

## Working and Living Condition of Indian Emigrants in the Gulf Countries- Experience from Gulf Returnees

Snigdha Banerjee, Ph.D Scholar, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India



### **INTRODUCTION**

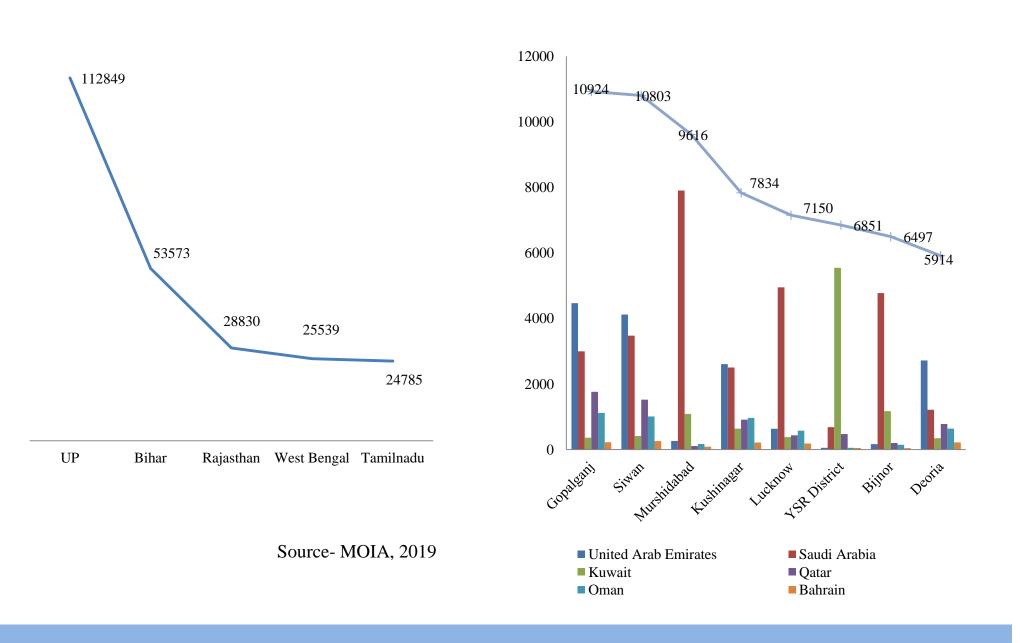
## ☐ Gulf countries have some of the most substantial numbers of temporary labor migrants in the world. Driven by oil wealth, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have undergone remarkable economic development over the last few decades, drawing both skilled and semi-skilled workers (Nair, 1999).

- ☐ Migrant workers are more inclined towards '3-D' jobs (dangerous, dirty, and degrading) which local workers are unwilling to avail. These jobs included Construction, Agricultural laborers, Low-skill service industry, Manufacturing, Domestic servants, Mining (Ganji, 2016).
- ☐ Migrant workers often fill undesirable and low-skill positions (Donini, 2019). The jobs are characterized by lack of legal protection, low-pay for long working hours, insecurity, and an unsafe working environment. Undocumented migrants are especially prone to exploitation since they have a fear of losing job and imprisonment.

### RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

- ☐ Indian labor migration to the Middle East and return migration from these countries has an important dimensions since the 1970s.
- ☐ Murshidabad district is regarded as one of the backward districts of West Bengal (HDI-0.41), having high concentration of Muslim population (67 percent) reflecting high rural population (80 percent), lower agricultural output, skewed distribution of land, These situations are considered as the leading factors of heavy out-migration from the district.
- ☐ Some districts of West Bengal like, Malda, Nadia, North 24 Parganas have a trend of Gulf migration and return migration, but the scenario is very prominent in the Murshidabad district (Ali, 2018).
- ☐ Return migration is mainly affected by "push" factors in host countries rather than "pull' factors in the place of origin. Hundreds of Gulf returnees got cheated either by the hands of travel agents or by the employers in the Gulf countries. Many returnees decide to move back to their home country due to worse living and working conditions abroad (Chobanyan, 2013; Alberts & Hazen, 2005).
- □ So, it is utmost important to address the problems of Gulf emigrants, particularly their working and living conditions.

### **Gulf Country Wise Emigration Clearance Obtained by Indian States** and Districts, 2019



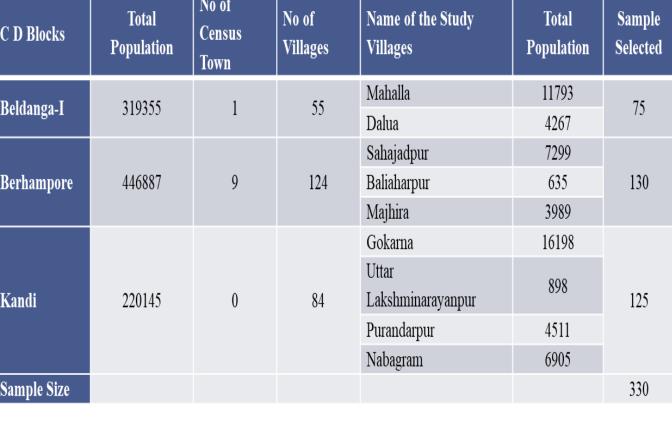
## **OBJECTIVE**

☐ Examine the living and working condition in the Gulf countries of the emigrants during their migration journey.

## DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

## >Study Area

The study was based on Primary survey in Murshidabad district. Seven villages were identified from three blocks to carry out the present study. These three blocks have a long history of Gulf emigration.



## Source- District Census Handbook, 2011

## **Inclusion Criteria**

The respondents who had worked in any Middle East countries for at least two years and returned to their villages at least one year before the survey were considered.

## Sample Size and Survey Instrument

With the help of snowball technique total 330 Gulf return migrants were personally interviewed with structured interview scheduled and also 10 Case Study and 12 Key Informant Interviews were conducted with the help of semi-structured interview scheduled.

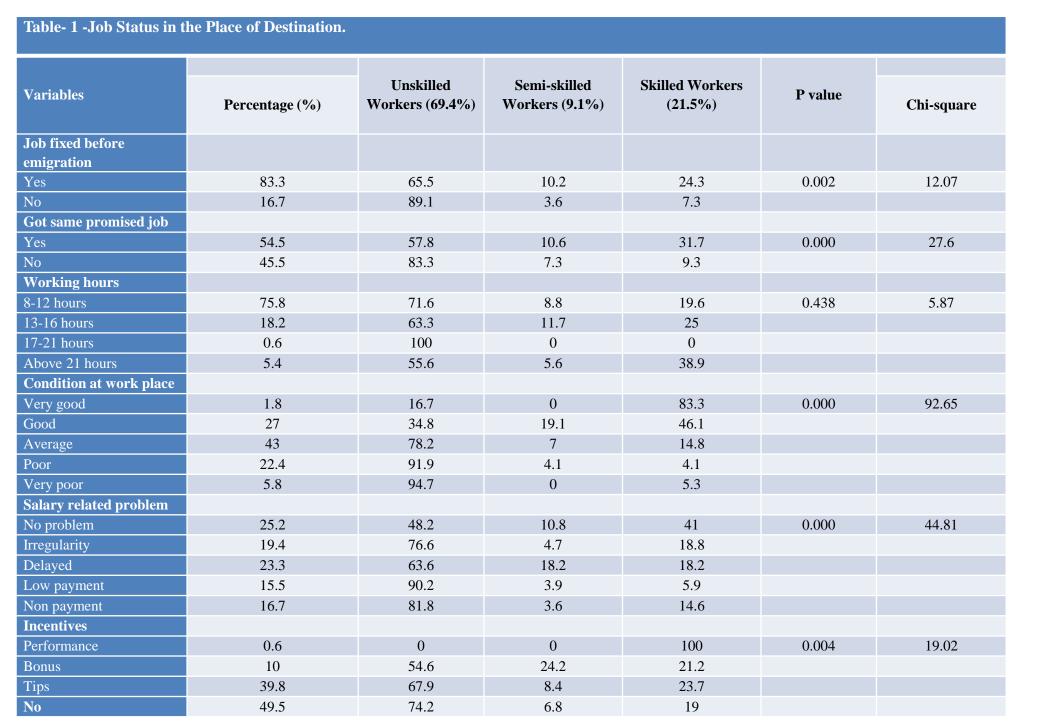
## > Methodology

• Descriptive statistics and Chi square test has been used for the further analysis

### RESULTS

■ 2-5 years ■ 6-9 years ■ Above 9 years

# **Destination Countries Duration of Staying in Abroad**



In this study, 31 different job profiles of Gulf returnees were observed. So for better understanding, the job profiles have been classified into 3 broad categories namely: unskilled, semiskilled and skilled labors. Unskilled workers comprised of agricultural workers, cattle rearing, cleaning, gardening, day labor and contributed to 69.4% of the gulf returnees. Further, Semi-skilled workers comprised of OT helper in hospitals, AC helper, chocolate packing, housekeeping, curtain setter, dates processing, mirror workers, book keeping in library, office helper, water supplier, waiter, security guard, cold drink supplier, tea boy and contributed to 9.1% of the Gulf returnees. Lastly, skilled workers comprised of constructional workers, carpenter, chemist, electrician, driver, mechanics, painter, plumbers, salesman, cook, and supervisor and contributed to 21.5% of the Gulf returnees.

### **Job Fixed up before Emigration**

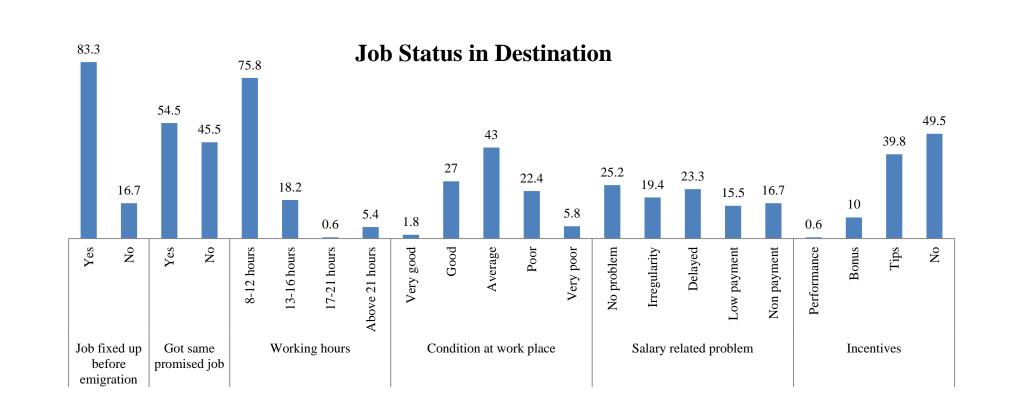
"Agents give hope about respectable jobs before traveling. But migrants mainly are involved in driving and cleaning jobs in the Arab Countries. To earn more, migrants tend to do overtime in foreign countries and end up breaking the rules and caught by the local police. Those who stay in jail for long times are deported by the foreign Government". (KII- Mahula Gram Panchayat Head, Age-37)

### **Salary Related Problem**

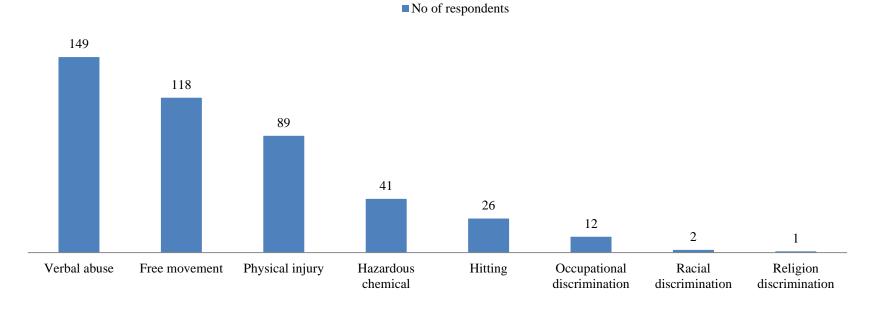
"I stayed for six long years in Saudi. But for the last six months, my company did not pay my salary. I used to work 10 hours a day. They cut down around 60000 Rupees of my salary. I complained to the Indian Embassy, but nothing happened.". (Age-37 Sahajadpur village)

## **Working Hours**

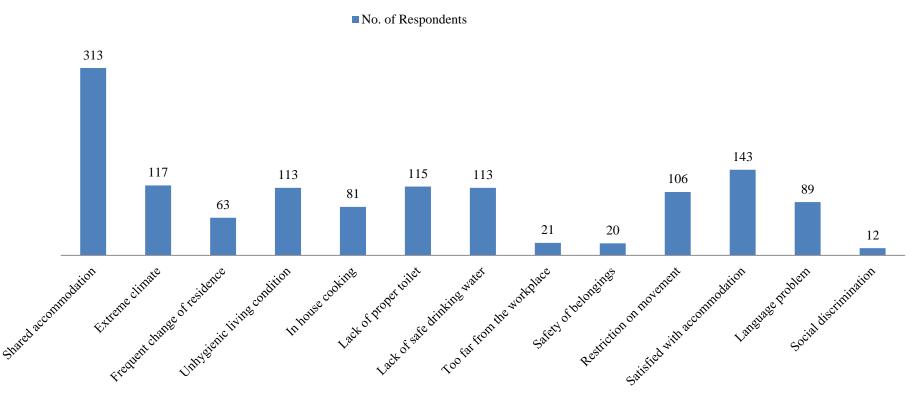
"I used to do some extra work after my duty hours' was over. I had to do it in a very risky way as it was strictly prohibited in Saudi Arabia, but still, I managed it somehow. My salary was not sufficient to send a good amount of remittance. I had no other option but working overtime or do extra work. I did nine hours' duty and after that, I did overtime also. So, on an average I worked for 15 hours a day. It was becoming very hectic, but to overcome the economic condition of my family, I had to do it. If I did not go to work for one day, they used to cut down my salary.... One day local police caught me and sent me to jail. I spent 45 days in jail...... After which they deported me to India. Now for next five years, I cannot migrate to the Gulf countries". (Return migrant, Age-40, Illiterate, Returned from Saudi Arabia)



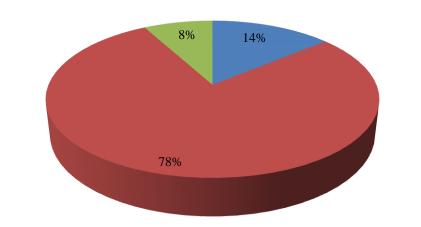
## **Problems Faced at Work Place**



## **Problems Faced at Living Place in Destination**



### **Quality of Life at Destination** ■Poor ■Average ■Good



We have taken variables related to living as well as working conditions at destination. A total of 15 variables were selected to compute the quality of life Index and for these responses were sought on 'yes' and 'no'. The score given for each response were 1= 'Yes' 0= 'No'. A higher score value indicates better quality of life. Score was divided in three groups i.e. poor (1-5), average (6-10), and good (11-15).

I got office cleaning work with a salary of 700 Riyals at destination place. They provided me one small room at the terrace of the office. It was in a very bad condition. The room was built by asbestos. There was no AC even. I felt sick because of this unhygienic environment. They never consider us as a human being. Due to my illness, I returned to my village. I will never migrate again". (Age-29 returnee, Sahajadpur village)

### CONT.....

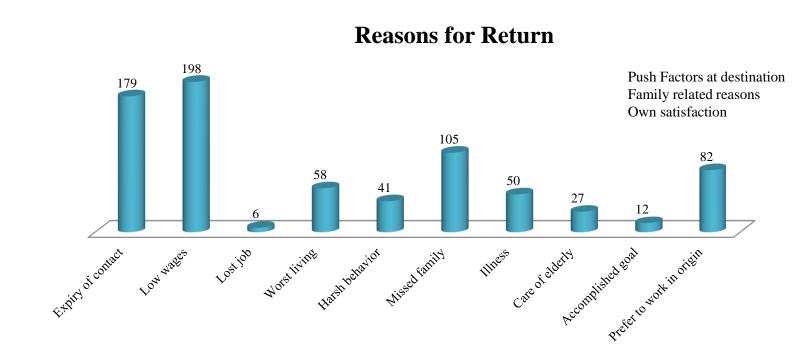


Table- 2: Living Condition and Availability of Food at Place of Destination		
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Variables		
Staying at destination		
Company provided room/camp	298	90.3
Hotel	1	0.3
Hostel	8	2.4
Shared own rented room	6	1.8
Religious places	1	0.3
Road/ desert	9	2.7
Employer's own home	7	2.1
Status of living		
Free accommodation only	268	81.2
Free food only	4	1.2
Both free	48	14.6
None free	10	3.0
Food satisfactory		
Yes	41	12.4
No	289	87.6
Type of food		
Free food	36	10.9
Subsidized rate	13	3.9
Normal price	3	0.9
Food made by emigrants own	278	84.2

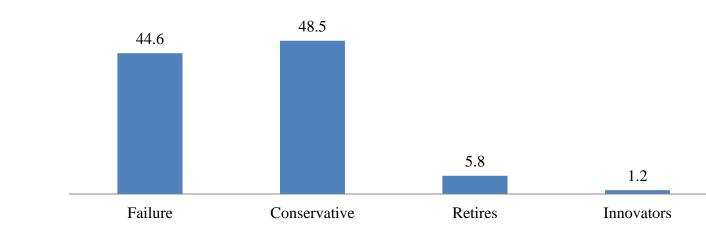
"My income was 800 Riyals per month. The company used to provide us two meals per day. But they only offered us two slices of bread, and if we asked for onion, they charged to us 3 Riyals for it. We faced tremendous problems in terms of food and lodging. The standard of food and accommodation was inferior. The company did not provide even AC. We encountered a scarcity of water. Even for one-time bathing, we faced water problem. We were not be able to wash our clothes for months. There was no leisure time. We could not sit together for chatting. Every time, local police used to come and ask for the ID card. We used to go very far from our camp for Namaz, as they did not allow us to read Namaz in our camp". (Age-37-Dahakula village, Return from Dubai (UAE).

### **Role of Indian Embassy**

Problems	Frequency (n)
Sought help from the India embassy	100
Grievances against employer	11
Salary problem	49
Problems communication	3
Harassment for local people	0
For ticket return and passport reissue	37
Received positive response from embassy	38

"I lost my passport in Saudi Arabia. Several times I approached to Indian embassy, but they did not respond to it. At last, I went to the Local police, and they caught me because I did not have a passport or a local ID card. After that, they (police) arranged a white passport (new passport) for me and sent me back to my village. In that case, the Indian embassy should help me out, but they just ignored it. Without the help of the local police, I could not be able to return to my village". (45 years old return migrant, Beldanga Block).

## **Typology of Return Migrants**



## **FINDINGS**

- ☐ Migrant workers were more at risk of working long hours, having little/ no time off, and working in evenings/weekends. It is noticed that the working hours' ranged from 8 to 12 hours. About half of the respondents used to work 12 hours per day.
- ☐ Most preferable destination among migrants was Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Kuwait. A significant portion of returnees got accommodation which was provided by their companies. Very few respondents stated that they were happy and satisfied with their food.
- ☐ Many respondents reported abuses at their workplace in the place of destination. They faced multiple abuses by the Mudirs (company supervisor). Verbal abuse was the most reported form of abuse. Migrants felt barriers in free movement in destination countries as the right to freedom of movement are restricted for the migrants in the Gulf countries.
- ☐ Findings shows that majority of the return migrants had average quality of life at destination. While very few of them had good quality of life at destination.
- ☐ The majority of the return migrants stated that expiry of job contract, job loss and the worst living and working conditions were the main reasons for return to their home country.
- ☐ Majority of the migrants did not visited the embassy (230respondents) whereas, about 30 percent (100 individual) of emigrants sought help for their problems from the Indian embassy. Among the emigrants who sought any help from Indian embassy, about 38 percent migrants received a positive response from embassy.

## **CONCLUSION**

\* This study focused on the working and living condition of the Gulf emigrants. It is very necessary to protect migrants' right in destination countries specially for unskilled and semiskilled workers. There is a need to implement some policies and strengthen the existing policies for betterment of the migrant workers life in destination to achieve the MGD goal - 'decent working condition' and make migration process more 'safe', 'regular'. 'orderly'.

