
MANAGED LABOR MIGRATION IN AFGHANISTAN: INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND POLICY PROCESSES WITH AND IN AFGHANISTAN



Rebekah Smith

Background Paper BGP 3b to the World Bank Project on
“Afghanistan: Managed International Labor Mobility as
Contribution to Economic Development and Growth”

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**Managed Labor Migration in Afghanistan:
Institutional Requirements and Policy Processes with and in Afghanistan**

Rebekah Smith¹

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Abstract

International labor migration is becoming an increasingly important employment strategy for developing countries. However, while increasing mobility creates huge potential increases in global welfare, accessing these gains requires careful management and facilitation of labor flows to avoid low-level equilibria. Sending countries will need to design labor-sending systems that balance increased mobility with protection throughout the entire migration process, while ensuring that supply and demand for specific skills are matched. This note proposes a structure for designing a labor-sending system and applies this structure to an assessment of the existing labor-sending system in Afghanistan, which is currently in very nascent stages and is missing many fundamental elements. It then applies the findings of this assessment to propose a way forward in building Afghanistan’s labor-sending system, along with an estimate of how long it will take for the system to become operational.

¹ Rebekah Smith is migration expert and consultant with the World Bank’s International Labor Mobility Team, Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice, Washington, DC.

List of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	iii
1. Introduction and Summary	5
2. Sending-Country Systems for Accessing Overseas Jobs	7
2.1 Framework for Access	7
2.2 Facilitating Access	13
2.3 Fortifying Access	16
2.4 Furthering Access	19
3. Applying the Framework in the Context of Afghanistan	21
3.1 Framework for Access	21
3.2 Facilitating Access	25
3.3 Fortifying Access	27
3.4 Furthering Access	28
4. Building a Labor-Sending System for Afghan Workers	29
4.1 Formalizing Labor Flows	30
4.2 Improving Migration Management	29
4.3 Strengthen Labor Intermediation	32
4.4 Balancing Mobility with Protection	33
References	34

List of Figures

Figure 1: Framework of a labor-sending system	7
Figure 2: Cumulative BLAs over time	8
Figure 3: Elements of BLA design	8
Figure 4: Elements of BLA design	9
Figure 5: Elements of BLA design	19

List of Table

Table 1: Processing times and fees for passports, selected countries	12
Table 2: Comparison of recruitment systems	15
Table 3: Predeparture orientation programs by country	17
Table 4: ASEAN countries with labor attachés as of 2015	17
Table 5: Complaints received from Sri Lankan migrants by nature and sex, 2003–2006	18
Table 6: Ministries included in GoIRA's migration management system	23

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BLA	Bilateral labor agreement
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GotP	Government of the Philippines
IDP	Internally displaced person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization on Migration
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Moi	Ministry of Interior
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and the Disabled
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OEU	Overseas Employment Unit
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1

Introduction and Summary

International labor migration is becoming an increasingly important employment strategy for developing countries. Labor surpluses and youth bulges paired with insufficient domestic job creation mean that for many countries, access to foreign labor markets is the only immediate answer to avoiding a significant increase in unemployment. Fortunately, labor shortages in many traditional receiving countries are likely to prompt increased openness of these markets for workers from developing countries. As recent events have made clear, however, policy and institutions have not kept pace with this changing reality. While increasing mobility creates huge potential increases in global welfare, accessing these gains requires careful management and facilitation of labor flows to avoid low-level (dis-) equilibria or, put differently, to maximize the potential gains of migration for the sending country, migrants, and receiving country (Holzmann and Pouget 2010). Sending countries will need to design labor-sending systems that balance increased mobility with protection throughout the entire migration process, while ensuring that supply and demand for specific skills are matched.

This paper identifies four pillars of a fully functioning labor-sending system: (1) the Framework for Access, legal frameworks and international agreements allowing for the movement of labor between countries; (2) Facilitating Access, tools for labor intermediation to help workers through the difficult process of identifying and obtaining jobs overseas; (3) Fortifying Access, protection mechanisms and support services that mitigate risks of migration for workers; and (4) Furthering Access, which creates institutions to expand and diversify foreign market access via upskilling and moving up the labor value chain. Underlying these pillars are foundational themes of administrative capacity/efficiency and cross-border alignment of institutions to ensure that supply is meeting demand. This paper identifies the elements of each of these pillars and offers examples of good practice on each.

Each of these pillars is then applied to an assessment of Afghanistan's current labor-sending system. Afghanistan currently has a very rudimentary labor-sending system as it has only recently started to develop its labor export policy. It has begun to take important steps, such as passing a National Labor Migration Strategy in late 2016 that was developed in coordination with the International Organization on Migration (IOM) and other key donors. This paper assesses the existing institutions in Afghanistan for facilitating and managing migration. It then proposes initial steps to continue to build Afghanistan's labor-sending system in four key areas: (1) formalizing labor flows; (2) improving migration management; (3) strengthening labor intermediation; and (4) balancing mobility with protection. The paper prioritizes within these areas to distinguish immediate steps for improvement from medium-term steps for active overseas labor promotion.

The next part assesses how long it will take to make a system operational. The experience of notable labor-exporting countries suggests that it takes between two to three decades to build a fully functioning labor-sending system. The Philippines started actively promoting labor migration following increased demand from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the 1970s, and had an extensive bureaucracy managing the export of labor by the early 1980s (Rannveig Mendoza 2015). Vietnam (a closer comparator) began its labor export program approximately in the 1980s, but began more actively exporting labor in the 1990s. While Vietnam's sending system is not comparable to that of the Philippines, it sets a realistic goal for a system that Afghanistan could achieve by 2030.

2

Sending-Country Systems for Accessing Overseas Jobs

Worldwide demographic and economic trends imply that an increase in labor migration is likely imminent. Historically, migration policy has been found primarily in the domestic immigration policy of receiving countries, but it is now recognized as central to sending-country policies as related to economic development and poverty alleviation. To allow labor markets to clear, systems are needed to match supply and demand for required skills across foreign labor markets. But beyond just employment, access to foreign markets creates enormous potential gains in income and poverty reduction. On average, the annual wage gap between sending countries and the United States is U\$15,400 for an observably identical worker.²

Section 2 discusses each of the pillars of a fully function labor-sending system as identified in section 1 and illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Framework of a labor-sending system

Framework for Access	Facilitating Access	Fortifying Access	Furthering Access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bilateral and multilateral labor agreements Bilateral social security agreements Any other bilateral agreement or international treaties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing research and campaigns Identifying jobs Public and private intermediation Interview/CV assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection mechanism Support services Labor attache offices Finance mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills and verification and certification Skills training and upskilling Measuring on-job skill acquisition
<p>Cross-border alignment of institutions: Cooperation and coordinations of stakeholders and systems in both sending and receiving countries</p>			
<p>Administrative efficiency: Bureaucratic streamlining, strong cooperation and coordination among stakeholders</p>			

2.1 Framework for Access

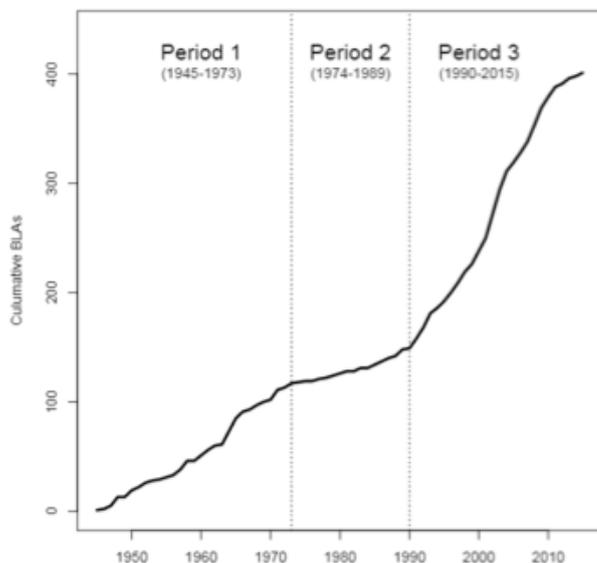
The Framework for Access includes all documents and agreements that provide the legal structure governing the movement of workers between two countries. These frameworks govern terms of admission into the country, access to the labor market, access to safety nets, and rights and protections throughout the migrant’s stay in the host country. The frameworks include bilateral labor agreements between source and host countries, national legislation regarding migration management in the source country, the institutional framework assigning ministries responsible for migration management, and the bureaucratic processes for regular exit (i.e., passport issuance, health and security screening, etc.). At later stages of development it may also include rights to social protection after the migrant’s return to the origin country (such as bilateral social security agreements); however, these can be considered once more fundamental building blocks of the framework are in place.

Labor agreements are the primary vehicle through which legal frameworks governing movement of workers are established. While multilateral labor agreements do exist (such as those found in ECOWAS, MERCOSUR, and recently ASEAN to a limited extent),³ the overwhelming majority are bilateral. Chilton and Posner (2017) identified 401 bilateral labor agreements signed between 1945 and 2015, between 287 unique country pairs and 384 unique country years.

² Clemens, Pritchett, and Montenegro (2008) estimate the median wage gap, based on a sample of 42 developing countries compared to the United States.

³ ECOWAS = Economic Community of West African States ; MERCOSUR = Mercado Común del Sur; and ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Figure 2: Cumulative BLAs over time



Source : Chilton and Posner 2017.

BLAs may be formal treaties, or more commonly, less formal memoranda of understanding (MoUs). Chilton and Posner (2017) identified 107 formal treaties and 81 MoUs in their sample set, with 216 unclear on their legal status. For example, rather than creating a legal relationship between parties, BLAs in the Pacific document negotiated agreements between Pacific governments and Australia or New Zealand on policy, principles, roles, and relationships necessary for managing labor migration and achieving agreement on practical matters for managing labor migration (Luthria and Malaulau 2013). MoUs are not legally binding, and as such their effectiveness depends highly on how they are implemented and enforced in practice. Sending countries can do little on their end if receiving countries do not want to enter into or implement an MoU. As such, they involve greater uncertainty for sending countries but also offer greater structure and legitimacy to labor flows than operating outside of any agreement.

Figure 3: Elements of BLA design

Design	Implementation	Capacity
Objectives and coherence	Stakeholder coordination	Supply-side readiness
Compatibility of incentives	Information sharing & job matching	Demand-side analysis
Division of Labor	Administrative Efficiency	Joint steering and Leadership

Source: Luthria and Malaulau 2013..

A well-designed BLA should explicitly set out the aims and objectives of each party. While sending and receiving countries are naturally motivated by different interests when negotiating a labor agreement, the objectives generally fall within three categories (Luthria et al. 2013). The first is economic interests, which generally address labor market shortages in receiving countries and surplus labor in sending countries. In particular, economic sectors with seasonal labor requirements (e.g., agriculture, tourism, construction) can find human resources lacking in the domestic labor market, while the migrant and the country of origin benefit from increased earnings. The second category is political interests, either to cement friendly relationships or to reinforce cooperation in addressing irregular migration. Finally, the third category of motivations is development objectives, which seek to maximize the development potential of labor flows from developing countries or to mitigate risks of migration.

Labor agreements should set out key structural elements of labor flows between the two countries. Two key structural elements of labor flows are the sectoral focus and circularity of migration patterns. In terms of sector, many sending countries find it easier and more effective to gain access to a specific sector in a receiving labor market as opposed to gaining complete labor market access. For example, the Government of the Philippines (GotP) has an MoU with the United Kingdom's Department of Health to allow for the movement of workers exclusively in the health care sector (Luthria et al. 2013). These structural elements include costs of migration and distribution of costs, processes for selecting workers and terms of employment, mechanisms for arbitration of disputes, and regulations for protecting workers.

BLAs are very difficult to obtain as states are reluctant to enter legal agreements on such a contentious issue. The GotP has found that while BLAs are very effective at structuring movement of labor and mitigating risks of migration, negotiating and implementing them is a lengthy process. As such, it has begun to lean toward adoption of more focused agreements in specific sectors rather than general BLAs as these are easier to negotiate and operationalize.

International experience shows that all successful BLAs are demand-driven: they focus primarily on opening labor market access to address labor shortages and meet employers' demand in select sectors. As such, the emphasis should be on the needs of the private sector and should allow the agreement to maintain flexibility to adjust to domestic labor market conditions. Further, agreements and mobility schemes should be designed in an "incentive-compatible manner" (Luthria et al. 2013), meaning that the incentives of key stakeholders are compatible with the intended outcomes.

Basic Elements of a Bilateral Labor Agreement

1. The competent government authority
2. Exchange of information
3. Migrants in an irregular situation
4. Notification of job opportunities
5. Drawing up a list of candidates
6. Pre-selection of candidates
7. Final selection of candidates
8. Nomination of candidates by employers
9. Medical examination
10. Entry documents
11. Residence and work permits
12. Transportation
13. Employment contract
14. Employment conditions
15. Conflict resolution mechanisms
16. The role of trade unions and collective bargaining rights
17. Social security
18. Remittances
19. Provision of housing
20. Family reunifications
21. Activities of social and religious organizations
22. Establishment of a joint commission to monitor implementation of the agreement
23. Validity and renewal of the agreement
24. Application jurisdiction

Successful labor agreements maintain flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, as opposed to over-specifying with burdensome conditions. For example, the Philippines and Pacific Islands both have flexible MoUs that focus on establishing access in a sector and include active relationships with receiving-country stakeholders so that adjustments can be made as necessary as the labor market fluctuates. On the other hand, France's BLAs are not negotiated from scratch but rather in a predesigned, generic template, which it minimally modifies during treaty negotiations with the partner country. This makes its BLAs much more rigid and less adaptable to the conditions surrounding the BLA. They also tend to have a heavy "development" component, which is difficult to define, implement, and monitor (Luthria et al. 2013). Similarly, Spain's BLAs have elaborate mechanisms to figure out and set a number for labor quotas that are difficult to implement and leave little flexibility.

Most critical is that the framework governing migrations and the institutions put in place under this framework are aligned with the destination market. Beam, McKenzie, and Yang (2015) examined the impact of both unilateral facilitation of migration on the sending country side and bilateral facilitation involving both country governments. Unilateral facilitation includes supply-side interventions such as provision of information, loan facilitation, and policies to ease the international job-search process. Bilateral facilitation policies involve more demand-side-oriented cooperation with governments or employers in destination countries and include the formalization of agreements to allow labor migration of specified numbers and types of workers. Beam, McKenzie, and Yang (2015) found that without parallel bilateral facilitation, efforts at unilateral facilitation were largely unsuccessful in increasing migration rates.

The framework for access also includes the governmental structures shaping labor outflows, including laws, government institutions, and the bureaucratic framework around exit. Many traditional sending countries have a dedicated law establishing the rules and procedures regarding legal exit and employment in a foreign labor market. Such laws establish the responsibilities of ministries in managing migration, regulate recruitment and remittances, and establish the obligations of the sending-country government to migrants before, during, and after migration. These laws are also important for articulating the long-term vision for labor migration as a part of the country's development and employment strategy.

It is critical that responsibilities be divided clearly across ministries, and that an effective coordination mechanism exists among relevant ministries to align implementation of these responsibilities. These ministries often include ministries dealing with labor, foreign affairs, interior affairs or security, education, finance, and health. Some sending countries have chosen to establish a ministry solely dedicated to migration to consolidate some of these responsibilities. For example, in Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Foreign Employment is responsible for migrant worker protection and facilitating placement in jobs abroad by regulating recruitment agencies, providing predeparture orientation, and actively facilitating foreign employment, while the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development provides TVET for foreign employment and relevant skill certifications.

Vietnam has an extensive institutional framework surrounding labor migration, despite having only emerged as a formalized labor sending country in the early 1990s. The following responsibilities for each ministry are set out in the 2007 Government Decree 126 “Guidance on Implementing Regulations on the Law on Overseas Worker:”

- Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs is the primary responsible ministry for managing migration, and is tasked with coordinating with other relevant ministries in drafting legislation, policy, and regulations on labor migration. Further it is responsible for negotiating international agreements, developing worker training programs, licensing and overseeing recruitment agencies, and resolving overseas worker complaints.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for consular protection, protection of overseas workers’ rights in the host country, and conducting research to develop labor markets in host countries.
- Ministry of Public Security grants passports, investigates violations of the law by workers abroad, and receives workers expelled from host countries.
- Ministry of Health sets the health standards for workers going abroad and issues health clearances prior to departure.
- Ministry of Finance sets cost norms, charges and fees, and funds for workers going abroad.
- State Bank of Vietnam develops credit policies associated with overseas migration and provides incentives for social welfare beneficiaries to seek international employment.
- Provincial People’s Committees oversee implementation of the above responsibilities at the local level (Le and Mont 2014).

In terms of the bureaucratic framework governing exit, the main element is the procedures for obtaining a passport and visa to the destination country. The process for proper issuance of a passport for the European Union (EU) was laid out by Frontex, based on International Organization for Standardization and International Civil Aviation Organization standards (Frontex 2011). The primary step of relevance to this assessment is the application phase. In this step, the e-passport applicant applies for an e-passport and provides the issuing authority with relevant documentation to substantiate his identity claim. For first-time applicants, evidence of identity may be based on a national persons registry, national identification, electricity bills to provide proof of residence, etc. Based on this evidence, the application officer decides whether to issue a passport. When the identity of the applicant is sufficiently established, the application officer will capture the biometrics (including photograph and fingerprints) of the applicant. Based on all this information, a decision is reached on whether there is complete information in the application file and whether the identity is sufficiently established. There are further checks on whether the applicant is entitled to travel. Exclusion criteria may be active criminal records or a pending trial, renouncement of nationality, tax debt, or excessive loss history.

However, this process must be efficient, affordable, and convenient for applicants. McKenzie (2007) presents findings on passport costs and processing times for 127 countries. The majority of passports cost less than US\$50, with a median cost of US\$38.60 (though a number of countries charge over US\$100 and others charge less than US\$10). The paper finds that one in every ten countries in the sample are found to have passport costs exceeding 10 percent of annual per capita income. High passport costs are found to be associated with poor governance, especially in terms of the quality of the bureaucracy, and with lower levels of migration. For countries with passport costs of less than 20 percent of national income, McKenzie (2007) estimates that lowering passport costs by 1 percent is associated with a 0.75 percent increase in emigrants per capita.

It is critical that passport services be accessible for most citizens. Countries generally have two main service channels: in-person and mail-in. McKenzie (2007) found that just over a quarter of the countries surveyed allowed the passport to be obtained by mail, while the majority of countries required their citizens to present themselves in person to apply for a passport. Having a network of receiving agents helps passport-issuing authorities provide greater accessibility to applicants. McKenzie (2007) also assessed processing times for passports in the 127 countries surveyed, and found the following range of reported processing times for a standard passport issue: El Salvador 45 minutes, Pakistan 8 days, New Zealand 10 days, Australia 10 days, Ireland 2 weeks, Ghana 1 month, Bulgaria 1 month, India 5 weeks, South Africa 6 weeks, and United States 6 weeks. Long waits are also theorized to increase corruption, with passport-issuing officials accepting bribes for faster processing. Table 1 shows processing times for select passports: international standards set this time at around two to three weeks.

Table 1: Processing times and fees for passports, selected countries

Country	Regular service			Additional express service		
	Turn-around time	Fee		Turn-around time	Fee	
Canada (pro-posed)	In person: 2 weeks + delivery Mail-in: 4 weeks + delivery	\$160		Urgent: 24 hours Express: 2-9 days	+ \$110 + \$50	
Australia	2 weeks + delivery	AUS\$233	\$238	2 days	+ AUS\$103	\$105
New Zealand	2 weeks	NZ\$53.30	\$120	3 days	+ NZ\$153.30	\$120
United Kingdom	In person: 2 weeks Mail-in: 3 weeks	£77.50	\$112	Fast track: 1 week Premium: 4 hours	+ £35 + £52	\$55 \$82
United States	4 to 6 weeks	US\$110*	US\$113	2-3 weeks	+ US\$60*	\$62

* For first time applicants, an additional US\$25 (\$26) execution fee is added to this price.

Source: Passport Canada 2012.

Ensuring quick processing for passports and visas is critical to marketing workers and helping them have practical labor market access. Pacific Island countries invest significant time and effort compiling and collating the necessary documentation for workers' visa applications to Australia and New Zealand, to ensure that visas are expedited quickly enough to meet flight departure and employment commencement timeframes (Luthria 2013a). Support for securing a passport is also found to increase job-search effort and the likelihood of obtaining a job interview for an overseas job (Beam Beam, McKenzie, and Yang 2015). This has been extremely important to maintaining relationships between employers and officials in these countries. In addition, it has been found to reduce incentives for fraud in the recruitment and processing systems (such as falsifying health or background checks).

2.2 Facilitating Access

Active labor market policies (ALMPs) to overcome information asymmetries and match labor supply and demand are widely acknowledged as a crucial element of domestic employment strategies. But even in such a closed economic environment, the instruments are often not highly effective or efficient. Overseas labor markets typically involve far greater challenges in terms of identifying jobs, matching workers with vacancies, and reducing information asymmetries. As such, to increase employment abroad, countries need to develop ALMPs that strengthen labor intermediation and recruitment to international markets. The labor intermediation and recruitment process is crucial to migration outcomes in terms of income impacts, employment outcomes, and migrant welfare. In a competitive environment, a transparent job intermediation process will require adherence to a common set of agreed operational frameworks on the part of both public and private stakeholders. Thus a system that allows for both coordination and oversight between these stakeholders must be in place to ensure the positive participation of private recruiting agencies. Enhancing the governance of this system, either via new institutions for governing labor intermediation or innovations in the recruitment industry, can lead to improved employment outcomes for migrants and enhanced access to potential labor markets. Beam, Beam, McKenzie, and Yang (2015) find that assisting individuals to match with recruiters through a jobs website does increase job-search effort and the likelihood of obtaining a job interview (though not necessarily the likelihood of obtaining the final job).

To obtain a BLA, sending country governments often have to actively market their workforces to receiving-country governments and employers. Countries intending to deploy their nationals abroad need to search for opportunities beyond their national boundaries in an international market that is highly competitive. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recommends that the marketing process start with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of each potential receiving market.⁴ This approach helps the sending-country government to focus its efforts on markets where it has natural strengths, or to tailor its strategies given the identified threats and opportunities.

Once markets with strong potential have been identified, several tools are available to sending-country governments to market their workforces. Pacific Island countries frequently conduct road shows for potential employers (IOM 2006). Other countries undertake technical studies and fact-finding missions composed of middle managers and senior technical staff from employment agencies in the sending country to assess opportunities and new prospects for their workers. Research on these missions includes prevailing wage rates, development plans, comparative data on competition from other countries, labor and business laws, and employment practices in the target country. They may also carry out marketing missions with their labor attachés, who conduct more “door-to-door” visits of prospective clients and send leads back to the home office. Finally, they may also use printed promotional materials disseminated through the use of (1) advertisements in media, (2) support communication materials, and (3) direct mail as well as soft-sell schemes to strengthen their corporate image and perception of their overseas employment management.

⁴ Note that this technique is used in a separate background paper to identify potential markets for Afghanistan.

Once foreign employment opportunities have been identified, a consistent process is needed for disseminating this information to prospective migrants and employers. Finding information on potential international job matches is particularly difficult for both migrants and employers, who face wider information asymmetries than during domestic job matching. As such, a functioning migrant-sending system has to include systematic job postings for overseas jobs and a mechanism for matching prospective migrants with employers abroad. For example, the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency curates a registry of all approved positions available through its recruitment agencies. ANAPEC (*Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétence*) in Morocco runs an electronic registration system for foreign employers and Moroccan youth that significantly eases job matching.

Provision of an effective job matching system and recruitment services is a crucial part of the intermediation process between labor-sending and labor-receiving countries. On the sending-country side, recruitment practices are of particular importance as large asymmetries of information exist between stakeholders across borders. The main functions include: (1) prospecting and marketing to identify and secure demand for workers; (2) worker screening and selection; (3) negotiation of worker terms and conditions; (4) visa and travel arrangements; (5) worker preparation; (6) liaison services for workers during their time abroad; and (7) worker return and reintegration (World Bank 2012). Governments vary in their approaches to facilitating the selection, recruitment, and deployment of workers. Some governments offer wholly government-delivered recruitment services, whereas others operate a mix of private agents, employers, and public recruitment.

Labor-sending governments must decide what modes of recruitment to permit, how best to regulate, and the benefits of government facilitation for the promotion of employment opportunities. To address the high costs of recruitment, many countries either ban charging recruitment fees to migrants or place a binding ceiling on recruitment fees. However, such stipulations serve to undermine a viable business model for private recruiting agents and are likely to push out of the market commercially viable, reputable agents who seek to comply with regulations, leaving only unscrupulous agents who can then charge a higher fee due to lack of competition. Given this, some countries have softened their stance from a ban on recruitment fees to a fee ceiling. For example, the Philippines caps at one month's salary; Malaysia at 15 percent of the first month's wages; Singapore at 10 percent of the first month's wages; and Zimbabwe, Switzerland, Egypt, and Israel all cap at US\$900 (Agunias 2009).

It is important to consider cost structure and pricing models in determining policy toward fees. For example, in Bangladesh, the average cost of financing migration is between US\$2,600 to US\$3,900 (approximately three years' income for the average Bangladeshi). Sixty percent of this cost goes to middlemen (informal agents) and recruiting agencies as commissions for facilitating the migration process, with the rest spent on airfare, passport, visa, medical certificate, and other expenses. While *de jure* many of these costs (particularly the commission for the agents and the airfare) should be paid by the employer, increased competition among low-skill workers for scarce jobs and fraud in the recruitment system result in a *de facto* agreement that these costs are borne by the migrant (Das et al. 2014).

Some governments make the mistake of imposing heavy regulations or compliance standards on recruiters in an attempt to address concerns around fraud and exploitation; these result in heavy monitoring and policing costs while again deterring the participation of reputable recruiting agencies. For example, Tunisia initially only allowed public recruitment for overseas labor, but in recent years transitioned to allowing registration of private recruiters for overseas employment. However, it imposed such heavy regulation on the registration of these private recruiters that few came forward to practice.

Table 2: Comparison of recruitment systems

Delivery mode	Key Considerations/Determinants
Public (e.g., Jamaica, Korea)	<p>High priority on labor migration within the context of broader policies for economic development and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination that adequate government capacity exists to effectively and efficiently deliver public recruiting services. • Imperative to protect workers (e.g., vulnerable workers such as the low-skilled) calls for tightly and carefully managed recruitment; public recruiting services are optimal in such instances. • Determination that policy settings associated with labor migration schemes are necessary but produce circumstances that do not create a commercially viable environment for the entry of reputable private recruiting agents. • Negative reputation of private recruiting sector for exploitative practices, etc. • Determination that existing private sector capacity is inadequate for the task. • Inexperienced labor-sending countries may opt to deliver public recruiting services at the outset as a means of ensuring familiarity with the requirements of effective recruitment and with a view to investment in developing and then transitioning such functions to the private sector in the near future.
Private (e.g., Sri Lanka)	<p>High priority on labor migration within the context of broader policies for economic development and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated determination of limited/inadequate public sector capacity to deliver recruiting services. • Represents a commercially viable business opportunity for private recruiting agents. • Existence of adequate private sector recruiting capacity and experience. • Distances political involvement in recruiting decisions. • Represents opportunity to better regulate private recruiting market
Hybrid Public/ Private (e.g., the Philippines)	<p>High priority on labor migration within the context of broader policies for economic development and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated determination that a practical imperative exists for both public and private delivered recruitment services (e.g., 'special' recruitment/placement needs that sit outside the standard might be handled by government, as in the case of GotP directly deploying 1% of total workers) and that these can coexist in a complementary manner. • Maximization of possible routes for catching demand and responding to overseas employer preferences for recruitment services. • Determination that special provision is required for some types of workers (e.g., vulnerable workers need more careful and greater protection). • Governments may or may not have limited capacity to deliver recruiting services. • Existence of adequate private sector recruiting capacity and experience. • Policy settings/circumstances produce commercially attractive/viable opportunity for private sector agents. • Represents opportunity to better regulate private recruiting market.

Source: World Bank 2012.

Once the prospective migrant has identified a potential job via the recruitment system, the next step is to assist him in getting the job. Migrants may need special assistance in resumé preparation and interview training to be able to obtain a job overseas and compete with native workers. In the United States, the state of Florida offers one-stop career centers for migrants that offer job information, job referrals, employment testing, employment counseling, and training opportunities (FloridaJobs 2015).

2.3 Fortifying Access

While many gains arise from sending workers overseas, any number of risks surround migrant well-being and social protection throughout the entire migration process. Workers in foreign labor markets often face asymmetries in terms of access to rights, protection, and information that increase their vulnerability. As such, a good labor-sending system should seek to balance mobility with protection by building institutions and tools that mitigate these risks. A key step to reduce risks associated with working in a foreign labor market is to provide information throughout the entire migration process, even prior to departure. Upon arrival in the host country, labor attachés become the first line of protection and risk mitigation for migrants. Finally, when risks are realized, ensuring that migrants have access to safe and expedient repatriation is critical to minimizing harm to migrants. Each of these systems should be strengthened to ensure continuous protection for migrants throughout the entire migrant experience.

Information dissemination throughout the entire migration process is critical to ensuring that migrants are aware of the risks involved and are as best able to deal with them as possible. Information campaigns can inform potential overseas workers on safe recruitment, travel, and employment procedures, and on the risks of irregular migration as well as legal pathways to migration. They should also provide information on regulations in receiving and sending countries, both on movement and employment options.

Predeparture orientations are a cornerstone of any migrant protection scheme. Most sending countries consider predeparture orientation critical enough to make them *du jure* mandatory for all workers going overseas. Predeparture orientations may last anywhere from a few hours to a few weeks. Shorter orientations cover basic topics such as worker rights, the immediate process upon arrival in the host country, resources available to them while abroad, and possibly regulations and customs in the host country. Longer orientations are more in-depth and may include some basic language training, employment information and training specific to the sector in which the migrant will work, and country-specific cultural, economic, and social orientation.

Asis and Agunias (2012) provide an overview of best practice in curriculum and structure for predeparture orientations in traditional sending countries. Table 3 summarizes the design of programs in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Nepal. For example, the Philippines Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) lasts six hours and covers the following areas: migration realities and life in a foreign labor market; profile of the destination country (including laws, culture, and customs); employment contracts and what to do in case of violation; health and safety; financial literacy; government support services available to migrants; and travel procedures and tips. According to Asis and Agunias (2012) IOM identified the following elements of best practice on predeparture orientation programs throughout the course of the past 60 years delivering these programs in 56 countries: (1) develop curricula with destination countries; (2) link predeparture and post-arrival support activities and information campaigns; (3) make use of cross-cultural or bicultural trainers; (4) schedule orientations as close to departure as possible; (5) develop training to be participatory; and (6) address not only the needs of the migrant, but also the family remaining in the origin country.

Table 3: Predeparture orientation programs by country

	Philippines	Indonesia	Nepal
Name	Pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS)	Pre-departure briefing	Pre-departure orientation training
Launch	1983	2003	2004
Initiated by	NGOs; migrant workers do not pay	Recruitment agencies; migrant workers pay	Not known
Implementing agency	OWWA (since 2003; previously POEA)	BNP2TKI	FEPB
Provider(s)	OWWA, POEA, NGOs (for vulnerable workers), recruitment agencies (58), industry associations	BNP2TKI, BP3TKI (in 16 provinces)	Recruitment agencies (50)
Fee	Government - none; others - PHP 100 (USD 2.30)	None	NR 700(USD 10); reimbursable for women
Length of programme	6 hours	8 hours	12.5 hours for women; 11.5 hours for men

Notes: BNP2TKI = National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers; BP3TKI = Agency for the Service, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers; FEPB = Foreign Employment Promotion Board; OWWA = Overseas Workers Welfare Administration; NGO = non-governmental organization; POEA = Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

Source: Asis and Agunias 2012.

Labor attachés are the frontline for balancing mobility with protection while migrant workers are in the host country. The labor attaché is responsible for providing protection mechanisms to workers abroad in his/her jurisdiction, undertaking marketing missions and identifying job opportunities, representing the sending country's interests in developing labor policy, and promoting good relations with the host country with regard to migrant labor (IOM 2006). Labor attachés can perform outreach to migrant workers who are particularly vulnerable to abuse or who are isolated (such as domestic workers). They can ideally provide emergency assistance and facilitate systematic transmission of information regarding both basic rights and abusive employers and industries. Labor attachés are also a crucial element of market development in the host country. Of the member states of ASEAN, 7 have labor attachés posted in other labor markets, totaling 82 labor attachés between them (Table 4).

Table 4: ASEAN countries with labor attachés as of 2015

Country	Number of labour attachés	Countries/Territories of assignment
Indonesia	11	Brunei Darussalam; Hong Kong (China); Kuwait; Malaysia; Qatar, Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, Jeddah); Republic of Korea; Singapore; The Syrian Arab Republic; and the United Arab Emirates.
Lao PDR	1	Thailand.
Malaysia	4	India; Indonesian Singapore; and Switzerland
Myanmar	5	Malaysia (2); Republic of Korea; and Thailand (2).
Philippines	39	Australia Asia (12): Brunei Darussalam; Hong Kong (China) (2); Japan; Macau (China); Malaysia; Republic of Korea; Taiwan (China) (Taipei; Kaohsiung; Taichung); and Singapore (2). Middle East and Africa (15): Bahrain; Israel; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Libya; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia (Riyadh; Al-Khobar; Unaizah/CRO; Jeddah); The Syrian Arab Republic; and United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi; Dubai). Europe, Americas & Trust Territories (11): Canada (Toronto; Vancouver); Cyprus; Italy (Rome; Milan); Greece; Spain; Switzerland; United Kingdom and Ireland; United States and Saipan (CNMI).
Thailand	13	Brunei Darussalam; Germany; Hong Kong (China); Israel; Japan; Malaysia; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Saudi Arabia (2); Singapore; Switzerland; Taiwan (China) (2); and United Arab Emirates.
Viet Nam	9	Czech Republic; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Japan; Libya; Malaysia; Qatar; Republic of Korea; Taiwan (China); and United Arab Emirates.

Source: ILO 2015.

Perhaps the primary role of the labor attaché is to receive and address complaints from migrants while working abroad. To provide this service, attachés should be prepared with an understanding of common complaints and how best to resolve them. Table 5 shows a breakdown of complaints received over a four-year period from Sri Lankan workers abroad by nature of complaint and sex. By far the most common complaints revolve around nonpayment of wages, breaches of contract, and being stranded without employment (primarily after recruitment fraud). Female workers also commonly submit complaints around being disallowed from communication and physical or sexual harassment. Consulates should be prepared to address these issues, either via a labor attaché or other consular services.

Table 5: Complaints received from Sri Lankan migrants by nature and sex, 2003–2006

Nature of Complaint	2003			2004			2005			2006		
	Male	Female	Total									
Non Payment of Agreed Wages	270	1498	1768	150	1476	1626	132	1577	1709	454	1535	1989
Lack of Communication	93	2065	2158	87	2078	2165	78	1677	1755	109	2402	2511
Sickness	35	435	470	51	559	610	78	575	653	78	584	662
Harassment (Physical and Sexual)	56	1358	1414	78	1675	1753	142	1807	1949	104	1662	1766
Death – Natural	49	78	127	73	80	153	55	60	115	100	72	172
Death – Accidental	40	23	63	43	32	75	38	24	62	59	18	77
Death – Homicide	1	3	4	3	5	8	1	3	4	-	1	1
Death – Suicide	4	19	23	3	6	9	5	17	22	3	4	7
Death – Due to Lebanon War	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6
Not sent back after Completion of Contract	11	151	162	15	191	206	44	667	711	36	689	725
Stranded – Lack of reception on arrival	-	21	21	-	13	13	2	33	35	-	-	-
Problem at Home (Sri Lanka)	7	163	170	13	330	343	33	483	516	25	497	522
Breach of Employment Contract	877	425	1302	695	449	1144	1137	655	1792	838	314	1152
Stranded without Employment	1	7	8	-	13	13	112	429	541	562	498	1060
Premature Termination	1	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Illegal Money Transaction	51	41	92	5	76	81	-	1	1	-	1	1
Others (Domestic Sector)	0	185	185	11	120	131	1	22	23	17	75	92
Others (Non-Domestic Sector)	1	2	3	20	3	23	14	26	40	10	-	10
Not Identified	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	69	76
Total	1497	6475	7972	1247	7106	8353	1874	8056	9930	2402	8429	10829

Source: del Rosario 2008.

Migrant welfare funds (MWFs) provide a critical safety net for migrants while abroad and upon their return to the sending country. Welfare funds generally are composed of fixed mandatory contributions from each overseas migrant, who in turn receives services and coverage via the scheme. MWFs are generally administered by public or semi-public agencies, such as the Overseas Pakistani Foundation (OPF), the Philippine Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), and the Sri Lanka Overseas Workers Welfare Fund (OWWF) (IOM 2006). Membership in an MWF offers access to several services, including inclusion in insurance schemes. Membership with the welfare fund automatically includes insurance against death and disability. These schemes are critical in reducing risk for migrants and their families during their time abroad, both in case of their death or disability to the point of being unable to work, and in the case of adverse scenarios emerging to where emergency repatriation becomes necessary.

If the sending country is not able to provide an MWF (or if there is demand for additional services), the private sector, including financial cooperatives and micro-insurance institutions, may step up to provide migrant insurance products. Yet the conceptual and operational challenges of such an insurance are huge. Migrants may choose to mitigate their own risk by purchasing supplemental services. Figure 5 demonstrates different models of migrant insurance. They may be provided in the host country, the home country, or a hybrid via a partnership between insurance companies in both countries. These different models are best suited to target different beneficiaries: models in the host country are best suited to provide health or repatriation insurance to migrants themselves, while models in the home country are best suited for providing benefits to the migrant's family, such as benefits in case of death and for repatriation of bodies.

Figure 5: Possible migrant insurance models

Location	Insured	Mitigates Risk
Host Country	Migrant	Repatriation, health, loss of employment
Home Country	Migrant's family	Death and loss of employment
Hybrid	Migrant and Migrant's family	All the above

Source: Powers, Magnoni, and Zimmerman 2011.

Migrant insurance could theoretically be adapted to cover all forms of failed migration. Given the high cost of migration (the average cost of financing migration in Bangladesh was between US\$2,600 to US\$3,900 in Das et al. 2014), failed migration poses a significant risk to family well-being. This is particularly true given that the cost must be paid whether or not migration results in successful employment abroad. Das et al. (2014) found that about a third of migration cases resulted in failure. More than half of failed migration cases were associated with fraudulent recruitment agents or visa scams, resulting in financial difficulties (20.1 percent), family or medical problems (19.2 percent), and failure to obtain a visa (8.7 percent). The average cost of failed migration (i.e., the initial investment minus income earned) for Bangladeshi migrants in the study was US\$818 and the median cost of failure was US\$250 (Das et al. 2014). Insurance schemes could be developed to mitigate this risk, though no country is known to have developed this insurance mechanism as yet.

Cheap, reliable mechanisms for transmitting remittances are also important to migrant well-being. Reducing the cost of sending remittances and increasing access to cost-effective, fast, and safe remittance services both benefit migrants and increase the net remittances available to recipients. Any number of possible schemes exist for improving this process, including regularizing informal transfers, clarifying regulations for foreign exchange management, encouraging the expansion of institutions offering transfer of remittances, and increasing access to banking service points on both sides of the migration corridor.

2.4 Furthering Access

Raising the level or visibility of workers' skills can improve their employment opportunities and promote their deployment to work abroad. Inaccurate assessments of migrants' technical and vocational skills diminish the economic benefits of labor mobility for migrants' employers and the receiving-country economy, as well as for migrants and their countries of origin. Programs that aim to prevent "brain waste," or the underutilization of migrants' skills, provide participants with certificates or diplomas to make their mid-level skills visible to employers. The limited transferability of skill certifications across borders, however, can lead to suboptimal recognition and utilization of migrants' skills. By increasing employers' access to information about migrants' skills, a successful transnational skill development and recognition system could help address this inefficiency and enhance labor market resource allocation.

Increasing skills requires close coordination and cooperation between employers in the host country and training institutions in the source country. Successful training schemes require thorough screening and skills verification of graduates of training programs to overcome both training gaps and information asymmetries between different stakeholders across borders. For example, the Philippines Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) succeeds in facilitating migration for employment because its administrators ensure that its certificates have value in a variety of labor markets. Program architects carefully cultivate TESDA's reputation through professional and personal relationships, encouraging employers to seek TESDA-certified workers. As evidence of employers' positive perception of TESDA, some foreign employers actually send their Filipino workers back to the Philippines to update their TESDA certifications. Because industries in receiving countries such as Germany and Saudi Arabia value TESDA certificates, Filipinos planning to work abroad view TESDA certification as the first step to migration (Weston et al. 2013).

On the other hand, skills training schemes that fail to include employers are unlikely to succeed in placing workers abroad. In 2007, the Government of Australia, in cooperation with Pacific Island governments, launched the Australian-Pacific Technical College (APTC). The college was launched to train Pacific Islanders through a network of training institutes housed in seven Pacific Island countries to prepare them to work in the seasonal work scheme in New Zealand and Australia. Though APTC's design seeks to create benefits for both sending and receiving countries, neither the Australian nor the Pacific Island country governments speak highly of its outcome – only 1.8 percent of APTC graduates migrated to any other country in the five years since the program's inception (Weston et al. 2013). While APTC provides graduates with certifications of in-demand skills, it lacks relationships with employers in Australia, and therefore many Australian employers distrust these qualifications. The Philippines is the only country that appears to have successfully created a TVET system that is recognized by most host countries. According to Weston (2014), while "formal training programmers in other labor origin countries may successfully improve candidates' vocational skills... employers and recruiters are either unaware of these programmers, do not value them, or do not require that workers deploy the skills that these training programmers develop." However, Filipino workers are particularly valued for their training and skills in the GCC, and are marketed at a higher price. This is largely a result of positive perceptions of Filipino training organizations as well as Filipinos' better command of English (IOM 2006). Employers often assume that Filipino workers will be qualified for technical or administrative roles; recruits of other nationalities may not receive consideration for these positions because of that perception. The reputation of Filipinos has been actively marketed by the GotP via its embassies in GCC countries, which regularly conduct research and development activities into labor market trends.

3

Applying the Framework in the Context of Afghanistan⁵

Afghanistan's labor-sending system is currently in very nascent stages. The majority of Afghan migration currently occurs outside the realm of formal agreements, and while some attempts have been made to extend the coverage of labor agreements, these attempts are unlikely to succeed without building the rest of the labor-sending system. Afghanistan is currently missing several key elements of this system; however, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and the Disabled (MoLSAMD) has taken admirable steps toward addressing these institutional gaps. This section of the paper performs an institutional assessment of Afghanistan's labor-sending system and identifies the most important gaps for immediate attention.

3.1 Framework for Access

Afghanistan does not currently have any functional BLAs or MoUs, although it has one standing MoU with Qatar (see below). The Overseas Employment Unit (OEU) within MoLSAMD has drafted 12 MoUs and sent them to various receiving countries with which Afghanistan has diplomatic relationships. However, given that these agreements were not requested by the receiving countries in question, they have not been returned or signed. Meanwhile, much larger labor flows to neighboring countries of Iran and Pakistan are not covered under any such agreement. While these corridors would benefit tremendously from a Temporary Movement of Persons scheme, such an agreement is unlikely to be reached unless the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) is able to demonstrate a concerted effort to discourage irregular movements.

Afghanistan's MoU with Qatar, signed in 2008, was expected to allow 25,000 workers to enter Qatar; however, to the knowledge of MoLSAMD not a single worker has found employment in Qatar via this agreement. The Government of Qatar continues to promise that the MoU will go into effect shortly; however, it is unclear what obstacles are stopping its immediate implementation. Follow-up conversations should be held with the Government of Qatar to understand whether they feel parts of the agreement are not being met or if the problem is simply in implementation. One hypothesis is that the agreement fell through when a Taliban office was opened in Qatar. The office was opened in 2013 to facilitate reconciliation between members of the Taliban and the GoIRA. As a result, the Afghan ambassador was pulled from Qatar, though this post has since been reinstated. The theory is that this instability in the diplomatic relationships between the two countries may have undermined the effectiveness of the MoU, explaining why work visas to Qatar are not being issued to Afghans.

In October 2016, a delegation from the GoIRA (including the Minister of MoLSAMD) visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where discussion included an MoU on labor flows from Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia. At the time of this visit, a verbal agreement was reached on the MoU, and a public statement made that Afghan workers would be able to obtain visas in their Afghan passports, and those holding visas in other passports would be able to switch them to their Afghan passport. The signed agreement is still in draft stages, and the GoIRA is waiting for the Ministry of Labor to revert on the latest version. A final signed version is expected within the next three months.

⁵ Much of the information and analysis presented in this section is drawn from consultations and workshops with GoIRA officials. While it is not possible to make the minutes of client consultations available to an external audience, the minutes of these consultations can be made available upon request for World Bank internal purposes.

Once signed, the most important consideration will be what mechanisms are put in place toward implementation of the agreement. In particular, the joint committee that is established through the text currently is incredibly important. It is critical that this committee have regularly established meetings, and that it conduct regular reviews of the functioning of the agreement. Ideally, the committee should include (or at least hold hearings with) representatives from the private sector as well as the elected community representatives for Afghan migrant communities.

Another critical step toward ensuring the success of the agreement is to understand more about the Afghan population in Saudi Arabia as well as what their needs are and what mechanisms are currently in place to meet these needs. There is strong reason to believe that a significant portion of the resident Afghan population in Saudi Arabia will come to the consulate to switch their passport from Pakistan to Afghanistan, as currently they face difficulties travelling to either Afghanistan or Pakistan. Because they will have to come to the consulate to exchange their passport, this creates an opportunity to collect information on their location, occupation, wage, etc. This information can be used not only to design better services for the existing Afghan community, but also to identify sectors with strong potential to absorb more Afghan workers. There seems to be some confusion as to the current state of affairs in terms of labor flows from Afghanistan to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) reports that UAE is accepting labor without an agreement and thus there is no obstacle to sending labor, whereas MoLSAMD reports that there is employer demand in UAE but that the UAE government is not issuing visas to Afghans. According to MoLSAMD, the UAE Ministry of Labor requested that several preconditions be fulfilled before it will consider signing an MoU with the GoIRA. Formal negotiations have not opened, but GoIRA officials are pursuing this discussion as there appears to be active employer demand for Afghan workers in the UAE market. However, it should be noted that private recruiters have managed to send a handful of Afghans to work in UAE as drivers (though out of a contract for 400 workers they have sent only 10). This implies that Afghans may indeed have legal labor market access to UAE that merely needs to be followed with the necessary institutions to translate into effective labor market access.

Afghanistan's existing labor flows are primarily irregular. Irregular migration is the preferred method of entry into Iran for 91.1 percent of respondents, of which 79.1 percent enter Iran clandestinely with the help of a smuggler. The same holds true for Pakistan –approximately 50 percent of Afghans in Pakistan have irregular status. Meanwhile, most migrants entering GCC countries do so by first entering Pakistan and then continuing on to the Gulf on a Pakistani visa. At least 53,000 Afghan workers are estimated to be working in UAE on Pakistani passports (Overfeld and Zumot 2010). Afghan government sources have suggested that more than 100,000 Afghans currently work in GCC countries, mostly with (often fake) Pakistani passports and visas. As far back as 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2002) reported 2,500 Afghan persons had been imprisoned in Dubai for more than a year after having been found to be in irregular status, and 750 of them were deported back to Afghanistan in the same year.

The Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad 2005 (MoLSAMD 2005) places significant burden on employers in host countries, which may make Afghan workers less competitive. The Regulation addresses in 22 points the obligations on the part of employers and recruitment agencies that are most often located in the destination countries. This poses a danger of overspecification, particularly without mechanisms to implement or enforce these points. Labor agreements should be crafted so as to provide protection for workers in destination countries while maintaining enough flexibility to be able to tailor them to conditions there.

Four main ministries form the core of Afghanistan's migration management system: MoLSAMD; MoFA; the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR); and the Ministry of Interior (Mol). MoLSAMD is responsible for overseeing all matters connected to labor migration, including all provisions set out in the Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad. This includes the negotiation and implementation of BLAs, licensing and overseeing private recruitment activities for overseas employment, protection services for workers while abroad, and other core labor-sending functions. MoFA is responsible for working alongside MoLSAMD on the diplomatic front to obtain BLAs with key receiving countries. It also runs the embassies and consulates in major destination countries, and in the absence of labor attachés is currently the primary actor in maintaining contact with and providing support to Afghan workers while abroad. MoRR is responsible for the integration of returnees and those internally displaced. It will lead the response on the current mass influx of Afghan returnees from Pakistan and Europe, while MoLSAMD will continue to lead on sending workers out to new destinations. Finally, Mol is responsible for issuing passports and visas, as well as trying to prevent irregular border crossings. These responsibilities are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Ministries included in GoIRA's migration management system

Line Ministry	Responsibilities
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled (MoLSAMD)	The Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad entrusts MoLSAMD with responsibility for overseas labor administration. The Foreign Employment Administration Unit established in MoLSAMD functions as the "Directorate of Sending Labour Overseas."
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)	MoFA is the focal ministry for all bilateral and multilateral relations with destination countries. It should also serve as the key ministry along with MoLSAMD to develop BLAs and MoUs with destination countries as envisaged in the Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad.
Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR)	MoRR promotes the socioeconomic reintegration of returnees. It also deals with diaspora engagement. Tentative plans of the ministry are to encompass Migration & Development as a core strategic component, as part of a 5-year strategic review (2013–2018).
Ministry of Interior (Mol)	Mol is responsible for security-related issues: the prevention of irregular migration, human trafficking, and smuggling of migrants. Mol is responsible for delivering passports and identity documents to Afghan citizens, and for criminal checks.
Ministry of Finance (MoF)	MoF and MoE, together with the Central Bank, can provide the regulatory environment to facilitate the transfer of remittances, currently handled mostly by informal channels.
Ministry of Economy (MoE)	
Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)	MoPH oversees medical checks and health certifications for migrant workers as required by destination countries.

No coherent and complete framework currently governs labor migration in Afghanistan. Afghanistan lacks a concrete emigration policy or a legal framework for managing international migration, limiting its capacity to develop and implement policy, issue regulations, or enact laws on labor migration (UN-TWG 2012). While broad guidelines are established in the Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad, there is no specific national policy. Migration is currently managed by a variety of government regulations, legal instruments, action plans, and strategies, but these tools are not woven together in any coherent manner. A National Labor Migration Strategy was passed by the GoIRA in coordination with IOM and other donors to fill this gap, but the GoIRA will be responsible for turning the strategy into policy and establishing mechanisms for implementation.

Current laws and regulations outline a number of provisions for migration management and the protection of workers. For example, the Afghan Labor Law places responsibility on MoLSAMD for negotiating labor agreements, registering and regulating recruiting agencies and overseas employers, and supervising the enforcement of agreements as well as terms of contract. The Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad also outlines provisions for the protection of migrant workers as the responsibility of MoLSAMD, including: “1. Development of specific plans and programs for employment services and sending Afghan workers to abroad; 2. Providing legal opportunities for sending Afghan workers to abroad; 3. Seeking work places and opportunities in abroad; 4. detection and specification of those in need of labor; 5. Development of specific employment forms and establishing registrations” (MoLSAMD 2005).

In terms of the bureaucratic framework, the GoIRA began revising its passport and visa systems in 2001. The GoIRA through MoFA conducted an impressive overhaul of the passport system in issuing machine-readable passports that store biometric data. The new passports are also valid for five years, whereas historically they were only valid for one year. Ministry officials believe that though the cost of passports has not decreased, the value of the passport is higher now that it is a digital document and lasts longer. They have also worked to streamline the bureaucratic process of obtaining a passport. Previously, passports could only be obtained in main urban areas, even though most migrants come from rural areas. Now, while the application must be submitted in main urban areas, the passport can be mailed to the recipient rather than requiring him to pick it up in the city. And the application can now be finished in one day, whereas before it could take several days and migrants often paid a bribe to expedite the process. It is not certain what the impact of the new system is on the number of irregular crossings and fake passports used, but ministry officials report that more Afghans are applying for passports now. Consulates in destination countries were also equipped to issue electronic passports to migrants on the old paper passports.

Because of Saudi concerns expressed during negotiations regarding security issues in allowing greater movement between Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, the GoIRA developed a screening mechanism for its workers. The screening mechanism was passed along to Saudi Arabia as part of negotiations, and Saudi officials have tentatively accepted the mechanism, though MoFA states that it has not received an official response or approval from the Saudi government. The screening process begins after the worker is chosen by the MoLSAMD Skills Committee. The screening mechanism requires approval from 10 ministries, including MoLSAMD, MoFA, MoI, Ministry of Health, , the Directorate of National Security, and the Security Council. MoFA proposed that MoLSAMD be responsible for taking the forms to all ministries after the migrant registers with MoLSAMD; however, MoLSAMD concluded that it does not have the manpower or resources to take on this burden. As a result, the migrant is responsible for taking the form around to all 10 ministries. To ease the burden on the migrant, MoLSAMD is negotiating to have each ministry develop a streamlined process specifically for migrants. For the time being, this appears to be the best option, though significant concerns remain regarding whether such a burdensome process will discourage prospective migrants or incentivize irregular migration.

3.2 Facilitating Access

Afghanistan does not currently have a marketing or negotiating strategy to gain access to new labor markets or increase access to existing markets. Afghanistan is in a highly competitive market in which it competes with Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to send workers to many of the same labor-receiving markets. As such, the GoIRA needs to have an active strategy for promoting Afghan workers for overseas employment. Currently no mechanism exists for actively marketing Afghan laborers to destination countries, or for designing and negotiating labor agreements to gain formal access to markets. However, the director of the OEU traveled to Saudi Arabia for these purposes in advance of BLA negotiations. Further, to support such operations, the GoIRA will need to build systems to address information gaps in market promotion, including: (1) niche markets in main destination countries for Afghan workers; (2) patterns of labor demand for different skills in main destination countries; and (3) major employers and reputed employment agencies in overseas labor markets.

No mechanism is in place for regulating the activities of private recruitment agencies until the Regulation for Overseas Recruitment is approved by the Ministry of Justice. The Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad requires recruitment agencies to be registered by MoLSAMD. According to MoLSAMD, 70 private recruitment agencies are registered with MoLSAMD; however, many of these are not active. The OEU recently performed a review of the 70 licensed recruiters and found that only 15 were functionally able to perform overseas recruitment activities. Indeed, it is believed that many registered when there were rumors of new corridors opening and began falsely advertising that they had access to jobs in the new corridor.

Currently the activities of these recruiting agencies are difficult to supervise as the Regulation for Sending Afghan Workers Abroad does not include concrete provisions for monitoring their activities. The MoU between MoLSAMD and the recruiting agencies states that the agencies should regularly share their information with MoLSAMD, but there is no mechanism for enforcing this at present. Without this or the capacity to monitor activities, there is currently no mechanism for monitoring or regulating the activities of private recruiters. A newly formed recruitment association may be of assistance in consolidating and streamlining this process. Its role is to promote increased transparency and accountability among member recruiting agencies.

The OEU of MoLSAMD is responsible for licensing private recruiting agencies. To obtain a permit valid for three years, prospective recruiters have to provide proof that they own no other company, have no conflict of interest, and make a payment of AF100,000 (with an additional payment of AF100,00 for a one-year extension). The application materials are submitted to the Minister of MoLSAMD, who then channels the permits through the Security Council, MoF, Da Afghanistan Bank (for the deposit), and the recruiters' association. The recruiting agency then obtains a business license from the Ministry of Commerce, at which point MoLSAMD signs a contract with the licensed recruiter that specifies the roles and responsibilities of each party. The deposit is intended to serve as a guarantee, and is deducted as a fee if the recruiting agency does not perform its duties as stipulated in the contract. The money is returned to the agency as soon as all workers are fully employed in the destination market. Because this licensing process does not require proof of capacity or functional operations, the majority of recruiting agencies licensed under this system have no actual operational capacity to place workers in jobs abroad.

Because recruiting activities have just barely begun, little information is available on their operational model. Recruiting agencies have registered 12,000 prospective migrants in Kabul, and 200,000 across Afghanistan. However, because there are no legally opened corridors, none of these registered workers have been placed in employment abroad. These workers were also passed through a second screening with the OEU after registration with the recruiting agency. Currently licensed private recruiters report that they plan to take 10 percent of each worker's monthly salary in exchange for their services, which they estimate cost them approximately US\$1,000. The 10 percent fee covers flights, medical insurance, wage insurance, housing, and one week of salary upon arrival in the destination country. There is now no fee for registering with a recruiter prior to placement; previously this was abused by recruiters who advertised jobs that did not exist in order to charge a fee as workers registered to apply. The wing of the OEU overseeing irregular migration is responsible for monitoring for fraud cases such as these; so far it has shut down two recruiting agencies for such activities. The monitoring activities are conducted via MoLSAMD centers in the provinces, but currently they are complaint-driven and no regular mechanism is in place for oversight.

Recruiters have already begun registering prospective migrants, and have a significant amount of information on them. One recruiting agency has already registered 10,000 workers and collected information on their demographics, contact information, work experience, and skill set; all of this information is maintained in a database. However, because as of yet no centralized way exists to register prospective migrants, MoLSAMD does not currently have access to this information.

The recruitment process as currently outlined is somewhat complex, as recruiting agencies do not select and place workers themselves. Because of concerns on the part of the GoIRA of corruption and exploitation in the recruitment and worker selection process, MoLSAMD opted to retain final selection itself via the Skills Committee. As such, recruiting agencies forward at least two prospective migrants for each position, and forward these candidates to the Skills Committee for final selection. However, given that the committee consists of officials from nine ministries and has not yet managed to convene, the process as it currently stands is likely to significantly slow the process down and perhaps hamper the ability of workers to access jobs abroad.

The cost of a visa is double the rate of hiring a smuggler, incentivizing irregular migration. The average cost of using a smuggler's services is US\$361 (equal to a month's wages in Iran) as opposed to the rate of a legal option for entry into Iran, estimated at US\$740. The costs for legal entry include visa fees of US\$60, passport fees of US\$180, and a roundtrip ticket at US\$500. Given this, migrants have little reason to choose to enter legally instead of paying a smuggler (Altai Consulting 2008). Based on figures from Altai Consulting (2008), the GoIRA loses US\$221 million per year in revenue as a result of the US\$94 million spent on smuggler fees. Smugglers also offer "re-entry packages" that offer three trips to Iran for the same price, each time within days of the last deportation date (Altai Consulting 2008). And a black market has developed for both formal and fake passports as a result of the burdensome passport process, with a formal passport costing US\$400 and a fake passport approximately US\$200. Given the high price of these documents on the black market, Afghans travelling to Pakistan often do so without a passport of any kind (Majidi 2009).

While the GoIRA has worked to improve its passport and visa systems since 2001, the process is still lengthy and burdensome, discouraging legal migration. Passports can only be obtained in main urban areas, despite the fact that most migrants come from rural areas. Waiting times are long, and migrants often pay a bribe to expedite the process. After all of this, the visa (in the case of Iran) expires after only three months, making it hardly worthwhile to bear the cost and burden of obtaining it. It should be noted that while the process of obtaining a passport is cumbersome, the GoIRA through MoFA conducted an impressive overhaul of the passport system in issuing machine-readable passports that store biometric data. While the potential of this new system is currently underutilized due to the high level of irregular crossings, this provides an excellent tool for gathering information on location and placements of Afghan workers and could be invaluable to labor attaché offices in providing services to Afghans abroad.

Irregular flows are bolstered by the GoIRA's lack of capacity for border management and control. The Altai Consulting 2008 study of cross-border movements from Afghanistan to Pakistan found substantial underregistration of cross-border movements by Afghan authorities. "The vast majority of border crossings were not being recorded, because individuals and entire families did not report their movement at border posts, preferring instead to cross the border freely and easily, without showing either passport or justifying a visa to enter Pakistan" (Wickramasekara and Baruah 2013). During just one morning (September 11, 2008), actual entries into Pakistan through the Torkham border were 12,934 and actual exits 23,934, but official records enumerated only 150 entries and 138 exits (Majidi 2009).

3.3 Fortifying Access

Several critical elements of migrant protection systems are missing. The GoIRA currently does not offer consular support to Afghan workers while abroad. MoLSAMD does not currently offer predeparture trainings as there are few formal movements of Afghan workers. However, this means that workers leave without proper preparation and are significantly more vulnerable to risks while abroad. The existing agreement says that recruitment agencies are responsible for providing predeparture training; however, given that no workers currently migrate through private recruiters, it is unlikely that any of these migrants are actually receiving pre-departure training. Further, given that there is no monitoring or regulation of recruiter activities it is unlikely this training will be provided even as workers begin to go abroad through them. Systems will need to be put in place to ensure the delivery of predeparture training to workers as it is one of the most important facets of a protection system.

No labor attachés are currently placed at embassies and consulates of Afghanistan in key receiving countries. MoLSAMD is eager to have labor attachés put in place, as are representatives of MoFA. However, some factions in MoFA may be resistant to the placement of labor attachés, possibly in response to the strain of multiple requests from various ministries for them. Some disagreement exists on whose responsibility this is and how it should be funded. In lieu of labor attachés, the consulates in destination countries currently provide minimal support to Afghan populations abroad. Support currently includes: processing of visa requests, investigation and resolution of complaints, and particularly support in the case of abuse and harassment. However, no legal advisors are currently placed at consulates, so legal representation and support is not available to migrants. Also, it is important to note that while consulates do currently keep a logbook of complaints received, at the time of writing this procedure had only recently begun, so there is no historical record of complaints received or their resolution. Finally, the consulates also interact with elected Afghan community representatives.

3.4 Furthering Access

Migrants acquire skills while working abroad, but are unable to deploy these skills upon their return to Afghanistan. In Iran, most migrant workers were able to learn a new skill or improve a previously learned skill, particularly when working in construction, manufacturing, agriculture, services, or retail (Wickramasekara et al. 2006). This skill accumulation offers enormous potential to spur growth in the Afghan economy. However, upon their return to Afghanistan, they are unable to use these newly acquired skills because of the scarcity of construction and manufacturing work.

While upskilling is an important part of furthering access in an overseas labor market, in some of Afghanistan's key labor markets it may be a less decisive factor. Recent data indicate that although many foreign workers obtain some level of education prior to arrival in a GCC country, the majority (on average more than 60 percent) have less than a secondary education (ILO 2015). With the exception of the Philippines, prior TVET experience appears to be largely ignored or given little weight in the recruitment process for work in the GCC. This may be because TVET systems in most sending countries have a poor reputation or low perceived relevance, or because these systems are not adapted to workplace demands in the GCC. It may simply also be true that GCC employers view all low-skilled workers as homogenous regardless of prior training. Employers and recruitment agents in GCC countries have noted that the skills of prospective migrants are not generally assessed; rather, selection is based on interviews conducted by host country local recruiters. For low-skilled laborers, this interview revolves around the willingness to work for the low wages on offer and is often dependent on the worker being able to leave on short notice.

Prior migrant experience appears to be preferred to TVET certification in hiring decisions. According to recruitment agents, previous work experience abroad is often an advantage when applying for work in GCC countries (ILO 2015). In fact, it appears to be preferred to TVET certification because of a perception that firms in destination countries are more technically advanced than the training in TVET systems in countries of origin. In Malaysia, the opposite appears to be true, with employers preferring employees who have no prior work experience in Malaysia or other countries of destination. The reason for this particular dynamic is unclear. However, this preference on the part of most host country employers may point toward creating stronger systems for certifying previous overseas employment.

Afghanistan recently completed the development of more than 150 skill standards that were developed by the National Skills Development Program (NSDP) in coordination with international authorities from Malaysia to ensure alignment with international standards. However, no mechanism is currently in place for skill qualification and certification according to these standards. Through the screening mechanism, a skill certification approach in the form of a certifying committee was established that will certify migrant skills on a case-by-case basis. This committee consists of representatives of NSDP, higher education institutions, and the Afghan-Korea institute, and does not yet have authority or a standardized process for certifying skills. This system of skill certification is very ad hoc and cumbersome, and potentially susceptible to corruption.

In an attempt to signal credibility, the OEU negotiated with Mol to list workers' professions in their passports when they go abroad for work. The rationale was that the consistency between legal documents will signal more credibility behind worker skills. However, it is unlikely that employers will look at passports as part of the hiring process, so this may impose an unnecessary complication in the passport issuing process.

4

Building a Labor-Sending System for Afghan Workers

Building a labor-sending system is a lengthy and highly uncertain process. Even under ideal circumstances, building such a system generally takes decades and progress is highly dependent on political and economic events. Sending countries must commit to actively promoting their workforce abroad, which may take many years before they are able to secure an agreement. Further, they likely need to build the basic elements of a labor-sending system before even being able to export their workers abroad as most competitor countries already have basic programming, an important market advantage. Finally, most success in labor export is determined by economic and political forces outside the control of the sending country.

The experience of notable labor-exporting countries suggests that it takes between two to three decades to build a fully functioning labor-sending system. The Philippines (a poor comparator as it began at a much higher baseline than Afghanistan) started actively promoting labor migration following increased demand from the GCC in the 1970s (Rannveig Mendoza 2015). In 1974, the Labor Code of the Philippines was the first official government framework for labor export. The Labor Code created a large bureaucracy composed of three institutions: the Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB), the National Seaman Board (NSB), and the Bureau of Employment Services (BES). OEDB and NSB were responsible for developing the market for overseas workers and recruiting workers, while BES regulated private recruitment agencies and functioned as a temporary government-run employment agency. The number of processed contracts almost tripled in the first three years after these institutions were created, from 12,501 in 1974 to 36,767 by 1977 (Rannveig Mendoza 2015). By the early 1980s, the Philippines had an extensive bureaucracy managing the export of labor (Rannveig Mendoza 2015). In the past few decades, a more sophisticated system emerged, with diversified receiving countries (with as many going to the “tiger economies” of Asia as to the GCC) and diversified occupations (including professionals, factory workers, and domestic workers in addition to the traditional trades) (O’Neil 2004). However, this was also paired with rapid economic development in the Philippines itself.

The experiences of more comparable countries suggest that development of a labor-sending system takes several decades. Vietnam began its labor export program approximately in the 1980s with students and workers going to the Soviet Union (Miller 2015). Beginning in 1986, Vietnam initiated a series of reforms known as Doi Moi to open the country, an effort that included loosening of migration restrictions. This significantly changed both internal and international migration. In total, between 1981 and 1990 more than 210,000 Vietnamese (an average of 21,000 per year) traveled to communist Eastern European countries as guest workers, according to Vietnamese government data (Miller 2015). This number decreased to the low thousands in the early 1990s, with growing resistance to Vietnamese migrants in Eastern Europe. The Government of Vietnam shifted its focus to Asia and the Middle East, sending out 3,000 workers in 1993. Currently (despite slowing down due to the recession of 2008), on average about 90,000 Vietnamese laborers leave to work abroad each year. Vietnam’s experience demonstrates that the growth of labor export is bumpy and subject to external shocks.

Given the lengthy and uncertain path of labor exportation, Afghanistan will need a steady, long-term approach to building its labor-sending system. This final section identifies four areas of Afghanistan’s labor-sending system that should be prioritized for development: (1) formalizing labor flows; (2) improving migration management; (3) strengthening labor intermediation; and (4) balancing mobility with protection. Priorities within these areas are identified to distinguish immediate steps for improvement from medium-term steps for active overseas labor promotion.

4.1 Formalizing Labor Flows

The first priority area is to formalize Afghanistan's labor flows. Irregularity is currently a dominant trait of Afghanistan's labor flows (as mentioned above, 79 percent of Afghans in Iran and 50 percent of Afghans in Pakistan are irregular, in addition to the Afghans in the GCC on Pakistani visas). Without formalizing this flow, it will be nearly impossible to reach agreements with new destination markets or expand access into existing markets, and it is very difficult to facilitate or fortify access for existing workers if they are irregular. Irregular flows decrease political capital for a sending country with potential markets, and leave workers vulnerable to exploitation as they are outside the protection of the law.

The three main steps identified toward formalizing Afghanistan's labor flows are to:

1. Improve migration enforcement – Altai Consulting's 2008 assessment found that the vast majority of border crossings were not recorded. UNHCR's finding that less than 1 percent of exits and just over 1 percent of entrances through the Torkham border were recorded points to a dire need for strengthened border control. The immediate first step is to equip border agents to record all entrances and exits and ensure that everyone crossing has a verified passport. This intervention needs to be put in place in coordination with other programming to align migrants' incentives with migrating regularly. While it is unlikely to be currently feasible to formalize the porous borders with Iran and Pakistan, demonstrating efforts toward border administration in negotiations to open new managed migration corridors is likely to be a critical requirement. It is important to note that improving enforcement goes beyond border control, and that improving coordination between agencies, decreasing monetary and bureaucratic burdens of regular migration on migrants, and aligning incentives of employers, recruiters, and migrants with regular migration are likely to be as if not more important in regularizing migrant flows than border control alone.
2. Negotiate a Temporary Movement of Persons Agreement with Iran – Given that the flow of labor migrants between Afghanistan and both Iran and Pakistan is largely cyclical and temporary, the first step toward formalizing labor flows after increasing border control could be to introduce an agreement that mimics these characteristics. Temporary agreements can align with fluctuations (either seasonal or cyclical) in the host sector and allow for more flexibility in the agreement. It is more likely that such an agreement could be reached with Iran than Pakistan as Afghan workers have an excellent reputation in Iran and Iran has a more favorable political climate than Pakistan.
3. Assess the possibility of opening new markets via MoUs with GCC countries and Turkey – As established in a parallel background paper, GCC countries and Turkey seem to be the most viable potential markets to enter. The next step is to conduct a more in-depth market analysis to understand precisely which sectors are positioned to absorb Afghan workers. After market research has been conducted, missions can be undertaken to meet with government officials and employers to gauge interest in creating an agreement for Afghan workers to move to their labor market.

4.2 Improving Migration Management

The second priority area is to improve migration management systems in Afghanistan. Once the flow of irregular migrants has been stemmed and new formal flows opened, the next priority area is to ensure that the basic tools are in place to properly manage these flows. This includes ensuring that incentives for migrants are aligned with regular migration, and ensuring that the government has the necessary tools in place to implement its programs and regulations. The two primary steps identified to improve Afghanistan's migration management are to:

1. Create a coordination mechanism for ministries involved in migration – Afghanistan currently has no coordinating body on labor migration. While MoRR has convening power over refugees and repatriation and MoLSAMD is responsible for labor migration, as of yet no specific mechanism exists for coordination among the ministries or agencies involved in the administration of migration management. While there is a Consultative Group on Refugees and IDPs, no similar body is in place for labor migration. In coming years this mechanism will be critical in ensuring coordination as the GoIRA seeks to scale up its active involvement in managing labor migration.
2. Streamline the screening process and exit. While the GoIRA has done an impressive job of updating its passport issuance process, these improvements will be largely for naught if not matched with efficient visa issuance and screening mechanisms. The screening mechanism proposed for the Saudi corridor is quite comprehensive, but poses a risk of making exit processes burdensome to the point of incentivizing irregular migration. This mechanism should be thoroughly tested to ensure proper functioning, and reviewed to confirm that each step adds additional value so that any unnecessary steps can be eliminated.

4.3 Strengthen Labor Intermediation

The third priority area is to strengthen labor intermediation for Afghan workers going abroad. Once formal access to foreign labor markets has been established and migration flows are properly managed, the next focus is to develop systems for assisting Afghan workers in getting jobs overseas. In their final form, these systems may include everything from market research and promotional activities, to job matching systems, to recruitment mechanisms, to skill matching and certification, to labor market information systems. However, at the beginning, a few essentials can provide the foundation for the rest of the labor intermediation system. In Afghanistan's case, the two initial steps identified to build a labor intermediation system are to:

1. Strengthen the recruitment system – Afghanistan currently has no mechanism for registering private recruitment agencies. Private recruiting agencies are critical partners in placing workers abroad, and as such it is crucial to have a strong framework regulating their activities. Regulations or certification systems for private recruiting agents improve transparency in the private recruiting industry by identifying who such agents are, what they are capable of delivering, and the results they have produced. This should be paired with transparency around licensing requirements and regulations around recruitment practices. A good model for this is the Office of Migration Agents Registration Authority (OMARA) in Australia. OMARA is attached to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) and administers the functions of the Migration Agents Registration Authority. Its key objectives are to ensure that: (1) all complaints about the services of registered, or formerly registered, migration agents are appropriately addressed; (2) only suitable persons are registered as migration agents, and unsuitable persons are refused registration or re-registration; (3) registered agents maintain appropriate knowledge to enable them to provide accurate advice to consumers; and (4) consumers understand their rights and agents understand their obligations under the regulatory framework. OMARA also assists migrants in finding a migration agent, provides advice on fees agents charge, and processes complaints against agents (World Bank 2015).
2. Build a skills certification and verification mechanism – Migrants often end up underemployed in positions that do not fully use their skills. Many migrants arrive in their host country armed with an impressive résumé, only to learn that their foreign credentials are not recognized by host country employers. Cross-border differences in certification standards and qualifications dramatically increase the information asymmetries surrounding a worker's true skill level and productivity. Working to unify skill certification standards between source and host country can help to improve migrant-employer matches while making it easier for migrants to get jobs. The first step would be to set up a skill certification pilot with one sector and one host country and then expand as systems are put in place to scale certification programming.

4.4 Balancing Mobility with Protection

The fourth priority area is to build a system for balancing mobility with protection. Once Afghan workers obtain jobs in a foreign labor market, it is crucial that a system is in place for their protection as they go abroad. A full protection system may include everything from hotlines to repatriation insurance schemes, migration finance mechanisms, and more. The three key elements that should be put in place immediately are to:

1. Place labor attachés in each host country embassy – As Afghanistan does not yet have any labor attachés, they should be established in each major host country (including Pakistan, Iran, GCC countries, and Turkey). These labor attachés should be responsible for providing protection mechanisms to workers abroad in their jurisdiction, undertaking marketing missions and identifying job opportunities, representing the sending country's interests in developing labor policy, and promoting good relations with the host country with regard to labor. They should also perform outreach to migrant workers who are particularly vulnerable to abuse or who are isolated (such as domestic workers). They can ideally provide emergency assistance and facilitate systematic transmission of information regarding both basic rights and abusive employers and industries. The first step would be to train labor attachés through programs such as the courses offered by IOM.
2. Establish predeparture training – Afghanistan does not offer predeparture training for its migrants, in part because it currently does not have sufficient numbers of regular migrants to warrant it. However, predeparture training is one of the most important pieces of a protection system and should be established as soon as possible. The ILO (2015) identifies the following four steps for building a predeparture orientation course:
 - (a) Making an assessment of needs and developing a curriculum for predeparture orientation;
 - (b) Developing predeparture orientation curriculum for the main destination countries and for vulnerable categories of migrants;
 - (c) Establishing in-country capacity by carrying out comprehensive predeparture orientation for migrants, by training of trainers and curriculum development; and
 - (d) Establishing financial sustainability.

In the case of the Pacific Islands, predeparture orientations are presented by a mix of country officials, employers, and local representatives. Critically they also include active support and involvement from representatives of the receiving countries, who may participate by producing and providing audiovisual material and training to local officials in the language of the sending countries (ILO 2015).

3. Conduct information campaigns for prospective migrants – While information campaigns have long been considered a critical part of fortifying access, in recent years sending countries also recognized the need to offer pre-employment information to assist migrants in deciding whether to migrate and understanding the options on how to do so. In its pre-employment orientations, the GotP covers not only application procedures, recruitment methods and lists of reputable and non-reputable recruiting agencies, and job-site information (including culture in the host country), but also topics such as financial planning and livelihoods so that individuals can compare their incomes and well-being as they choose whether to migrate.

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