourers, someone would appear enquiring about the reason for the conversation. Thus, interviewing around 100 workers in each of the cities was in itself was no mean feat, as the project time scales meant that there was little time for trust building.

In sum, researching the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus in five countries in south Asia has been an intensive and punctuated research journey in several ways. This included: identifying, connecting and establishing rapport with each country team; organising the mapping of the terrain of large-scale construction for the first time; undertaking an inception mission at short notice to - meet with researchers - visit construction sites and discuss the nuances of the research objective with country partners in Chennai, Dhaka and Kathmandu, whilst negotiating to meet our Kabul partners in New Delhi and our Lahore partners in Kathmandu (as a result of visa and security restrictions); engaging in constant dialogue with each research team via electronic means (email and Skype); and commenting on several iterations of draft country reports. The field research was intensive as it had to be undertaken within one year. Punctuated because of *force majeure*: security related incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan; the collapse of an eleven storied building in Chennai, which killed approximately 60 workers, injuring many more, which led to work being halted on many construction sites in the city and made research into contract migrant construction labour impossible for several weeks; monsoons and numerous and prolonged festivals – Ramadan in Kabul, Dhaka and Lahore and a number of Hindu festivals in Chennai and Kathmandu. This meant that the unit of analysis, namely

migrant contract construction labour, downed tools and returned home for celebrations. Not only did construction work come to a halt; it was equally slow to restart, due to migrant labourers trickling in over a week to ten days.

## 8.6 POLICY CHALLENGES AND CIVIL SOCIETY CONSTRAINTS

It is clear that policy challenges and civic action constraints are interrelated on three fronts (Chapter 7). The first is the nature of deprivation and the range of vulnerabilities that confront transient migrant contract construction workers employed in large-scale construction projects. The second is the precarious nature of their livelihoods, the lack of alternative local employment, and the effects of separation between married and single migrants and their families back home, especially for those with children. The third is the impact of unfettered construction capital on the physical urban environment<sup>5</sup> and the serious backlog of problems being amassed in relation to the brown (water, sanitation and rubbish collection) and green agendas (the disappearing commons and fragile ecosystems and its cumulative impact on flora and fauna and the environment as a whole). Government should be particularly concerned about the violations and deprivations faced by migrant contract labour, especially where government is the client; so too should civil society actors and organisations with an interest in the welfare of workers. The environmental impacts of large-scale construction on the rural and urban landscapes should also be of concern to urban residents.

### 8.6.1 The plight of transient migrant contract construction labour

The predicament of migrant contract workers in urban large-scale construction relates to: (i) wages (minimum, gender and skill related) and working conditions; (ii) housing and service provision; (iii) access to state social welfare provision (health and education) and political (voting) entitlements; and (iv) the creation of spaces for ‘voices’ to be both expressed and heard. Concerns relating to the factors giving rise to migration and social relationships involve: (i) systems for recording migratory movements in relation to employment in urban large-scale projects; (ii) mechanisms to enhance savings and remittances; and (iii) systems that enhance communication with kith and kin. It might be assumed, quite reasonably, that it is less of a challenge to address these issues, as the labour camps housing migrant construction workers, provide contained spaces for intervention.

However, the absence of political will came across as the most significant reason, for the ongoing difficulties that transient migrant contract construction labour, in large-scale construction, face. Minimum wage violations, poor working and housing conditions and the lack of basic services are ignored, despite the existence of laws and regulations, which specify minimum standards.

The reasons for this lack of political will are unclear, as explanations were not forthcoming. However, it is possible to infer beyond issues relating to corruption. Given migrant contract labour in large-scale construction is hidden (with the exception of infrastructure), an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ attitude is certainly present. In addition, since the employer-employee link in large-scale construction is fragmented, individuals at the top of the construction hierarchy (developers and main project contractors) appear to be able to absolve them of responsibilities for the downstream aspects of the employment chain, such as the recruitment of labour by labour-contractors.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it may also be the case that the issues confronting migrant construction workers are ignored, as they are considered to be in the private domain of property developers and commercial and industrial entrepreneurs. This also explains the predicament of migrant contract labour in housing or infrastructure projects that directly or indirectly involve government agencies. In Chennai, for instance, a large number of interviewees working in such government or government sponsored

projects alleged minimum wage violations and were found to be living in poor housing conditions with low levels of basic services.

### 8.6.2 Similarities and differences between international and internal migrant labour in construction

As with the international migrants for construction, the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> found that transient migrant contract construction labour is faced with a 'double-whammy'. They have to contend with vulnerabilities and deprivations both at their places of origin, as well as their destinations. The added deprivation and vulnerability in relation to the latter takes the form of having no choice but to live in labour-camps, with poor quality housing and services. This, not only makes them 'invisible' to the outside world but also 'hard-to-reach' by non-state welfare organisations. They accept these conditions on the basis of understanding they will have two potential gains: the 'availability and continuity' of work and 'relatively higher wages' in comparison to available work opportunities, at their places of origin. They endure the 3Ds present in most large-scale construction projects. However, in comparison to international migration for work in construction, the specific challenges that internal transient migrant construction labourers face include: the long-distance<sup>7</sup> migratory moves they make using locally available modes of transport, that are very often unreliable; their having to frequently move, as they are both seasonal and circular (project to project) migrants; the fact that these two temporal forms of migration are intertwined; and their stay in urban large-scale construction is 'transient', in relation to any given construction project. This is irrespective of the total duration of their stay. In all, these vulnerabilities combine to produce a set of circumstances where interventions, for example, organising workers, becomes problematic. Difficulties in reaching out to them about collective action are overshadowed by the challenges posed by their understandable reluctance to organise - not only due to the fear of upsetting their paymasters - but more importantly because they do not see what purpose local collective organising will achieve, given the transient nature of their stay.

### 8.6.3 Drivers of migration

Drivers of migration, feeding the demand for labour in large-scale construction, identified earlier is neither under-researched, nor new. What is new and of particular interest is that, almost all respondents mentioned that local employment opportunities in their places of origin were either very limited or non-existent. Equally interesting was the finding that skills were learned on the job. This is indicative of a rural labour force with the flexibility and ability to adapt. There is therefore an urgent need for a national policy that addresses the needs of internal migrants (**not a migration policy**). It is high time that internal migration is treated at least on par with international migration. The focus on international migration for construction overshadows the domestic/internal migration for construction. The issue of viable alternative sources of local employment needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The decision to migrate should be one of choice and not as effectively little choice or the result of constraints.

### 8.6.4 Impact of unfettered investments in large-scale construction

Despite planning and development regulations, political will seems to be almost completely absent in the face of the blatant enclosure of peri-urban commons, and processes underpinning accumulation by dispossession, in this case agricultural land, as observed in Chennai and Lahore. This is less to do with institutional capacity and more do with corrupt practices and the various nexuses between the parts of the construction sector and the state. The anger expressed to researchers of the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup>, in Chennai and Lahore for example, was not directed at concerns about diminishing labour market

opportunities, as a result of the influx of migrant workers, rather it was about the direct, or indirect, collusion between the state and the construction industry, and the impact that dispossession is having on most aspects of local life.

## 8.7 THE CHALLENGE OF INFORMATION, COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION

Information sharing between South Asian nations on the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus does not currently exist and would be a good starting point. Attempts should be made to forge links between the ministries of urban development and labour, for example.

Links could also be forged between non-state organisations working on labour issues in general, and construction labour in particular.

Currently, DFID commissioned research outputs are made publicly available via its Research for Development (R4D) portal. Two additional options are worth considering.

- DFID's country offices could create or support a portal (with the necessary caveats pertaining to research quality), which contains information on research outputs not funded by DFID, but related to internal migration in general, and construction in particular. Linking up with UNDPs Solution Exchange is worthy of further exploration.
- DFID could also benefit from commissioning its own quantitative data collection on migration and construction for countries in which it has an interest.

## 8.8 A FORWARD THINKING RESEARCH AGENDA

Over the course of the U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research, a number of research ideas emerged. Some could be pursued given increased resources both in relation to timescale and budget. Others were generated as a result of the analysis of the primary quantitative and qualitative data and in the course of writing up this report. This is elaborated below in the form of a forward thinking research agenda, aimed at providing a more nuanced understanding of the urbanisation-construction-migration nexus, in the urban global South.

### 8.8.1 Specific research gaps in relation to the UCMnpSA

#### 1. Why do some households opt to migrate or send household members to work in large-scale construction and others not.

Apart from asking respondents to explain how they were recruited, the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> was unable to explore this issue in any great detail. Further exploration of this issue would involve undertaking research in the various places of origin, identified in this research project. This would assist in a better understanding the reasons why some migrate and others do not. Reasons could include, for instance, weak or limited networks, and constraints in accessing other resources, including the financial means required to migrate. Do certain households and individuals not want to make the trade-offs that other transient migrant contract construction workers make?

#### 2 How do labour contractors recruit at places of origin: choice of migrants and negotiations?

The U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> was only able to gather limited information in relation to the processes of recruitment. This was done by interviewing respondents and some willing labour contractors. Similar to the earlier suggestion in relation to point 1, research at their places of origin would be required.

### 3. How do local and resident migrant construction labourers view the option of working in large-scale construction projects?

Local and long-term resident migrant construction workers were not interviewed about how they viewed working in large scale construction projects, as this was outside the scope of this research. The exception was Chennai, where eighty-four interviews were conducted with resident migrant construction labourers. Understanding how local and long-term resident construction migrants view opportunities for work in construction, in relation to where they currently work and large-scale construction would be of interest to a range of actors, such as civil society and academia.

### 4. How do relationships develop and how are they maintained between developers and civil contractors on the one hand, and labour contractors on the other?

An understanding of the relationship between clients (including developers) and civil as well as specialist contractors on the one hand, and contractors and labour-contractors on the other, is essential for the identification of points of entry to these relationship chains. That said, it is important to recognise that it is not going to be particularly easy to research, given the suspicion that exists, about any enquiries in relation to construction labour, in large-scale construction projects.

### 5. How will an increase in the mechanisation of parts of large-scale construction impact on unskilled migrant construction labour, especially women?

In the course of this research project, the mechanisation of a range of tasks in large-scale construction projects was evident, in all the five cities in south Asia. Some of these took the form of: mechanical diggers for the excavation of earth for foundations, electrically operated hoists to move building materials to upper floors, and the supply of ready mix concrete. Given that construction is a relatively easy entry point for unskilled migrant workers and that this unskilled work is where women are found to work (if they do), mechanisation will significantly impact the available employment opportunities, in large-scale construction projects, both for local and unskilled migrant labour alike. Women in particular will bear the brunt of this change. Mechanisation will also have implications for family migration, especially where children move with their parents.

### 6. How the urbanisation–construction–migration nexus plays out in secondary cities and small towns.

The U<sup>C</sup>Mn<sup>SA</sup> research project focused on large cities, rather than secondary cities and small towns (Hassan and Raza, 2011; Kundu, 2011; Satterthwaite and Tacoli, 2003), which are also witnessing an increase in their urbanisation rates, as their populations increase. As they are not precluded from infrastructure investments or the establishment of production units in export processing zones, it will be interesting to explore the extent to which such investments in construction use migrant contract construction labour.

## 8.8.2 An ethnographic study of the urbanisation construction migration nexus.

As noted earlier, civil and infrastructure construction projects only employ workers with the skills necessary for particular stages of the construction process, for instance, foundations, brickwork, concreting, plastering. On completion, labour departs either to work at another site or to return home. A combination of the temporary nature of migrant contract labour and the fact that research for the

U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> was undertaken at one particular point in time, made it impossible to capture the entire gamut of trades involved in construction, especially those related to the blue-collar skilled workforce. It also prevented enquiries into why, when and how local or resident migrant labour is used. Where such labour was used, it was captured as a part of the research somewhat serendipitously. Otherwise, the only information about trades not on site during the fieldwork phase, was provided by other migrant contract construction workers and project managers. Neither was the U<sup>C</sup>Mnp<sup>SA</sup> able to capture information about the origins and trajectories of highly skilled white-collar workers, as they were not the focus of the research. An understanding of how labour as a whole relates to and negotiates the complexity of work in large-scale construction projects, would benefit from an anthropological study of labour in large-scale construction projects, using a range of ethnographic methods.

Such a research agenda would both strengthen and complement recently completed, as yet unpublished comparative anthropological research, conducted by researchers at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, on “Labour relations and the working poor in India and China”, with their focus on labour in the construction and the ready-made garments industries.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the need to better understand construction is highlighted in recently advertised ESRC-DFID PhD scholarships, including one for a project entitled: “Roads and the politics of thought: Ethnographic approaches to infrastructure development in South Asia”<sup>9</sup> and other work related to infrastructure.<sup>10</sup>

It is also timely, given the publication of the *Migrants and Cities 2015* report by the International Organisation for Migration<sup>11</sup> that the role and significance of construction labour; including transient migrant contract construction labour, in city-making is further researched and recognised.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=587>
- <sup>2</sup> Recruitment agents involved in the recruitment of migrant labour for overseas construction projects, only supply labour to the overseas sponsor. It is the latter who arrange for their deployment, supervision and remuneration.
- <sup>3</sup> City-building is used in its broadest sense to include the contribution of construction labour to the construction of the smallest and most temporary of accommodation (in informal settlements, for example), petty-construction as well as large-scale capitalist construction projects.
- <sup>4</sup> The terms 3Ds is said to have originated from the Japanese terms *Kitanai* (dirty), *Kitsui* (dangerous) and *Kiken* (hard). The 3Ds are applicable to other forms of employment as well; labour intensive mining is a good example. Also see: <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-worst-jobs-in-history>.
- <sup>5</sup> See the blog on Bangalore, India: [It's gross injustice if only the gullible were to pay](#) relating to “punishing officials who colluded to allow encroachment of public commons is critical to protecting lakes for posterity”.
- <sup>6</sup> This is not dissimilar to global production chains, in apparel, for example. The difference is that large-scale construction projects are in-situ and the chain between developer or contractor and the employment of migrant labour can be traced relatively more easily.
- <sup>7</sup> Within India, migrants to Chennai covered the longest distances amongst the five countries. For example, the rough distances in kilometers to Chennai from the following states are: Assam (2,724), Paschim Bengal (1,672), Chhattisgarh and Odisha (1,325) and Andhra Pradesh (378).
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.soas.ac.uk/development/research/labour/labour-conditions-and-the-working-poor-in-china-and-india/>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/scholarships/erc-phd-studentships.html>
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/about-the-department/people/academic-staff/andrew-harris>
- <sup>11</sup> The Migrants and Cities report hardly mentions construction labour or construction.

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



## References

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, C. (1964). *Housing in the Modern World: Man's Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanising World*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Adhikari, J. (2001). Mobility and agrarian change in central Nepal, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 28(2): 247-267.
- Adhikari, J. and P. Deshingkar (2015). How Migration into Urban Construction Work Impacts on Rural Households in Nepal, Working Paper, 27 April, Sussex: University of Sussex.
- Aderemi, Y. A., O. O. Stephen, O. O. Aina and E. A. Olanipekun (2006). 'Empirical evidence of women under-representation in the construction industry in Nigeria', *Women in Management Review*, 21(7): 567-577.
- Afsar, R. (1999). 'Rural-urban dichotomy and convergence: emerging realities in Bangladesh', *Environment and Urbanization*, 11 (1): 235-246.
- Afsar, R. (2003). Internal migration and the development nexus: the case of Bangladesh. Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia: 6, Dhaka: DFID and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMR). [Source](#).
- Agnihotri, I., I. Mazumdar, and N. Neetha (2012). Gender and Migration in India, National Workshop on Internal Migration and Human Development in India, 6–7 December 2011, Workshop Compendium, Vol. 2: Workshop Papers. New Delhi: UNESCO/UNICEF. [Source](#).
- Agnihotri, I., I. Mazumdar, N. Neetha, T. D. Mohan, S. Chaudhry, and N. Pillai (2012). Gender and Migration: negotiating rights; a women's movement perspective. New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies. [Source](#).
- Ahluwalia, I. J., R. Kanbur and P. K. Mohanty (2014). *Urbanisation in India - Challenges, Opportunities and the Way Forward*, London: Sage.
- Ahmed, Iftikhar (n.d.). Labour and Employment Law: A Profile on Pakistan. [Source](#).
- Ahsan, R. (1997). Migration of female construction labourers to Dhaka City, Bangladesh, *International Journal of Population Geography*, 3(1): 49-61.
- Alkire, S. (2005). 'Subjective quantitative studies of human agency', *Social Indicators Research*, 74(1): 217-260.
- AlSayyad, N. (2004). 'Urban informality as a new way of life'. In A. Roy and N. AlSayyad (Eds.). *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books: 1-19.
- Alsop, R (2005) *Power, Rights and Poverty: Concepts and Connections*, Washington D. C: World Bank.
- Ashley, C. and D. Carney (1999). *Sustainable Livelihoods: Lessons from early Experience*, London: Department for International Development.
- Athreya, V.B., G. Djurfeldt and S. Lindberg (1990). *Barriers Broken: Production Relations and Agrarian Change in Tamil Nadu*, New Delhi and London: Sage.
- Baauw, D., H. Louw and R. Schenk (2006). 'The employment history of day labourers in South Africa and the income they earn - A case study of day labourers in Pretoria.' *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 9(4): 458-471.
- Banister, J. and S. Thapa (1981). *The population dynamics of Nepal*. Honolulu: East-West Population Institute.

- Barnabas, A., D., J. Anbarasu and P. Clifford (2013). 'A Study on the Empowerment of Women Construction Workers as Masons in Tamil Nadu, India', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 11(2): 121–141.
- Baruah, B. (2010). 'Women and globalisation: challenges and opportunities facing construction workers in contemporary India', *Development in Practice*, 20(1): 31–44.
- BBS (2010) *Report on Labour force survey 2010*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning.
- Begum, S. and B. Sen (2005). 'Pulling rickshaws in the city of Dhaka: a way out of poverty?' *Environment and Urbanization*, 17 (2): 11–25.
- Benelli, P., A. Donini, and N. Niland (2012). *Afghanistan: Humanitarianism in Uncertain Times*. Somerville: Feinstein International Centre, Tufts University. [Source](#).
- Bhattacharyya, S. K., & K. Korinek (2007). 'Opportunities and Vulnerabilities of Female Migrants in Construction Work in India', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 16(4): 511–531.
- Bhatt, W. (2009). 'The gender dimension of migration in India: The politics of contemporary space in Orissa and Rajasthan', *Development in Practice*, 19 (1): 87–93.
- Bove, V., and E. Gavrilova (2014). 'Income and Livelihoods in the War in Afghanistan', *World Development*, 60: 113–131.
- Boyer, B (2006). Linking relief, rehabilitation and development programme (IRRD) in Afghanistan: Urban Sector Review (2001–2006) Group U.R.D. [Source](#).
- Breman, J. (1996). *Footloose labour: Working in India's informal economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Breman, J. A. N. Das and R. Agarwal (2000). *Labouring Under Global Capitalism*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Breman, J., I. Guerin and A. Prakash (Eds.). *India's Unfree Workforce. Of Bondage Old and New*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Buckley, M. (2012). 'From Kerala to Dubai and back again: Construction migrants and the global economic crisis', *Geoforum*, 43(2): 250–259.
- Buckley, M. (2014a). 'On the Work of Urbanization: Migration, Construction Labor, and the Commodity Moment', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(2): 338–347.
- Buckley, M. (2014b). Construction, migration and urbanisation. In B. Anderson and M. Keith (Eds.). *Migration: A COMPAS Anthology*, Oxford: COMPAS.
- Carney, D. (1998). Implementing the sustainable rural livelihoods approach. In D. Carney (Ed.). *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: What Contribution Can we Make?* London: Department for International Development, 3–23.
- Carney, D. (2002). *Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches: Progress and Possibilities for Change*, London: Department for International Development.
- Carswell, G. and G. De Neve (2013). 'From field to factory: Tracing transformations in bonded labour in the Tiruppur region, Tamil Nadu', *Economy and Society*, 42(3): 430–454.
- CBS (2008). *Nepal Labour Force Survey 2008, Statistical Report*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Commission Secretariat.
- CBS (2011a). *Nepal Living Standards Survey Report 2010/11, Statistical Report, Volume One*, Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Commission Secretariat.

- CBS (2011b). Nepal Living Standards Survey Report 2010/11, Statistical Report, Volume Two, Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, National Planning Commission Secretariat.
- Central Statistics Organization (2014). National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12. Afghanistan Living Condition Survey. Kabul, CSO.
- Chambers, R. and G. Conway (1992). Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century. *IDS Discussion Paper 296*, Sussex: Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- Chandrasekhar, S. (2011). 'Workers Commuting between the Rural and Urban: Estimates from NSSO Data', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(46): 22-25.
- Chant, S. (1998). 'Households, gender and rural-urban migration: reflections on linkages and considerations for policy', *Environment and Urbanization*, 10 (1): 5-21.
- Chen, Y., G. Z. Jin and Y. Yue (2010). Peer migration in China, Working Paper No. 15671, National Bureau of Economic Research. [Source](#).
- Choudhury, T (2013). 'Experiences of women as workers: a study of construction workers in Bangladesh', *Construction Management and Economics*, 31 (8): 883-898.
- Coelho, K., and N. V. Raman (2013). 'From the frying pan to the floodplain: Megotiating ;and, water and fire in Chennai's Development'. In A. M. Rademacher and K. Sivaramakrishnan (Eds.). *Ecologies of Urbanism in India: Metropolitan Civility and Sustainability*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- CSSR (2004). 'A rapid assessment of bonded labour in hazardous industries in Pakistan: glass bangle-making, tanneries and construction', Working Paper, 3 January, Karachi: Collective for Social Science Research. [Source](#).
- Dalmia, A.J. (2012). 'Strong Women, Weak Bodies, Muted Voices- Women Construction Workers in Delhi', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVII (26 & 27): 249 – 255.
- Datta, A. (2008). 'Spatialising performance: masculinities and femininities in a 'fragmented' field', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 15(2): 189-204.
- de Haan, A. (1997). Rural-urban migration and poverty - The case of India, *IDS Bulletin*, 28(2): 35-47
- de Haan, A. (1999). 'Livelihoods and poverty: The role of migration - a critical review of the migration literature', *Journal of Development Studies*, 36(2): 1-47.
- de Haan, A. (2000). Migrants, livelihoods, and rights: the relevance of migration in development policies. Social Development Working Paper 4, London: Social Development Department, UK Department for International Development.
- de Haan, A. (2002). 'Migration and Livelihoods in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of Bihar, India', *Journal of Development Studies*, 38 (5): 115-142.
- de Haan, A. and B. Rogaly (2002). Introduction: Migrant Workers and Their Role in Rural Change, *Journal of Development Studies*, 38(5): 1-14.
- de Haan, A., K. Brock and N. Coulibaly (2002). 'Migration, Livelihoods and Institutions: Contrasting Patterns of Migration in Mali', *Journal of Development Studies*, 38 (5): 37-58.
- Deshingkar, P. (2005). 'Seasonal migration: how rural is rural?' *Opinions*, 52, London: ODI. [Source](#).
- Deshingkar, P. (2006). 'Internal Migration, Poverty and Development in Asia: Including the Excluded'. *IDS Bulletin*, 37 (3): 88-100.

- Deshingkar P., S. Akter, J. Farrington, P. Sharma and S. Kumar (2008). Circular Migration in Madhya Pradesh: Changing patterns and social protection needs, *The European Journal of Development* 20: 612–628.
- Deshingkar, P., and E. Anderson (2004). People on the move: new policy challenges for increasingly mobile populations, Briefing Paper, London: ODI. [Source](#).
- Deshingkar, P., and D. Start (2003). Seasonal Migration for Livelihoods in India: Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion. [Source](#).
- DeWind, J. and J. Holdaway (Eds.) (2008). *Migration and Development within and Across Borders: Research and Policy Perspectives on Internal and International Migration*, Geneva, New York: IoM-SSRC (Social Science Research Council). [Source](#)
- DFID. (2007). *Moving out of Poverty: Making Migration Work Better for Poor People*. London, Department for International Development.
- Dharse, R. (2004). 'Organising inside the home: Domestic workers in Pune.' [Source](#).
- Dobbs, R., S. Smit, J. Remes, J. Manyika, C. Roxburgh and A. Restrepo (2011). Urban world: Mapping the Economic Power of Cities, McKinsey Global Institute. [Source](#).
- Dyson, T. (2001). 'A partial theory of world development: the neglected role of the demographic transition in the shaping of modern society', *International Journal of Population Geography* 7(2): 67-90.
- Ellis, F. (1998). Household strategies and rural livelihood diversification, *Journal of Development Studies*, 35(1): 1-38.
- Ellis, F. (2003). A livelihoods approach to migration and poverty reduction, Norwich: Overseas Development Group, University of East Anglia
- Esser, D. (2009). Who Governs Kabul? Explaining Urban Politics in a Post-War Capital City. [Source](#).
- Esser, D. (2013). 'The Political Economy of Post-invasion Kabul, Afghanistan: Urban Restructuring beyond the North-South Divide', *Urban Studies*, 50(15): 3084–3098.
- Farooqui, R. U., A. Arif and S.F.A. Rafeequi (2008). Safety Performance in Construction Industry of Pakistan', Paper presented at the First International Conference on Construction In Developing Countries (ICCIDC-I) "Advancing and Integrating Construction Education, Research & Practice" August 4-5, 2008, Karachi, Pakistan.
- Fei, J. C. H. and G. Ranis. (1963). Innovation, capital accumulation, and economic development, *The American Economic Review*, 53(3): 283-313.
- Gandhi, A., and M. Walton (2012). Where Do India's Billionaires Get Their Wealth? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(40): 10–14.
- Gazdar, Haris (2003). 'A Review of Migration Issues In Pakistan', Migration, Development Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, Bangladesh, and the Department for International Development, UK, 22-24 June, 2002, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Ghertner, D.A. (2008). 'Analysis of New Legal Discourse behind Delhi's Slum Demolitions', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43 (20): 57-66.
- Ghobadi, N., J. Koettl and R. Vakis (2005) Moving out of poverty: Migration Insights from Rural Afghanistan, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) [Source](#)].
- Gidado, K., and G. Niazi (2012). Causes of project delay in the construction industry in Afghanistan. Paper presented at the EPPM2012, Brighton, UK: University of Brighton. [Source](#).

- Gilbert, A. (1983). 'The tenants of self-help housing: Choice and constraint in the housing markets of less developed countries', *Development and Change*, 14(3): 449-477.
- Gilbert, A. (1987). 'Latin America's urban poor: Shanty dwellers or renters of rooms?', *Cities*, 4(1): 43-51.
- Gilbert, A. and A. Varley (1990). 'Renting a home in a third world city: Choice or constraint?', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 14(1): 89-108.
- Gilles, D. (2014). 'Growing Through Cities in Developing Countries', Policy Working Paper No. 6818, *World Bank Research Observer*, Washington DC: World Bank.
- GoB (2006) Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (Act No. 42 of 2006), Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh.
- GoB. (2014). Bangladesh Population and Housing Census 2011 – National Report Volume 3: Urban Area Report. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) [[Source](#)].
- Gol (2011a). *High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) for estimating the investment requirement for urban infrastructure services*, New Delhi: Government of India.
- Gol (2011b). Census of India 2011, Table C-1, Population by Religious Community [[Source](#)].
- Gol (no date). 'Census of India 2011: Provisional Population Totals Urban Agglomerations and Cities [[Source](#)].
- GoP (2002) Industrial Relations Ordinance, 2002, Islamabad, Government of Pakistan.
- GoP (2010) Punjab Industrial Relations Act 2010. Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Source .
- GoP (2013). 'Chapter 12: Population, Labour Force and Employment', Pakistan Economic Survey 2012-2013.
- GoP (2015). Pakistan Economic Survey 2014-15. Islamabad: Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan [[Source](#)].
- Graeme, H. (2012). 'International Labour Migration and Migration Policies in Southeast Asia', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 40(4): 392–418.
- Greed, C. (2000). 'Women in the Construction Professions: Achieving Critical Mass', *Gender, Work & Organization*, 7(3): 181–196.
- Green, P. (2005). Disaster by Design: Corruption, Construction and Catastrophe, *British Journal of Criminology*, 45: 528-546.
- Guérin, I. and G. Venkatasubramanian (2009). Corridors of migration and chains of dependence: brick kiln moulders in Tamil Nadu. Breman, J., I. Guerin and A. Prakash (Eds.). *India's Unfree Workforce. Of Bondage Old and New*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 170–97.
- Guérin, I., A. Bhukhut, K. Mariou-Gnanou and G. Ventatasubramanian (2009). 'Neobondage, seasonal Migration, and Job Brokers: Cane Cutters in Tamil Nadu'. In J. Breman, I. Guerin and A. Prakash (Eds.). *India's Unfree Workforce. Of Bondage Old and New*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press: 233-259.
- Harris, N. (1986). *The end of the Third World: the Newly Industrialising Countries and the Decline of an Ideology*, IB Tauris, Penguin, Viking: London and New York.
- Harris, N. (1990). Urbanisation and economic development, ODA-commissioned paper for French Government conference of international aid donors, Lille, Nov. 1989, published in *Les Villes: Moteurs du developpement economique des pays du Tiers Monde*, Ville de Lille, Vo.2.
- Harris, N. (1992). The urban contribution to national economic growth in Nepal, Royal Government of Nepal (mimeo). UNDP/World Bank, 1991/DPU Working Paper 60, DPU, London.

- Harris, N., C. Rosser and S. Kumar (1996). *Jobs for the Poor: A Case Study in Cuttack*. London, UCL Press.
- Harriss, J., K. P. Kannan and G. Rodgers (1990). *Urban labour market structure and job access in India: A study of Coimbatore*. Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.
- Harvey, D. (2003). *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Harvey, D (2004). 'The 'new' imperialism: accumulation by dispossession'. *Socialist Register*, 40: 63-87.
- Hasan, A., and M. Mohib (2003). 'Understanding Slum Reports: The Case of Karachi, Pakistan' [[Source](#)].
- Hasan, A., and M. Raza (2011). *Migration and Small Towns in Pakistan*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Hassan, H. A. and J. Houdmont (2014). 'Health and safety implications of recruitment payments in migrant construction workers', *Occupational Medicine*, 64: 331–336.
- Hindu, The (2015) Rustice Regupathy Commisison report on Moulivakkam tragedy tabled in TN assembly, 25 August. [[Source](#)].
- ILO (2001). *The Construction Industry in the Twenty-first Century: Its Image, Employment Prospects and Skill Requirements*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.
- ILO (2002) Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy, ILC90-PR25-292-En.Doc, Geneva: ILO [[Source](#)].
- ILO (2007). *Construction: Employment and Output Dimensions*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.
- International Relief and Development. (2012). *Capacity Building through Vocational Training: Case Study - Construction Trades Training Centre*, International Relief and Development [[Source](#)].
- IOM (2015) *World Migration Report 2015 – Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility*, Geneva, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)[[Source](#)].
- Ishtiaque, A., and M.S. Ullah (2013). 'The influence of factors of migration on the migration status of rural-urban migrants in Dhaka, Bangladesh', *Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography*, 7(2): 45-52.
- Jatrana, S. and S. K. Sangwan (2004). 'Living on site: health experiences of migrant female construction workers in North India', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 13(1): 61-87.
- Jatrana, S., & S. K. Sangwan (2004). 'Living on site: health experiences of migrant female construction workers in North India', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 13(1): 61–88.
- Jones, H. and Y. Basnett (2013). *Foreign employment and inclusive growth in Nepal*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Kantor, P. (2008). 'Diversification and security? Labour mobilization among urban poor households in Kabul, Afghanistan', *Habitat International*, 32(2): 248–260.
- Karimi, S., & K. Gidado (2012). *Factors Influencing Construction Productivity in Afghanistan*. Paper presented at the EPPM2012, Brighton, UK: University of Brighton.
- Khan, A. and L. Shehnaz (2000). 'Determinants of Internal Migration in Pakistan: Evidence from the Labour Force Survey, 1996-1997'. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 39(4): 695-712.
- Khandelwal, Rajiv (2012). 'Internal migration and labour market integration: Breakthroughs in organizing and collectivizing migrant workers in India.' *Migration Policy Practice*, 2(4): 6-10.
- Khaliq-uz-Zaman and A. A. Baloch (2011). 'Urbanization of Arable Land in Lahore City in Pakistan: A Case-Study'. *Canadian Social Science*, 7(4): 58-66.
- Kundu, A. (2000). 'Globalising Gujarat: Urbanisation, Employment and Poverty', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXV (35/36): 3172-3181.

- Kundu, A. (2009). *Urbanisation and Migration: An Analysis of Trend, Pattern and Policies in Asia*, New York: UNDP.
- Kundu, A. (2011). Trends and processes of urbanisation in India, Urbanization and Emerging Population Issues – 6, London and New York: IIED-UNFPA [[Source](#)].
- Laczko, F. (2008). 'Migration and development: The forgotten Migrants'. In J. DeWind, J. and J. Holdaway (Eds.). *Migration and Development within and Across Borders: Research and Policy Perspectives on Internal and International Migration*, Geneva, New York: IoM-SSRC (Social Science Research Council). [Source](#)
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A Theory of Migration, *Demography* 3(1): 47-57.
- Lerche, J. (2011). The unfree labour category and unfree labour estimates: A continuum within low end labour relations, Working Paper No. 10, *Manchester Papers in Political Economy*, Manchester: University of Manchester. [Source](#).
- Lerche, J. (2015). Personal communication at the UCMnpSA workshop held at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Friday 30 October.
- Levin, M. (2013). The Politics of Dispossession: Theorizing India's Land Wars, *Politics and Society*, 41(3): 351-394.
- Li, L., S.-m. Li and Y. Chen (2010). 'Better city, better life, but for whom?: The hukou and resident card system and the consequential citizenship stratification in Shanghai', *City, Culture and Society*, 1(3): 145-154.
- Lin, X. (2013). *Gender, Modernity and Male Migrant Workers in China: Becoming a 'modern' Man*, London: Routledge.
- Lister, S., & A. Pain (2004). Trading in Power: The Politics of 'free' Markets in Afghanistan, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.
- Meagher, K. (1995). 'Crisis, Informalization and the urban informal sector in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Development and Change*, 26: 259-284.
- Mahapatro, S. R (2012). The Changing Pattern of Internal Migration in India Issues and Challenges, Bangalore: Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC). [Source](#).
- Mander, H., and G. Sahgal (2012). Internal Migration in India: Distress and Opportunities- A Study of Internal Migrants to Vulnerable Occupations in Delhi, Centre for Equity Studies, New Delhi: Centre for Equity Studies. [Source](#).
- Meardi, G., A. Martín and M. L. Riera (2012). Constructing uncertainty : unions and migrant labour in construction in Spain and the UK', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 54(1): 5-21.
- Memon, R. (2005a). 'Determinants and Trends of Internal Migration in Pakistan'. In H. Oda (Ed.). *Internal Labour Migration in Pakistan*, ASED 72, IDE-JETRO: Japan.
- Memon, Rashid (2005b). Pakistan: Internal Migration and Poverty Reduction. Country Paper presented at the Regional Conference on Migration and Development in Asia, Lanzhou China, 14-16 March 2005.
- Metcalfe, V., S. Haysom and E. Martin (2012). Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, ODI HPG Working Papers, London: ODI. [Source](#).
- Ministry of Labour (1991) Report of the Study Group on Migrant Labour, New Delhi: National Commission on Rural Labour, Government of India.
- Ministry of Labour (2002) Report of the Second National Commission on Labour, New Delhi: Government of India.

- Mizsak, N., and A. Monsutti (2014). 'Landscapes of power: local struggles and national stakes at the rural-urban fringe of Kabul, Afghanistan'. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(2): 183–198.
- Monteiro, V. (2006) 'Another India is Possible: Basic Needs, the Unorganized Sector and Science in India'. In M. Malhotra (Ed.) *India: The Next Decade*, New Delhi: Academic Publishers: 247–62.
- Moser, C. O. N. (2007). Asset Accumulation Policy and Poverty Reduction. In C. O. N. Moser (Ed.). *Reducing Global Poverty: The Case for Asset Accumulation*, Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 83-103.
- Mosse, D., S. Gupta, M. Mehta, V. Shah, J. Rees, J. fnms, and KRIBP Project Team (2002). 'Brokered livelihoods: Debt, Labour Migration and Development in Tribal Western India'. *Journal of Development Studies*, 38(5): 59–88.
- Mosse, D. (2010). 'A relational approach to durable poverty, inequality and power.' *Journal of Development Studies* 46(7): 1156–78.
- Mumtaz, B. and K. Noschis (Eds.) (2004). *Development of Kabul Reconstruction and Planning Issues*, Lausanne, Comportements.
- Murie, F. (2003). 'Building Unions in South Asia - Focus on South East Asia', *International Union Rights*, 10(4): 12- 13.
- Muzzini, E. and G Aparicio (2013a). *Urban growth and spatial transition in Nepal: an initial assessment*, Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Muzzini, E., & Aparicio, G. (2013b). *Bangladesh: The Path to Middle-Income Status from an Urban Perspective*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Nabi, A.K.M.N. (1992). 'Dynamics of Internal Migration in Bangladesh', *Canadian Studies in Population*, 19(1): 81-98
- Nair, K. P. (2014). 'The Kerala Construction Labour Welfare Fund', *Working Paper 219*, Geneva: ILO.
- Naraparaju, K. (2014). 'Well-being of Migrant Workers: Perspectives from Daily Labour Markets in Navi Mumbai', *Urban India*, 34(1): 68-86.
- NCEUS (2007). 'Report on Conditions of Work and Promotions of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector' [National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector], India: New Delhi
- Ness, K. (2012). 'Constructing masculinity in the building trades: 'most jobs in the construction industry can be done by women'', *Gender, Work & Organization* 19(6): 654-676.
- Ngai, P. and L. Huilin (2010) 'A culture of violence: The labor subcontracting system and collective action by construction workers in post-socialist China', *The China Journal*, No. 64,
- Nijman, J. (2008). 'Against the odds: Slum rehabilitation in neoliberal Mumbai', *Cities*, 25 (2): 73-85.
- NPC (2013). *An approach paper to the Thirteenth Plan*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal.
- NSSO (2010). *Migration in India*, Report No 533, (64/10.2/2). 2007- 2008, New Delhi: National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi.
- ODI (2008). Opportunity and Exploitation in Urban Labour Markets, Briefing Paper, November, London: ODI.
- Ong, A. and A. Roy (2011). *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*. Sussex: Blackwell.
- Opel, A. (2005). Bound for the City: A Study of Rural Urban Labour Migration in Afghanistan, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Working Paper, Kabul: AREU. [Source](#).

- Padel, F., and S. Das (2010). *Out of This Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*, Hyderabad: Orient Black Swan.
- Pais, J. (2002). 'Casualisation of urban labour force: Analysis of recent trends in manufacturing', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(7): 631-652.
- Pani, N. (2009). 'Resource cities across phases of globalization: Evidence from Bangalore', *Habitat International*, 33(1): 114-119.
- Papola, T. S. and P. P. Sahu (2012). *Growth and structure of employment in India Long-Term and Post-Reform Performance and the Emerging Challenge*, New Delhi: Institute for Studies in Industrial Development. [Source](#).
- Parry, J (2014). 'Sex, bricks and mortar: Constructing class in a central Indian steel town', *Modern Asian Studies*, 48 (5): 1242-1275.
- Parry, J and N. Gooptu (Eds.) (2014). *Persistence of Poverty in India*, New Delhi: Social Science Press.
- Picherit, D (2014). 'Neither a dog, nor a beggar: seasonal labour migration, development, and poverty in Andhra Pradesh'. In J. Parry and N. Gooptu (Eds.). *Persistence of Poverty in India*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 261-290.
- Premchander, S., V. Prameela, S. Banu, K.G. Meenakshi, H. Majunath, and T. Prema (2014). 'The Socio-economic Status of Migrant Construction Workers in Bangalore and Intervention Plan to Improve Their Livelihood', *Urban India*, 34(1): 112-133.
- Raiden, A. and A. Dainty (2006). 'Human resource development in construction organisations, and example of a 'chaordic' learning organisation?', *The Learning Organization*, 13(1): 63-79.
- Rajni, V. (2007). 'Casual Labour Contracts of Agricultural Labourers in East and West Uttar Pradesh', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(2): 154- 160.
- Rashid, S. R. (2013). 'Bangladeshi women's experiences of their men's migration: Rethinking power, agency, and subordination', *Asian Survey*, 53 (5): 883-908.
- Ravenstein, E. G (1885). 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 48(2): 167-235.
- Rogaly, B., D. Coppard, A. Safique, K. Rana, A. Sengupta and J. Biswas (2002). 'Seasonal Migration and Welfare/Ilfare in Eastern India: A Social Analysis', *Journal of Development Studies*, 38 (5): 89-114.
- Roy, T (2007). Sardars, jobbers, kanganies: the labour contractor and Indian economic history, *Modern Asian Studies*, 42(5): 971-98.
- Ruhs, M. and B. Anderson (Eds) (2010). *Who needs migrant workers? Labour shortages, immigration and public policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sanyal, K. and R. Bhattacharyya (2009). 'Beyond the Factory: Globalisation, Informalisation of Production and the New Locations of Labour', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22: 35-44.
- Satterthwaite, D. (1997). 'Urban poverty: Reconsidering its scale and nature', *IDS Bulletin*, 28(2): 9-23.
- Satterthwaite, D. (2007). 'The transition to a predominantly urban world and its underpinnings'. Human Settlements Discussion Paper, London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).
- Satterthwaite, D. and C. Tacoli (2003) The urban part of rural development: The role of small and intermediate urban centres in rural and regional development and poverty reduction. Working Paper 9, Working Paper Series on Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies, London: IIED. [Source](#).

- Schmidt, J.D. (1998). 'Globalisation and inequality in urban South-east Asia', *Third World Planning Review*, 20(2): 127-145.
- Schütte, S. (2006). Poor, Poorer, Poorest: Urban Livelihoods and Vulnerability in Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul: AREU. [Source](#).
- Schütte, S. (2009). 'Informal (In)security in Urban Afghanistan', *Iranian Studies*, 42(3): 465–491.
- Sen, A. (1985). 'Well-being, agency and freedom: the Dewey lectures 1984', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 82(4): 169-221.
- Sevilla-Buitrago, A. (2015). Capitalist Formations of Enclosure, *Antipode*, 47(4): 999-1020.
- Shafique, S. (2007). 'Karachi: Political uncertainty, Ramazan slow down construction sector'. [Source](#).
- Shah, A. (2006). 'The Labour of Love: Seasonal Migration from Jharkhand to the Brick Kilns of Other States in India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 40(1): 91-118.
- Sharma, P. (circa 2013). 'Urbanisation and Development' (Chapter 10). [Source](#).
- Sharma, S., S. Pandey, D. Pathak and B. Sijapati-Basnett (2014). State of Migration in Nepal, Research Paper VI, Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, Social Science Baha. [Source](#).
- Sharma, S., and J. R. Sharma (2011). Enumerating migration in Nepal: A review. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility.
- Shree-DSK (2012). Moving Backwards: Korail slum eviction Dhaka, April 2012. [Source](#).
- Sinha, A., R. Prabhakar and R. Jaiswal (2015). Employment dimension of infrastructure investment: State level input-output analysis, *Employment Working Paper No168*, Employment Policy Department, Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Sivaramakrishnan, K. C., A. Kundu and B.N. Singh (2007). *Handbook of Urbanization in India*, India: Oxford University Press.
- Skeldon, R. (2008). Migration and Development, Paper presented at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in Asia and the Pacific, 20-21 September, Bangkok, Thailand (UN/POP/EGM-MIG/2008/4). [Source](#).
- Smita (2008). *Distress Seasonal Migration and its Impact on Children's Education - CREATE Pathways to Access Research Monograph No. 28*, Brighton: Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity.
- Soundararajan, V. (2013). 'Construction Workers', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48(23): 21–25.
- Spence, M. and P. C. Annez (Eds.) (2009). *Urbanization and Growth*, Commission on Growth and Development, Washington DC: World Bank. [Source](#).
- Srivastava, R. (2005). India Internal Migration Links with Poverty and Development. In country paper, regional conference on Migration and Development in Asia, Lanzhou, China, 14-16 March 2005.
- Srivastava, R., and S. K. Sasikumar (2003). An overview of migration in India, its impacts and key issues. Paper presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, Dhaka, 22-24 June. [Source](#).
- Stark, O. (1991). *The Migration of Labour*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Subedi, B.P. (1991). International migration in Nepal: Towards an analytical framework. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 18(1): 83-102.
- Tacoli, C. (Ed.) (2006). *The Earthscan Reader in Rural-Urban Linkages*. London, Earthscan.
- Tilly, C. (1999). *Durable inequality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Todaro, M. (1976). *Internal Migration in Developing Countries*. Geneva: ILO.
- Todaro, M. (1991). *Economic Development in the Third World*. London: Orient Longman.
- Torres, R., R. Heyman, S. Munoz, L. Apgar, E. Timm, C. Tzintzun, C. R. Hales, J. Mckiernan-Gonzalez, S. Speed and E. Tang (2013). 'Building Austin, building justice: Immigrant construction workers, precarious labor regimes and social citizenship', *Geoforum* 45: 145-155.
- Tucker, S. (2010). *Social Networks and Rural Migrant Workers' Wage Levels: Evidence from Hyderabad, India*, Unpublished Dissertation for a Research Masters in International and Development Economics, Université Paris-Dauphine (Dauphine).
- Turner, J.F.C. (1968). 'Housing priorities, settlement patterns and urban development in modernising countries', *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 34 (5): 354-63
- Turner, J.F.C. (1976). *Housing by People*. London: Marion Boyars.
- UN-DESA (1998). *Measuring Changes in Consumption and Production Patterns*. New York: Population Division, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)
- UN-DESA (2013). *World Population Policies*, New York: Population Division, UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA).
- UN-DESA (2014). *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/352)*. New York: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA).
- UN-DESA (2015). *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision - Key Findings and Advance Tables*, New York: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA).
- UNESCO and UNICEF (2013). *Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India*, Internal Migration in India Initiative, New Delhi: UNESCO-UNICEF. [Source](#).
- UN-Habitat (2010) 'Chapter 1: Development Context and the Millennium Agenda' [Revised and updated version (April 2010)], *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, Nairobi: UN-Habitat. [Source](#).
- Unruh, J. and M. Shalaby (2012). Road infrastructure reconstruction as a peacebuilding priority in Afghanistan: Negative implications for land rights. In D. Jensen and S. Lonergan (Eds.). *Assessing and Restoring Natural Resources in Post Conflict Peacebuilding*, London: Earthscan.
- Vaid, K.N. (1999). *The construction industry in Nepal: The challenge of manpower development*. Mumbai: National Institute of Construction Management and Research.
- Vaid, K. N., and G. Singh (1966). *Contract Labour in Construction Industry: A Study in Rajasthan*, New Delhi: Shri Ram Centre Press.
- Van der Loop, T. (1999). *Industrial Dynamics and Fragmented Labour Markets: Construction Firms and Labourers in India*. Geographical Studies 139, Royal Dutch Geographical Society Utrecht and Department of Human Geography, University of Amsterdam.
- Vanamala, M. (2001). 'Informalisation and feminisation of a formal sector industry ', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(26): 2378-2389.
- Vasudevan, A., C. McFarlane and A. Jeffrey A (2008). 'Spaces of enclosure', *Geoforum*, 39(5):1641–1646.
- Verma, R. (2002) *Second Labour Commission Report, Report of the National Commission on Labour, Volume I (Part 1)* New Delhi: Aakalank Publications.
- Weinstein, L. (2008). 'Mumbai's Development Mafias: Globalization, Organized Crime and Land Development', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32(1): 22-39

- Wells, J. (1984). 'The construction industry in the context of development: A new perspective', *Habitat International*, 8(3/4): 9-28.
- Wells, J. (2006). Labour Mobilisation in the Construction Industry. Paper presented at: CIB W107 Construction in Developing Countries International Symposium entitled *Construction in Developing Economies: New Issues and Challenges*, 18-20 January, Santiago, Chile. [Source](#).
- Wells, J. (2007). 'Informality in the construction sector in developing countries', *Construction Management and Economics*, 25(1): 87-93.
- Wells, J. and A. Jason (2013). "Employment relationships and organizing strategies in the informal construction sector," *African Studies Quarterly*, 11(2 & 3): 107-124.
- Wiggins, S. and S. Keats (2014). Rural wages in Asia. London, Overseas Development Institute.
- Wills, J. (2009). 'Subcontracted employment and its challenge to labor', *Labor Studies Journal*, 34(4): 441-460.
- World Bank and UNHCR (2011). Afghanistan: Research study on IDPs in urban settings, World Bank and UNHCR. [Source](#).
- Yusufzai, A. (2004, December 7). AFGHANISTAN: It's Boom Time for Pakistani Construction Workers. Inter Press Service News Agency. PESHAWAR, Pakistan [[Source](#)].
- Zeitlyn, B., & P. Deshingkar with B. Holtom (2014). Internal and Regional Migration for Construction Work: A Research Agenda, Working Paper 14. Sussex: University of Sussex. [Source](#).

the  
**URBANISATION**  
**CONSTRUCTION**  
**MIGRATION**  
**nexus** <sup>(UCMn<sup>SA</sup>)</sup>  
in **5 CITIES** in  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Afghanistan **KABUL**  
Bangladesh **DHAKA**  
India **CHENNAI**  
Nepal **KATHMANDU**  
Pakistan **LAHORE**



**Appendices**

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## INFORMATION REQUESTED FOR THE MAPPING EXERCISE AND BEYOND

Outlined below is some basic background information we are asking all project partners to collect during the period of this research. We do not expect all of this to be gathered at the mapping stage but as an on-going activity to begin now and continue as the investigation develops. However, we encourage you to gather as much as possible before the more intense fieldwork begins, as it would be useful to include some of this information in the progress and interim reports. As always, do let us know if you have any questions.

### On data more generally

If during the course of the research (or in your recent knowledge) you are aware of any data collected by international donor agencies within the remit of the project (for instance, UNDP and USAID work directly with universities on most of their activities) it would be great if you could contact those responsible directly to try and get further information about data availability/sharing capacity; and/or let us know about it and we will contact them directly.

Our quantitative researcher would like to have access to as many statistical sources on labour and migration as possible and your input in terms of what is available locally is very welcome. In this sense, if you have knowledge and/or access to State-level (for federal states) and any local-level (for centralised states) labour surveys or economic surveys, please let us know (or collect directly if possible).

### Definitions

1. The 'urban' means different things in different places, and has distinct implications for municipal governance, finances, power structures, etc. We'd like to know how 'the urban' is officially defined in your city and country, and what implications this definition has for how the city is administered, how local versus national governments deal with financial aspects, etc. What are the city's spatial zones and how does planning and governance work in relation to them?
2. Similarly, depending on the country context, who is considered an official (or unofficial) 'migrant' varies in terms of local histories, policies, conflict-environments, etc. While our literature review exercise has begun to identify these definitions, if you could provide additional sources of local information about what 'a migrant' is, and how these definitions may have particular relationships to local politics/policies (of welfare, for example) that would be very helpful.
3. If you could also consult and/or let us know of any local statistical sources or information that records migration patterns and flows (beyond national Census or Labour Force Surveys) that would be great. If these are accessible from abroad, our quantitative researcher can use these.

### City-level

1. Full scale maps: it would be ideal if you can find official maps corresponding to your city which show how it is divided, emphasizes administrative divisions, etc.
2. Growth (of the city): we would like to have the most relevant and/or recent information, as per local government documents or literature only available in-country, of the following city-growth factors:
  - a. Population growth - both city specific, and in relation to other major cities and the country;
  - b. Demographic changes - both city specific, and in relation to other major cities and the country;

- c. Spatial growth – how has the city, locally defined, grown over the years.
3. Income and labour: In order to be able to comment on changing consumption patterns and social classes, we would like to have information regarding income patterns (particularly in construction, of course).
    - a. Income changes over the years (median and mean, at national city and any other local level available);
    - b. Sources of income over time;
    - c. Consumption patterns – what are the main sectors of consumption (including real estate)
    - d. Labour wages (local and migrant – the latter will be gathered during the interviews with migrants, but if there is information general available, it will be useful) in the construction sector (as detailed information as possible – by the level of skill – unskilled, semi-skilled or skilled as locally defined).

### Construction

We expect that most of the information below can be gathered either from local authority/policy personnel, planners or builders:

1. When (year/s) did the construction boom (growth) begin in your country and city? This will be considered the 'baseline' year.
2. Is this construction boom concentrated within the city limits, at the periphery or both? Is there a clear trend or is it mixed?
3. Are there construction 'seasons' in your city? If so, what are these seasons exactly and what determines them? How do seasons of construction work interact with the time/length of a project?
4. Are construction workers in your city predominantly seasonal or daily wage? Or is it mixed?
5. What are the future plans (construction wise) over the next five years for the city?

**MAPPING EXERCISE- Letter for city X**

Dear

The exercise involves searching, identifying, assessing and collecting appropriate material about on as many large construction sites as possible in XX. Each country defines 'large' (or size) in slightly different ways. Moreover, what is large, medium and small will have different definitions depending on project typology (see attached basic form). We'd expect information to be gathered on 'medium' ones only if these are in fact copious (with much investment) and clearly forming part of the consumption aspect of urbanization process defined by the project. However, idea is to concentrate on larger projects.

We have attached a template 'Mapping Chart' of the kind of information that should be gathered for each of the construction sites seen/identified. We hope this will be helpful- and it is entirely flexible. You are welcome to add to this as you see fit- and we can discuss further in our next talk or via email. As you will see, it has 'instructions' in the bottom that indicate a very basic protocol for researchers when approaching sites. You are of course knowledgeable with these methods, and can/should of course modify this as per your country context, and we can discuss further too.

The other things we ask from this exercise are:

- It would be ideal if you can map the locations by GPS onto a google map and consolidate all locations in the end so we can visualize the geography of sites;
- We'd also like to see images of sites (and/or workers, the area, etc.), if and where possible;
- In addition to the straightforward 'mapping', we would expect some further comments and observations to be included in progress reports, where any additional 'inside' information that cannot be recorded by the schematic chart but which is clearly relevant to the project and its development is conveyed. For instance (and this is just from some of the things that have been coming across in other places- the kind of information that you get in XX will we are sure be unexpected in many cases), you may find that similar explanations are being given by project managers about why they can or cannot interview workers in subsequent project stage; they may be getting some clear ideas about why projects are getting delayed; about who the funders are or type of migrant workers involved. This will be 'field information' gathered either directly from people spoken to on site, or in the course of the project- with other informants, or just senses of what's going on. In this sense, please do encourage your field workers to keep field notes;
- Once mapping has begun, it would be good to get weekly updates of progress;
- In these, we'd like to know the reasoning and methodology employed in the mapping exercise (for example- did you divide the city into zones and if so which and why; did you start by busy areas first and then move out, etc.) This should help explain your subsequent work-plan;
- In the updating reports, please also include a description of how the city is administratively divided (into zones, districts, etc.) and give a description insofar as possible of how these various areas work in relation to the city as a whole (some are more residential than others, some financial or commercial- which and where, etc.). If this can include a brief indication of how these zones and spatial relationships have been changing since the base-line year identified for the study, this would be good as well- but the latter can also be part of the subsequent interim report;

- We would expect relevant grey literature (including local media) to be kept up with and included in reports and final bibliography if/where appropriate;
- Finally, so that we can have a joint platform of exchange, we'd like it if you can set up a shared drop box folder where you can deposit the documentation being gathered (by day/ week, etc.- whatever classification suits best) in terms of maps, images, charts, relevant literature, etc.

At this stage, we would like to be as flexible as possible with the design and methods you use to gather mapping information- so please feel free to work in relation to your country realities and to amend the above according to your knowledge. If you have any doubts you'd like clarified immediately, please do let us know.

Sunil Kumar and Melissa Fernandez

**Mapping of Large-Scale Construction Projects in City X**

No	Type of construction project	Name of Project	Name of contractor	Financial source	Location	Number of workers	Proportion of Migrants	Start Date	Expected completion Date	Notes/Other remarks
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										

**Instructions**

- If you see a large construction site, write the name of the Project and GPS location of the project.
- Introduce yourself as a researcher (local context). Show them your ID if necessary and other local information as suitable.
- Ask to be introduced to the labour contractor. If there is no labour contractor, ask to meet the site supervisor.
- Introduce yourself to the labour contractor or contractor in charge and ask for 5 minutes of his time.
- If there is agreement, ask the questions in the form. If he does not agree, ask for a time when you can revisit.
- If at any point the contractor or the in charge asks you for the purpose of the visit, tell them you are working on a project about urbanisation in (city X) and relationship with migrants.

**Definitions**

**Form of construction project:** residential, commercial, infrastructure, industrial.

**Name of Project:** Name associated to future development.

**Name of contractor:** if you cannot get the name of contractor, give name of person spoken to and position.

**Financial source:** public (national or international), private (corporate or personal).

**Location:** specific location, and area.

**Number of workers:** total number given by person spoken to (number of workers on site may vary by stage of project, try getting as much information as possible).

**Prop. Migrants to total workers** (again, this may vary by stage of project development- we'd like to get idea of total migrants employed in duration of entire development but can also work with proportion per stage).

**Start Date:** when project began.

**Expected completion date:** when it hopes to finish. Please state if delays are expected.

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing

## URBANISATION-CONSTRUCTION MIGRATION NEXUS IN FIVE CITIES IN SOUTH ASIA PROJECT

*[Part of a five-city South Asian study being funded by the **Department for International Development** (Government of the UK), South Asia Research Hub, New Delhi, India and conducted by the **London School of Economics**, London, UK.]*

### SCHEDULE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS – INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY

Note: This schedule was modified to suit the specific country and city context.

#### Objective:

To discuss with migrant labour, the causes for and conditions and experience of inter-state migration, its trade-offs in the short run and prospects for the long term.

#### Reference Data:

Date: 2014 Interviewers:

Project/Location:

Employer:

Name of Principal Respondent:

Mobile Number

Ref. No.

Sex	Age	Education	Religion

#### A. MIGRATION HISTORY & EXPERIENCE:

1. When did you first **come to [City]**?

a) From where?

2. Where is home?

a) Village/Town:

b) District:

c) State:

3. **Why** did you decide to **come to [City]**?

4. Did you come alone **or with others**?

a) If with others, were they family or friends and how many?

5. Did you **already know** people in **[City]**?

a) Are there many people from your village/town or district in **[City]**?

6. Did you **help others** from your village/town or district **find work** here?

Or, do you wish to help others come and work in **[City]**?

7. **Steps to Migration** – within own State to current employer (First Respondent only):

Step	Year	City	State/Division/District	Employer (city only)	Costs	Own/Loan
A						
B						
C						
D						

**B. RECRUITMENT PRACTICES:**

8. **Who recruited** you and how?
- What were the **terms/incentives** promised?
  - Did you receive an **advance** before you left home?
  - If yes, how much and on what terms?
  - Did you sign a bond or some other document?
9. What **kind of contract/arrangement** do you have with your employer?
- Do you **get** the **wages promised** to you before coming?
  - Do you still have to answer to the person who recruited you?
  - Will you continue to work with this employer after this project?
  - If yes, why?
  - If no, what will you do after?

**C. WORK HISTORY, SKILLS & TRAINING:**

10. Have you **worked on construction sites before** coming to Chennai?
- If yes, where and doing what?
  - If no, what work did you do at home?
  - When and where did you learn your current skills?
  - Did you get any formal training on this or other project sites in Chennai?
11. Is your trade/skill related to your caste/community?
- If so, how?
  - If not, which do you like more?
12. Do any of your **older family members** also work in **construction**?
- If yes, since when?
13. Do any of your **children** work in **construction**?
- If yes, how did they become construction workers?
  - What work do they do now and where?

**D. CONDITIONS OF WORK & WAGES:**

14. What **kind of work** do you do?
- Do you like it?
  - Would you like to be doing some other work on site?
15. What are your **working hours**? Mon-Sat: \_\_\_\_\_ Sundays: \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you get a weekly holiday?
  - Are hours of work in excess of 8 hours/day counted as over-time?
  - If yes, what is the OT rate applied:      x1.0/                      x1.5/                      x2.0

16. **Wages** received by you and your family (if applicable):

	Respondent	M/F	Age	Designation	Daily Wage	Monthly Cumulative Earnings after deductions to advances
A						
B						
C						
D						

17. **Standard deductions** from wages towards: Advances:

a) Other deductions, specify:

18. **Frequency** of wage payments: Weekly/Fortnightly/Monthly      Regular/Irregular

19. Do you **send money home**?

a) If yes, at what frequency?      Weekly/Monthly/As Needed      Amount:

b) If no, how much will you take back when you return?

20. What will the **money be used** for?

a)                      Daily Consumption Expenses:

b)                      Monthly Rents/Chits/Loan Repayments:

c)                      Education:

d)                      Health/Marriage/Migration/Other:

e)                      Land/Savings:

21. How much do you **spend every day/week** here?

a) If you drink/smoke, how much do you spend every day/week on

Liquor:                                      Tobacco products:

22. To whom do you take your **grievances/complaints**?

a) How are these generally resolved?

23. Are you treated with **dignity** by supervisors, security guards, contractors and other project staff?

a) If no, can you give an example?

b) Are migrant workers from the same district/state hired to work as supervisors?

24. What is your experience of **accidents** on construction sites?

a) What are the work safety practices followed on your project site?

b) Do you think these are good enough?

c) If no, what more needs to be done?

## **E. LIVING CONDITIONS IN CHENNAI:**

25. If you live in a **labour camp**:

a) Is it on-site or off-site?

b) How many workers in all are living in your camp?

- c) How many children live in your camp?
  - d) What is the **size** of a typical **room**?
  - e) How many workers share a typical room?
  - f) Are your family members living with you?
  - g) Are you allowed to go out of the camp whenever you want?
26. Where will you live once the **project is finished**?
- a) Will your employer help you find/secure a place to live?
27. What are the **benefits or problems** of living in a labour camp on-site or off-site?
28. If you **do not live in a labour camp** but elsewhere:
- a) How did you find it and who do you live with?
  - b) If it is rented, what is the monthly rent & other charges?
  - c) How far do you have to travel to work?
  - d) How do you travel to work and what does it cost?
29. What are the **benefits or problems** of living in a place of your choice?
30. Whether living in a labour camp or other housing, do you have access to these  
**Basic Amenities:** Provision: Yes/No    Sufficient/Deficient:    Quality: OK/Poor
- a) Water for Drinking:
  - b) Water for Washing:
  - c) Toilet:
  - d) Electricity:
31. Do you **cook** for yourself/family or is there a group-kitchen?
- a) How many meals do you eat per day?
  - b) What does it normally include?
  - c) Are weekends special?
  - d) If a group-kitchen, who runs it and on what terms?

**F. WOMEN & CHILDREN-RELATED PRIORITIES:**

32. Are you **married**?
- a) If yes, do you have young children?
  - b) If male, and your family is at home, how does your wife manage?
33. If you are a family unit, who manages the income?
34. Are **female** family members engaged in **construction**?
- a) Are the tasks that women perform essential?
  - b) Should they be paid the same as men?
35. Do your **children work** along with you?
- a) If yes, how old are they and what do they do?
  - b) Are children below 14 working on your project site?
  - c) If yes, how many?

36. Do your **children go to crèche/school**?
- If no, why not?
  - Is there a crèche on site?
  - If yes, who runs it?
37. If **female**, do you feel **safe** here?\*
- (\*Note: Ask with care and only if the women are alone or with children.)
- If you have personal or work-related grievances, whom do you go to for help?
38. Are women and children on site **treated with dignity** by supervisors, security guards, contractors and other project staff?
- If no, can you give an example?

### G. WELFARE, CIVIC SERVICES & RIGHTS:

39. Have you **fallen ill** more often after leaving home?
- Do you suffer from any chronic illness?
  - If yes, since when have you had it?
  - What does it cost you to treat per week/month?
  - Is there a doctor's clinic nearby?
  - What does it cost to consult the doctor there?
40. If you were suddenly unable to work, would you go back home?
41. Are there **organisations** that support you in case of a problem?
- Whom do you turn to for help if there is an accident on the site?
  - How do they assist?
42. Are you aware of any **legislation** that protects your rights?
- Are you a member of a union or other mass organization?
  - If yes, which one?
  - Are you a registered with the TN Construction Workers Welfare Board?
  - Do you have a TN Voter ID or Ration Card?
  - If not, did you attempt to get either one?
43. Did you vote in the last General Elections (2014)?
- If no, was it because you were away from home?
44. Can you speak the local language?
- Do you have relations with the **local** people?
  - Do you shop at the local markets?
45. Are you treated with **dignity by the local people and government officials**?
- If no, can you give an example?
  - Have you or other workers you know, ever faced intimidation by the police?

**H. SOCIO-ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AT HOME:**

46. Do/did you **have land at home**? Own/ Share-cropped  
 a) If yes, what is/was the extent? Irrigated: Rain-fed:  
 b) If yes, what did you grow on it and how much?  
 c) If you had land but sold it, for how much?  
 d) If you were a share-cropper, what was the rent?  
 e) If no, did you work on land belonging to others?  
 f) If yes, how many of your family worked & what wages were you paid?  
 g) Also, how many days of work could you get per year?
47. Is **NREGS** work available in your village/town or district?\*
- a) Have you or your family members worked on NREGS sites?  
 b) If yes, what were the wages paid?
48. Do you have a **house in your village/town**?
49. In your home/village, did you have access to these
- |                         |                   |                       |                  |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| <b>Basic Amenities:</b> | Provision: Yes/No | Sufficient/Deficient: | Quality: OK/Poor |
| a) Water for Drinking:  |                   |                       |                  |
| b) Water for Washing:   |                   |                       |                  |
| c) Toilet:              |                   |                       |                  |
| d) Electricity:         |                   |                       |                  |
| <b>Social Services:</b> | Available: Yes/No | Sufficient/Deficient: | Quality: OK/Poor |
| e) PDS: *               |                   |                       |                  |
| f) Health Care:         |                   |                       |                  |
| g) School:              |                   |                       |                  |
| h) Markets:             |                   |                       |                  |
50. How often do you visit home?  
 a) Are you permitted to visit your home when necessary?
51. What **caste/community\*\*** do you belong to?  
 a) ST/ SC/ MBC/ BC/ OC/ Not Applicable  
 b) Did your caste/community actively support you?  
 c) Did friction/conflicts with other caste/community groups force you to migrate?
52. Do you have **debts** at home?  
 a) If yes, how much and at what interest?  
 b) If yes, who was the lender?
53. Have you **lost land or livelihood due to a project**, mining or deforestation?  
 a) If yes, can you give details?
54. Has **agriculture in your village/town** declined over the last 20 years?  
 a) If yes, why?

55. Has your **access to common water resources**, grazing lands or forests been restricted or denied over the last 20 years?
- a) Do you know of land-grabbing instances in your village/town?
56. Has your village/town or region suffered from **large scale mining or deforestation**?
- a) If yes, can you describe the problems faced?
57. Have you seen **changes in the quality of the air, water and soil of your region**?
- a) If yes, what sort of changes and why?
58. Has the **incidence of hunger and/or disease increased**?
- a) If yes, can you give examples?

**I. PROGNOSIS & ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE:**

59. Do you plan to **continue living and working in Chennai**?
- a) If yes, what are your hopes for the future here?
- b) If no, where will you go and why?
- c) With whom, when?
- d) Do you wish to go abroad for work?
60. If things continue the way they are, what do you see as the **future of your children**?
61. Can you imagine **an alternate world** for your children/grand children?

This page is deliberately blank to enable double sided printing