

Migration in Post-COVID South Asia

Economic migration is a central facet of South Asia's development, helping increase productivity by reallocating labour to places where it is more productive. Seasonal or temporary migration strengthens resilience to local shocks. The role of migration as a mechanism for adjusting to locally varying shocks and longer-term trends may become even more significant because of climate change.

Among the region's poor, internal and international migration is largely of a temporary nature. While it entails potentially high returns, it also involves considerable risks and costs due to limited information, high upfront financing costs and weak institutional safeguards. There is immense potential to reduce this vulnerability and to maximise the benefits of migration for workers from South Asia, and the countries in the region are increasingly developing policies to enhance the welfare impacts of migration.

The first year of the COVID-19 crisis disrupted migration in South Asia. Facing lockdowns, job loss and other difficulties in their host locations, many poor migrant workers were left stranded or returned earlier than planned. This experience underlined long-standing policy concerns related to economic migration in South Asia, such as migrants' weak access to public services and social assistance, the credit and labour market frictions that impede migration, and the possible negative spillovers of migration on home locations. However, much of the evidence on the impacts of the crisis on migrants and their households still only dates from the first few months of the crisis. The role of migration in the recovery from the crisis and its longer-term impacts are not well understood.

Against this backdrop, the session invites papers addressing one of the following (and related) questions:

- What are the causes and consequences of internal and international economic migration in South Asia?
- How has the COVID-19 crisis affected economic migration in South Asia and what role will it play in the recovery from the crisis and in a post-Covid South Asia?
- What can policy makers do to make economic migration more productive and safer? How can they help maximise its positive impacts and minimise negative spillovers on migrant sending locations? What are the tradeoffs involved in migration-related policies?

In addition to contributed papers, this session will feature a presentation of the World Bank's upcoming *South Asia Economic Focus*, Fall 2022 issue.

Panel Organisers

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