

**GLOBAL LAUNCH**  
**SAAPE Poverty and Vulnerability Report 2020**  
**Migration in South Asia**  
**Poverty and Vulnerability**  
**04 September 2020**

## GLOBAL LAUNCH

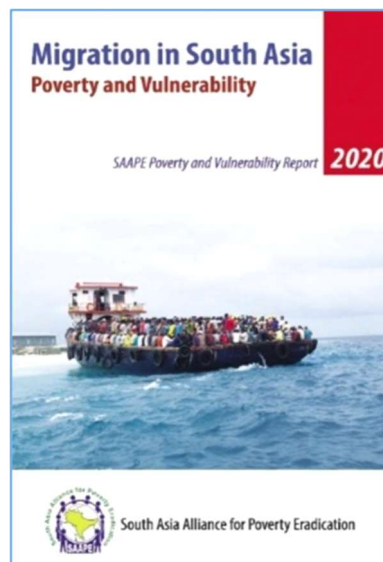
SAAPE Poverty and Vulnerability Report 2020

### 'Migration in South Asia: Poverty and Vulnerability'

04 September 2020

The global launch of the sixth edition of the SAAPE Poverty and Vulnerability Report '**Migration in South Asia: Poverty and Vulnerability**' was organised by South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) on 04 September 2020. The online launching was attended by approximately 170 participants from numerous civil society organisations, social movements, students and professors from various universities, trade unions, women rights activists etc.

The event was begun by Netra Prasad Timsina, Regional Coordinator of SAAPE welcoming participants and highlighting the proceedings of the launching event. In addition to welcome and programmer highlights, he also introduced the history of SAAPE Poverty and Vulnerability Report in brief as well as the team members who were engaged in the report writing and production process.



### Introduction of the Team

**Regional Authors:** Babu P Remesh, Ambedkar University; Akhil Ranjan Dutta, Gauhati University; Mohan Mani, Centre for Labour Studies, National Law School of India University (NLSIU).

#### Editorial Board

**Advisors:** Shobha Raghuram, Independent Research; Babu Mathew, National Law School of India University (NLSIU)

**Members:** Babu P Remesh, Akhil Ranjan Dutta, Mohan Mani, Sushovan Dhar, Netra Timsina; Ainoon Naher, Nalini Rathnarajah

**Country Authors:** Mirwais Parsa (Afghanistan), AKM Mustaque Ali (Bangladesh), DNS Dhakal (Bhutan), Babu P Remesh (India), Azim Zahir (the Maldives), Keshav Bashyal (Nepal), Ammar Ali Jan (Pakistan), Chandima Arambepola (Sri Lanka)

*Independent researcher based in India, Shobha Raghuram, introduced the report to the participants in a nutshell as well as shared her views on each chapter of the report.*



### Introduction of the Report

The cover of this report poignantly captures the anonymity of the migrant and the extreme nature of the unknown waters of risk in which he /she is pushed into traversing in search of the most basic of human needs.

This Photograph by Ahmed Azim, of The Maldives depicts the transport of expatriate labourers to their workplace, a newly developing resort site in the Maldives (the irony cannot be lost here).. Almost 400 workers packed in a small launch boat travelling to their next site of labour extraction, selling the one commodity they have...their labour, for a pittance, that their families may live to see another day...

***No one would put their children in a boat unless the sea is safer than the land***  
**"Home" by Warsan Shire**

*(Warsan Shire is a British-Somali poet, and "Home" is one of her most widely received poems, which was written in 2009, reflecting on her visit to an abandoned Somali embassy in Rome, which was turned as their temporary home by some young refugees)---*

**Chapter 2 , Babu Remesh-**

This report is dedicated to the two out of every three citizens of South Asia who are migrants....it is a world of dislocation, of moving constantly in search of the most basic needs of survival...in many ways this report by the sheer weight of history turns towards the migrant and the search for economic, social and political justice, in a world that has increasingly placed market considerations above equality and social justice in human development.

The migrant is not on the margin of modern experience – he is absolutely central to it .  
*(Babu Remesh, cites, John Berger and Jean Mohr)*

## Looking Back

In 2003 the first Poverty report of the South Asia Poverty Alliance members emerged, cogently capturing the realities of lives trapped in years of poverty conditions, across a South Asia, increasingly being subjugated by the conditionalities of the Bretton Wood institutions. From then to the present sixth one they express the Future of Pro-People Development, The Centrality of Social Justice and Equality, People's Struggles for Justice and Dignity, for survival, civil society perspectives and concerns.

All of these five earlier reports reflect the realities of the condition of poverty, of struggle, of national/social mobilisation in search of a better life...**They remain relevant to this day because so much has changed and yet so little has changed in terms of deepening inequality.** What has set these reports apart from the multilateral, the bilateral poverty and human development reports is that they have been penned by writers who have had close connections with social movements, by activists' groups who captured the narrative as felt and seen by those who received little from the system despite contributing the most.

**All of these reports in more ways than one reflect the lives of South Asians as re-constructed histories after severe colonisation, recounted by the people, different nationalities, similar trials and tribulations when displaced, when disregarded as citizens, when over- determined by unemployment and scarcity of regular wages and income, when living through emergencies which last a lifetime, life a pandemic of suffering and a belittling of dignity.** The authors of this report have not only referred to the collapse of public health systems during the ongoing health emergency of COVID-19 but also analysed the systemic failure of nation states to meet emergencies with the highest standards of probity and social protection for citizens. They also surface the issue of "Climatic changes and natural disasters create many problems such as land degradation, floods, water shortage, food insecurity and the depletion of natural resources. These problems eventually push the affected population to migrate towards secure and safer destinations.

As per an estimate of IOM, there will be around 200 million 'climatic migrants' in the world by 2050.'''

The last chapter indeed on the way forward by Mohan Mani brings up the issues of Exercising rights as Citizens which require firstly, knowledge of the interdependence between different sets of entitlements, different agencies and their duties and secondly, the courage in unity and practice of solidarity group formations that will wage these struggles for different aspects of social justice on common platforms. Several of the writers, point out the paradoxes of having a high bar of constitutional standards and yet that there is a spiralling down of social justice for those who struggle for their citizenship rights. Female foeticide, dowry deaths, rape, caste violence, maternal mortality are only a few of the overt forms of violence faced by women. Low social status, early marriage, unpaid care labour, are still the realities faced by many rural poor women. In migration these issues get further aggravated. What can be said in the face of such distorted demographic development? Indeed, the entire

region of South Asia, with the exception of Sri Lanka and Maldives are doing poorly on all counts of HDI and GDI.

- **Chapter 2 and 3** underline that migration scenarios of South Asian countries are determined by **multiple factors**, which are often **interconnected**. A poignant quotation,

"No one leaves home unless  
home **is the mouth of a shark**.....  
No one leaves home **unless home chases you**  
fire under feet hot blood in your belly.....  
... no one would put their children in a boat  
**unless the sea is safer than the land...."**

The discussion provided in **Chapter 3** explains that **women's positioning within the migration scenario of South Asian countries is drastically getting transformed**. On the one hand, more and more women are pushing into or aspiring to get into migration streams stretching beyond their own country borders. On the other hand, the **states and regulatory frameworks of migration are becoming increasingly rigid**. Here, what is evident is the **dominance and spread of patriarchal controls** in the governance framework of women's migration. (Remesh Babu)

*The importance attached to marriage and familial concerns in matters related to migration in South Asian societies is largely on account of the underlying patriarchal considerations, based on male-breadwinner and female-follower models. In some of the South Asian countries the restrictions are found being imposed on migration of women, without husband or an authorised escort. This shows the importance of patriarchal norms in shaping women's migration in South Asia.*"Remesh Babu

-Chapter 4

#### **Poverty and Inequality in South Asia: State Responses**

Akhil Ranjan Dutta suggests that poverty and inequality have wider dimensions—agrarian crises and rural distress, joblessness, climatic catastrophe, resource appropriation, withdrawal of the state from the essential public services, gender inequalities and so on. Growing poverty and inequality in the region are structurally embedded into the neoliberal policy regimes all across the states in the region. **Therefore, investigation of the policies on poverty and inequality starts with a short reflection on the neo-liberal regimes in the region followed by a critical investigation of the policy framework of addressing poverty and inequality by the states in the region.**

"Inequality in the South Asian region is spread over all important indicators- accumulation of wealth, landlessness, gender deprivations, access to secure work, access to basic services like healthcare and sanitation, tax benefits accorded by the respective governments and so on. Top rich 1 per cent in the countries of the region has accumulated wealth that is nearly

as much as the rest 99 per cent combined, making the region most unequal globally (SAAPE, 2019).

Neoliberalism is not necessarily the withdrawal of the state as a regulatory institution. Rather, it is more about the shift in the nature of regulation, priorities and the complete overhauling of the personnel in the state institutions which favours the big capital and the elites. David Harvey argues that the neoliberal state collapses 'the notion of freedom into freedom for economic elites'.

**Attention needs to be drawn to the manufacture of State-driven discourses that act to divert public attention from critical economic and social crisis.**

## **Chapter 5**

### **State Responses to Migration, Emigration and Refugees, Akhil Ranjan Dutta**

On the issue of internal migrants, international protocols laid by the ILO and the silence of states on the issue of regulation, safety and protection of distress led internal migration. He cites Ghosh's work and his observation that "the region of South Asia has 'experienced hosting millions of migrants and refugees that too without a proper legal framework in place' (p. 177). The question is how the region has handled such a huge magnitude of migrants/emigrants and refugees? Has it been addressed through national, bilateral or regional efforts? "... nothing substantive has happened either at the regional front or the bilateral front in this regard. It is through the individual state's efforts that the issues, particularly the issue of refugees, have been handled. However, efforts like relief have been made, rather than a permanent solution under the international protocols and covenants." And it here that the problem truly needs redressal...that relief is temporary, social security is permanent. Akhil Ranjan Das Gupta underscores the national and the international frames under which the discussion on migrant rights have been located and dislocated in reality. In a wide ranging essay he covers several social groups such as the Rohingyas, the Chakmas etc. and examines the authoritarian role of State mechanisms in dealing with this all too human crises.

To quote him:

"However, the worst response of the state responses has been to the internal migrants. They are stateless without losing the state's legal recognition. They are either climate refugees within their countries or displaced persons without any protection from the end of the state. They are human entities meant for profiteering by others. Consolidation of the neoliberal regimes and their obsession with the appropriation of resources have been pushing the internal migrants to the brink. Malnutrition, health hazards, illiteracy and the tag of outsiders within their own countries make them run from one place to another to live a life without rights and dignity. For them, their identity of citizenship has no meaning."

Chapter 6 was specially added as the report was being completed when the pandemic broke out, unleashing further the migration crises and the tragedies of those immiserised by loss of work and support by State/private employers: COVID-crisis and the resultant developments testify that the states in South Asian countries are not adequately equipped to provide basic, income, food and other social security support to their migrant workers (especially for those who are from the lowest-income category). Inefficacy of social security programmes, legislative protection and welfare-provision machineries were very strikingly evident during these periods. (Remesh Babu)

**The Last Chapter:** In the concluding chapter Mohan Mani in 3 telling sections looks at the past, the present and the future...He calls for solidarity, for the building of platforms for regional cooperation based on virtues, devoid of the “othering” mentality, for solid social programmes, and for hope to be revived.

Prof. Babu also states that it is desirable for the governments in South Asia to earmark more resources for ensuring employment and income support to the migrant workers, who are affected by the COVID crisis. The increased participation of the people of India in **measures like MGNREGS** shows that what is required is to immediately provide the migrants with work (and food).

There is a need for right-based programmes and supportive measures.

*“The economic orthodoxy of “neoliberalism.” A hallmark of this transformation has been the increasing redistribution of wealth upwards as rents to those owning property—physical, financial, and “intellectual.” As “rentier capitalism” has risen, working classes have foundered, as those relying on labor have been losing ground in both relative and absolute terms.” The Precariat: Today’s Transformative Class? Guy Standing*

Lastly, we will not be able to do justice to this report if we do not recognise the extreme value of the eight country chapters penned by well-known and respected authors. These eight chapters are written by authors from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan, and India. I do not have the time to dwell into them but they are the wealth of this report. They detail various contextual crisis in the social and political and economic firmament within the countries. There are also approximately 61 boxes which detail a context, a story, a feeling from the countries. For all those interested in South Asia the strength of these writings are incontestable. Running to almost 200 pages this report is outstanding. The narratives, the meta- narratives together form the large region of South Asia, its population of 1.819 billion lives, lives that have struggled for their independent histories despite the overall contexts. In the end the glimpses into the struggles, the realities need to be further investigated, and transformative exercises have to happen. The report has faithfully retained the centrality of the migrant in development history and its social audits.

*Trade union activist based in India who is closely working with the tea plantation workers, Sushovan Dhar shared perspectives from the Editorial Board of the report with the participants highlighting the concept and usefulness of the report.*



### Perspectives from the Editorial Board

Sushovan Dhar shared some perspectives on behalf of the Editorial Board. He opined that the report is not only academic writing but also a narrative of the grassroots. He said that thousands of people are marching every day, both within and beyond the frontiers, to eke out a living. Despite the old history of migration in the region, today's unprecedented exodus is shocking. In almost all the countries in South Asia, a multitude of reasons that include rural distress, natural calamities and socio-political tensions force increasing numbers of people to migrate, either to urban centres within the region or to other far-off destinations in Asia (e.g. Gulf countries) and beyond. Most of these migrants who are forced to opt for migration, often find themselves relegated to the ranks of the *precarariat* in their destinations.

In Editorial Board's perspective, the current edition of the SAAPE's Poverty Report—sixth in the series—takes note of the fact that economic growth in the region has not stemmed desperate migrations. South Asia continues to witness an increasing rate of migration—both internal and external—over the past three decades. These two categories of migration might have internal dynamics of their own, but the significant overlaps between these two streams cannot be discounted. The poor and vulnerable are compelled to move at an alarming pace, most of which are undocumented, across the region. Already at the receiving end, they are welcomed with precarious jobs in the labour market, to fill up its lowest strata. Acknowledging that migration is the last resort and a coping strategy for these categories of population, the report notes that mitigating the issues of unemployment and underemployment comes at a cost.

In Editorial Board's opinion, it is important that the latest report of SAAPE chooses to analyse poverty, vulnerability and inequality through the lens of migration to understand their interconnections from the perspective of the most vulnerable sections – the migrants. The report looks at the underpinnings of the economic crisis in rural areas, which are the cause of rural to urban migration of the poor.

He added that the report, which is based on insights and inputs gathered from various country reports, is hoped to cater to the needs of local groups to understand their own



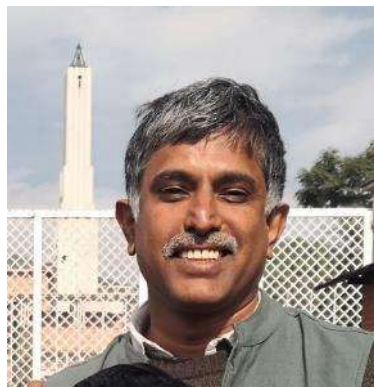
economic and self-determination struggles from the vantage of pan-regional struggles for economic, social and democratic rights. The report attempts to highlight that the migrant is, therefore, central to the modern experience of urbanisation.

He is hopeful that this report will be useful to people who wish to resist the inhuman social structure that produces such unprecedented vulnerabilities and also strive to change it. A quest for a better world involves the elimination of poverty and systemic inequalities. He also shared his confidence with the participants that the will evoke interest and spark debates within the society for a better understanding of the problem and its resolution.

-----

### **Authors' Remarks**

*Babu P Remesh, Dean and Professor at Ambedkar University Delhi, India and a lead author of the report spoke after the sharing of perspectives from the Editorial Board by Sushovan Dhar.*



***Babu P Remesh***

Babu P Remesh, lead author of the report highlighted the important aspects of the report during his deliberations. He explained that report is in line with the ethos and values of SAAPE and thus it has given focus to the poorest of the poor migrants or the most vulnerable migrants.

According to him, the report has explained many drivers of migration analysing the underlying core determinants of migration in South Asia 'poverty and vulnerability', 'poverty and inequality'. The report is focused on the changing role of the state in South Asia while addressing the dynamics of migration. For instance, the state has multiple roles as facilitator, regulator, support-provider. Similarly, how the state within the South Asia region, changing their position or how the state programmes were responding to migration issues are also discussed in the report.

The report also discusses the dynamics of women's migration. The report attempts to explain that the patriarchal norms are dominant while deciding women's migration. It is closely controlled by patriarchal norms, social or familial norms and there is a common pattern in all South Asian countries regarding this patriarchal aspects.

He further added that there are lots of commonalities in the migratory practices in South Asian countries having similar issues and similar problems. Most of the South Asian countries are labour sending countries. The issues of migration in GCC countries are common problems of those labour sending countries. While promoting rights-based approaches to support migrants, the report has tried to arrive at common solutions.

Moreover, the report tries to show the internal migrant's issues; restrictions for women; the approach of the state, and the inadequacy in devising support mechanisms. The report explained the concerns and plights of migrants from the entire region.

Babu also highlighted the following features of the report which are of unique nature.

1. ***Strong Interdisciplinary perspective:*** A set of academicians and social activists from diverse fields were working together on a continuous basis for three years. This provided ample scope for nurturing interdisciplinary approach to the study of migration.
  2. ***Blending the concerns of Academicians and Activists.*** Seasoned Academicians and Veteran activists have been working together
  3. ***Importance of Feeder Reports.*** 8 Country Reports are prepared, which helped the authors to get country specific perspectives clearly. Each of the chapters were vetted by country authors and they kept on providing inputs. This existence of network was also very helpful for us to quickly prepare a detailed chapter on COVID-19, within a very short time period.
  4. ***Academic Gains.*** While working on this report, we could also translate these learnings for the benefit of students in the universities we are working. For instance, in both Ambedkar University Delhi and Gauhati University we could design and introduce courses on migration in South Asia.
-

*Akhil Ranjan Dutta, Professor and Head in the Department of Political Science at Gauhati University, Assam, India shared his experiences as an author, briefly highlighted the issues that are been discussed in the report especially on the role of state and situation of inequality and vulnerability in South Asia.*



***Akhil Ranjan Dutta***

Author's remarks by Akhil Ranjan Dutta followed the sharing made by Babu P Remesh. He shared that the migration in contemporary South Asia needs to be located into the overall political dynamics of neoliberal regimes. These regimes are marked by several contradictions. They are engaged in poverty reduction programmes as laid by international financial institutions. Inequality is no longer the issue of concerns. The concentration of political power and transfer of common's resources to the corporate are the common features throughout South Asia.

South Asia has also witnessed obsessive nationalism that creates barriers among the countries of South Asia. Under these circumstances, SAARC has become almost defunct. The governments are involved in pursuing populist policies but helped in consolidating structural inequities.

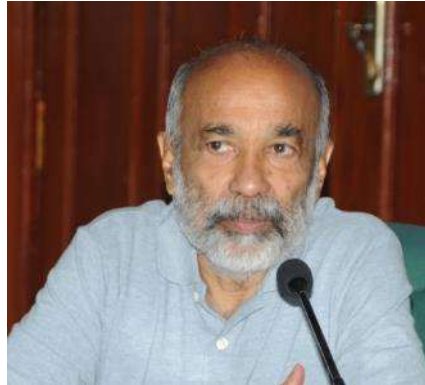
Citizens have been pushed to the level of dependent subjects on state's patronage in many instances. All these have serious and adverse implications on the democratic culture in the region. Any discussion on policies on migrants, immigrants/emigrants and refugees cannot be understood without investigating these political and economic dynamics.

Policies on poverty reduction have been fragmented in nature and they do not address the structural constraints of the marginal communities. States in the region have failed to evolve any meaningful and substantive policies either on migrants, emigrants/immigrants or refugees. In the greater society, they are considered to be a burden to society.

The contribution of these marginal categories towards nation building is both overlooked and undermined. Better future for these categories invites a paradigm shift in the state policies. That can be achieved only through peoples' solidarity movements.

-----

*Mohan Mani, Visiting Fellow with the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru shared his experience with SAAPE during the writing process, Editorial Board meetings and highlighted some additional issues of the report to cover the gaps.*



***Mohan Mani***

Similarly, Mohan Mani while sharing author's experience gave an additional remark on the report. He mentioned that, migration is endemic in a world defined by extreme inequalities. In the context where increasingly migrants are not given rights of citizenship and permanent residency, migration remains circular, temporary and insecure. This form of labour circulation does not lead to any substantial reduction in economic inequalities. Therefore, it does not allow the migrant to move from insecurity to security; it perpetuates vulnerable and footloose labour.

The current global crisis brings together global economic slowdown and climate-induced crisis in addition to the widening inequality in society. This has resulted in shrinking of demands for the migrant workers resulting in further restrictions on free movement of workers. This has resulted in a cascading impact on the most vulnerable sections, increasing their economic and social deprivations; and fundamentally impacting citizenship rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought global attention on the plight of migrants. The scale of migrants returning from cities they had migrated to at great financial and emotional cost, to the source towns and villages they had been forced to leave because of lack of opportunities, underscores the trauma of the pandemic. This trauma was compounded by an unhelpful neoliberal state.

This is the context in which alternate paradigms to urgently address the migrant question need to be put forward and campaigned for by civil society organisations. These paradigms have to necessarily challenge the neoliberal paradigm where fiscal intervention is on the side of "freeing" capital to extract surplus, without concern for rising economic inequalities or increasing depredation of the environment. These paradigms have to be necessarily premised on greater equity in earnings and consumption across nations, and among people within nations. This can be the only long term solution to the global economic crisis, the climate crisis, the migrant crisis, and the crisis to democracy, all of which have common roots.

## Discussants' Observations<sup>1</sup>



**Binda Pandey**

*Member of Parliament, Nepal & Deputy Member, ILO Governing Body*

As a discussant, Binda Pandey found the report a useful advocacy tool that tried to reflect the status of migration in South Asia.

In her observation, the report focuses on poverty and inequality. The report has mentioned the driving forces of migration mainly economic factors. The report is very critical to the neoliberal regime. However, in South Asia, the political, as well as social, cultural factors, are also contributing a lot when the discussions come on poverty and inequality. In her opinion, these issues are mentioned very briefly in the report and suggested for more depth on the issues.

The report categorized the migration in internal, inter-regional, and international which is not sufficient as it is also the important factor that which class of the people is migrating and where they are migrating.

In her views, the major driving forces of women migration are the dignity of labour and gender-based violence. Similarly, access to new technology, curiosity in the new generation are somehow parts of the driving forces. She added, the report has talked more about the gloomy side of the migration.

Migration has some positive impacts such as supporting the family financially, getting exposure, learning new technologies etc. which we can take as a positive side. This should be the discussion on how we take the migration, whether there should be a demand for stopping migration or regulating/dignifying it. In the South Asian context, due to the lack of a data management system regarding migration, pre-migration, and returnees, it is difficult to get a clear picture of it.

She notified that the report left out the issue of social cost as a nation. Nation has invested them as a workforce and social cost of the family on a personal level.

---

<sup>1</sup> This section contains the transcribed version of the discussants' deliberations. The discussants will be sending in a more detailed and structured contribution.

The report talks about internal and external migrations highlighting the labour migration. However, nowadays there is professional migration which can be defined as a part of labour migration or differently. In the report, marriage migration has been discussed which demands more definition and description to connect with the migration. Most of the women and the young generation migrate not only for better economic activities but also to enjoy their freedom, self-reliance, and self-esteem even from high-class families.

Regarding the women's external migration, the inconsistency in policy is the major reason for the fluctuation on women's participation like restrictions in going abroad to work as a house-maid, domestic workers, age-limitation policy which is baseless, and these policies have to be reviewed.

She pointed out the statement -the cross border marriage migration from Nepal basically from the far west. In her knowledge, either it is the southern or northern side, cross border migration is not only the women. She further added that the report needs more clarification on internal and external marriage migration, follower migration, and trafficking in the name of migration.

She further pointed out the state response to the issues mentioned in the report. In her views, the most challenging factors are social-cultural norms and practices, psychological deprivation, identity crisis more than economic in relation to women and are the main cause of the vulnerability and should be addressed in the report.

In between her observation sharing on the COVID chapter in the report, she suggested that the chapter would be more effective if there is a section separation to internal and external migration which helps to make the policy intervention effective and actionable.

She concluded her observation with the thought of making a clear position about the international migration whether it would be stopped or regularized with a more human face. Based on that there should be a highlight of the impacts and drawing the conclusion to make the ultimate impact.

---



***Prof. Prabhu Mohapatra***

*Historian, University of Delhi, India*

Prabhu Mohapatra expressed his observations on the report during the event as a discussant. In his opinion, migration is always a political phenomenon. It is a very individualistic decision always embedded in particular structures of power. Power means certain inequalities of social, economic, and political inequalities. After going thoroughly to the report, he found that opined that the regional and country reports show the centrality of social or economic inequalities in shaping the pattern of migration which brings the political strength.

He congratulated the writers of the report as they have taken the consequence of what they could see clearly during the COVID-19 time in the report, the special chapter by Babu P Remesh, COVID impact on migration. Migration has suddenly become so important in this pandemic period. Pandemic is all contradiction within which migration patterns are embedded. The idea of reverse migration, what does migration play in economic development in the question of political rights, the political nature of migration, and contradictory aspects of migration, the question of citizenship are clearly visible in the report.

He pointed out the specific aspects of circular migration. He further clarified the features of circular migration with an example of the complementary flow of migrants from Europe to America which lessened the demographic pressure and allow the industrialisation and the benefit of industrialisation to happen not available to us in the twentieth and twenty-first century to the underdeveloped countries.

In his views, migration always links with one point to another, links village to city, formal to informal, underdeveloped to developed countries, cities to factories. This linkage is a crucial aspect of migration. There is more and more circulating labour. But circulation was in some sense impact part and partial of the South Asian economic development, especially on the colonial group. During COVID time, the circulating migrants are treated as disposal migrants. He agreed with the suggestion from Binda Pandey on the social cost of migration which produces and sustains the economics of the cities, the countries, and the nation. In his views, the internal and external migrants are very vital contributors to the particular type of development.



The so-called equalizing force of internal and external migration, why it is not visible? It remains relatively poor continuously despite hundreds of years of migration. Why does this continue to be poverty? This question is so conferred to this report. Is poverty the main cause of migration or this pattern of migration produce poverty? The migrating zones are created as places from which workers are produced and which workers can have retained so that capitalist industrialization doesn't or capitalist does not have to pay, full burden, or the full cost of reproduction of labour-power. The capital doesn't want employees to hold. They want them to come at will and go at will. They can work and then go back. This pattern to sustain over the long term is the most important factor in the South Asian pattern of migration.

He observed that women's migration pattern is wonderfully and strongly highlighted in the report. He realized that report not only centred marriage migration but also emphasized on follower migration. Further, he expressed his impression of climate change in the migration issue highlighted in the report.

In his opinion, the bulk of migration has always been single male migration which was also clearly seen by the cover photo of the report. However, it doesn't mean that women are not migrating. They are increasingly migrating and it is important to know the character of the women's migration. In the case of young male migrants, that always be kind of sustain and subsidize. Their labour-power is created in the home by unpaid labour women and that's crucial for containing and continuing certain patterns of capitalist development. He further added that the political nature of migration absolutely central and they focus on the state policy and have to think that it is a particular nexus between capital and the state.

Finally, he commended all the writers for bringing such an excellent report with particular focus on the poor, the poorest, and most vulnerable.

### **Open Discussions**

After listening to the deliberations from the discussants, authors of the report were asked to share their thoughts on the issues raised during the discussion. As the report has already been published, the authors and the SAAPE reiterated to take care of any gaps that are pointed out in the discussion for the forthcoming publications of SAAPE. The recording of the entire programme is available to watch on SAAPE's official YouTube channel.

The link to see the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5GjQxj1sVI&t=3237s>



## Vote of Thanks



Human rights activist, Nalini Ratnarajah, SAAPE Core Committee Member, who is also associated with Search for Common Grounds, Sri Lanka, shared SAAPE's gratefulness to every committed people who contributed to the process directly and indirectly.

## Closing the Programme

*Netra Timsina, a human rights activist who has been engaged in social and political freedom movements in Nepal chaired the session. He is currently working with SAAPE as a Regional Coordinator.*



Regional Coordinator of SAAPE, Netra Timsina, shared the memories of three years journey of SAAPE to produce the report, thanked everyone contributed and adjourned the programme.

## Report Editors



Praman Adhikari, Programme Coordinator at SAAPE Secretariat looks after the overall programmes of SAAPE and coordinates with networks, social movements, financial partners etc.. He and team receive mentorship from SAAPE Advisors, SAAPE Core Committee Members and the Regional Coordinator to organise campaigns and other flagship programmes.



Reshma Shakya, Advocacy and Campaign Officer at SAAPE Secretariat supports programme implementation in South Asian countries with the support from SAAPE campaign members.



Anup Chaudhary looks after the financial matters and administrative affairs of the SAAPE host organisation, LDC Watch as Finance and Administration Officer.

## Annex 1: Programme

Time (Nepal Time)	Activity	
14:00-14:05	Welcome and programme highlights	<b>Netra Timsina</b> Regional Coordinator, SAAPE
14:05-14:15	Introducing the report	<b>Shobha Raghuram</b> SAAPE Founding member
14:15-14:25	Perspective from the Editorial Board	<b>Sushovan Dhar</b> SAAPE Core Committee member
14:25-14:45	Authors' Remarks	<b>Babu P Remesh</b> , Ambedkar University Delhi, India <b>Akhil Ranjan Dutta</b> , Gauhati University, India <b>Mohan Mani</b> , Centre for Labour Studies, NLSIU, India
14:45-15:30	Discussants' Observations	<b>Binda Pandey</b> , Member of Parliament, Nepal & Deputy Member, ILO Governing Body <b>Prabhu Mohapatra</b> , University of Delhi, India
15:30-15:50	Open Discussion	
15:50-15:55	Vote of thanks	<b>Nalini Ratnarajah</b> SAAPE Core Committee member
15:55-16:00	Closing the Programme	<b>Netra Timsina</b>

## Annex 2: Press Release

***“Poverty, declining livelihood and employment opportunities and increasing violence targeting specific vulnerable communities in South Asian countries have triggered internal, intra-regional and international migrations” – says SAAPE report: Migration in South Asia Poverty and Vulnerability.***

04 September 2020

Neoliberalism, coupled with tightening of international borders to stop the migration of the poor are making progressive legislation an onerous task, says the report launched by South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), today on its official website, <https://saape.org/>.

The report suggests easy cross-border travel in South Asia and strongly recommends the revival of regional cooperation by activating South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It also advocates for the strengthening of protection mechanisms for the migrant workers in various GCC and other labour importing countries.

This edition of the report published by SAAPE attempts to explore the underlying issues of migration of the vulnerable and the poor, from both the country and a regional perspective. It substantially highlights and discusses the important drivers of poverty and migration.

The major issues that the report covers are:

- Inter-connectedness of poverty, inequality and migration and rising vulnerabilities and the ever-widening vicious cycle of poverty.
  - How poverty and vulnerability induce migration and, this involuntary migration reinforces the former.
  - Neoliberalism and its relation to poverty and migration.
  - The question of women's migration.
  - The political economy of poverty and inequality in South Asia and a comprehensive investigation of the state responses to deal with those.
  - State responses to migration, emigration and refugees in South Asia.
- 
- Impact and implications of COVID-19 on the migration scenarios of South Asian countries

#### Notes:

The online launching of the report will follow a number of other events in South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka when normal movements are restored after the COVID-19 pandemic. The report is available at <https://saape.org/>.

The report is available for download at <<https://saape.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Migration-in-South-Asia-Report.pdf>>

Follow the online conversation on Twitter/Facebook by using #MigrationInSouthAsia, @saape\_network.

For further details, please contact Praman Adhikari at [praman.saape@gmail.com](mailto:praman.saape@gmail.com) and Reshma Shakya at [reshma.saape@gmail.com](mailto:reshma.saape@gmail.com) at SAAPE secretariat, Kathmandu, Nepal.

-----

"This remarkable study of the circumstances that compel the migration of the poorest and most vulnerable within and across the countries of South Asia and of the socio-economic injustices and human rights abuses they face, has come at an opportune time when the Covid pandemic unexpectedly put their plight in the forefront of public attention everywhere. All the more reason there to be grateful for what SAAPE has given us by way of a wealth of vital information, analytical acuity, and solid proposals for making the lives of these men, women and their families more livable, just and secure."

— Achin Vanaiik

Former Professor, University of Delhi, India

SAAPE has produced a very timely, excellent report which comprehensively analyses different streams of working-class migration within and across the South Asian region. The links between poverty and migration are well researched and elaborated from an

intersectional perspective identifying the structural drivers of migration and the multiple vulnerabilities experienced by migrants as they move from rural to urban settings or across borders. It highlights how neoliberal economic policies mesh with populist authoritarian discourses, intensified by inter regional conflict, which cast migrants as 'others', undeserving of basic social citizenship entitlements, despite the major contribution they make to the economies of the region.

A critical assessment is made of the limitations of state policies on migration and a strong argument with thoughtful insights presented for specific national and regional migration policies as well as for policy interventions that address the structural issues of poverty and inequality, acknowledge the agency of migrant workers and enable the portability of social citizenship rights through universal social provisioning within the region as a whole. This report is an extremely useful, important and valuable resource for activists, policy makers, and development studies scholars.

**– Amrita Chhachhi**

*Erasmus University, The Netherlands*

This report has brought facts, figures and arguments to show the other side of the much publicised high growth in South Asia. The vast majority of people in South Asia live in the darkness of poverty, uncertainty, insecurity, constant threat on lives and livelihood with increasing air and water pollution, shrinking rivers, deforestation and so on. In desperate search for job and security these people take risk to move with uncertainty, there has been a considerable expansion in the flow of people migrating from their native places and countries.

Increasing militarization, ethnic and communal violence, state surveillance and repression multiply the sufferings and livelihood uncertainties of the poor. The report confirms that to change the scenario of deepening poverty and vulnerability, our first priority should be to build effective solidarity of people among South Asian countries

**– Anu Muhammad**

*Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh*

"The SAAPE Poverty and Vulnerability Report 2020 – Migration in South Asia is a necessary working tool for anyone interested or studying subjects related to poverty, social inequality and migration. These are global issues but have a specific and dramatic weight in South Asia.

The authors offer us a diversity of perspectives and analysis on these subjects. In seven chapters, they address topics ranging from the conceptualization of migration in South Asia and its determinants, the circumstances and causes of female migration, the role and responses of the State to the phenomenon, linking the impact of neoliberal agendas to the spread of poverty and inequality. The report includes an up-to-date study on the regional impact of Covid-19 on migration and a final chapter, imagining possible future scenarios, showing that "the way forward has to be a democratic revival, where economic growth does not preclude equitable distribution of wealth".

The report is useful for all those who need to keep themselves updated on the topics covered in the book, which are part of the main challenges of the present time.

**– Beatriz Bissio**

*Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

The lockdown during Covid-19 Pandemic exposed one of the cruelest realities of contemporary development experience when millions of migrant labour in urban areas were forced to be on the road. They were the distress migrants from rural areas who had gone out in search of livelihood. This report vividly captures the phenomenon of vulnerability accompanying widespread, multidimensional poverty in South Asian countries. The experts marshal systematic evidence to show that longstanding structural inequalities and deprivations lay at the root of such migration which get accentuated as a result of wars, communal drives and natural disasters. Those who wish to see a better future for South Asia will find this report of great value both to understand the reality and get insights for policy and social action.

**– Manoranjan Mohanty**

*Former Professor, University of Delhi, India*

This path breaking Report on human migration in South Asia in 2020 highlights the enduring importance of mobility in the region and its strikingly contemporary relevance in COVID times. It succeeds wonderfully in underlining the many commonalities that drive migration in the region but above all in emphasising the deeply political nature of migration, the way inequality, poverty and neoliberal ideology are braided together by state policy to produce "agrarian distress" and shape migration within and across the region. No one reading the report will ever come out believing that human migration is merely a "natural" "phenomena of an overwhelmingly poor and overpopulated region.

**– Prabhu Mohapatra**

*University of Delhi, India*