

India-Gulf Migration: Corruption and Capacity in Regulating Recruitment Agencies¹

December 2010

Mary Breeding
Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank²
mbreeding@worldbank.org

¹ Paper forthcoming in a Columbia University Press Book <http://www12.georgetown.edu/sfs/qatar/cirs/MigrantLaborSummaryReport.pdf>, edited by Mehran Kamrava; I would like to thank the Center for International and Regional Studies as well as the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University for their generous support in funding this research and Lara Sukhtian for her research assistance in the project.

² This research is independent of my employer.

Abstract

What are the processes for recruitment of low-skilled labor from India to the Gulf? While a substantial body of research exists across different economic, political and cultural dimensions assessing India-Gulf migration, there has been little research to track the formal and informal processes of recruitment and the steps involved in migrating from India to the Gulf. This research documents the process by which recruitment of low-skilled labor occurs in India. In doing so, I present an analytic narrative outlining the procedures of contract brokering between recruitment agencies, job candidates and Gulf-based employers—including abuses and corruption. This paper is based on three months of fieldwork in India and Qatar, during which time I conducted in-depth interviews with recruitment agencies based in four cities of India, employers in Qatar and government officials in both countries to better understand recent trends in India-Gulf migration. Findings highlight three informal practices common in contract brokering for India-Gulf Migration. These informal practices potentially undermine formal institutions and allow for abuses of contract brokering. They include: recruitment agencies working with sub-agents; fishing for candidates in rural areas; and information asymmetries between recruiters and job candidates regarding wages.

I. Introduction

The recruitment of workers in India for the purpose of fulfilling construction and other low-skilled occupations in the Persian Gulf region has gained considerable attention in recent years. Thousands of Indians emigrate to Gulf countries annually as contracted workers. In 2007 the number low-skilled Indian migrants acquiring emigration clearance to work in the Gulf topped 800,000 (809,453) from 466,456 in 2003 (MOIA 2008). These migrants were individually recruited by one of 1835 registered recruitment agencies in India and gained work clearance in Gulf Countries. The overall stock of Indian migrants currently residing in the Gulf is unknown, but recent estimates suggest that 19 percent of all Non-resident Indians and Persons of Indian Origin living outside India are estimated to be located in the Gulf (Khadria 2006).

Who are these migrants? Indian migrants first started going to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in the 1970s after the oil boom in West Asia and the Gulf. During the 1970s and 1980s the composition of migrants from India was largely restricted to South Indian migrants from Kerala (Venier 2007). During the 1990s the demand for labor in GCC countries increased and diversified across many sectors from construction, services, oil and manufacturing. As a result, the composition of Indian migrants emigrating also diversified. Indian migrants come from all states across India, but migrants from the southern states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have comprised more than fifty percent of emigration clearances over the past decade (ICOE 2009).

While a substantial body of research exists across different economic, political and cultural dimensions assessing India-Gulf migration, there has been little research to

track the processes of recruitment and the steps involved in migrating from India to the Gulf (ILO 2009). This research documents the process by which recruitment of low-skilled labor occurs in India. In doing so, I seek to present an analytic narrative outlining the procedures of contract brokering between recruitment agencies, job candidates and Gulf-based employers—including abuses and corruption. During three months of fieldwork in India and Qatar, I conducted in-depth interviews with recruitment agencies based in four cities of India, employers in Doha and government officials in both countries to better understand recent trends in the case of Indian migration. Below, I present an overview of the research and some key findings from the fieldwork.

II. Narrative: Cycle of Migration and Stakeholders

It is estimated that there are approximately five million low-skilled workers in GCC countries, but how did they get there? A recent document released by the Indian Council of Overseas Employment outlines three phases of a job candidate's India-Gulf migration process: pre-departure, the employment phase and the capacity building phase (ICOE 2009, 21). One, the pre-departure phase includes recruitment, obtaining a passport, the job search, insurance procurement, travel booking and emigration clearance from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs to travel abroad. A recruitment agent facilitates these tasks. Two, the employment phase is the period in which a migrant is working for an employer in the foreign country. Three, the final phase is the return of the migrant to his/her home country. The Indian government positively refers to this period as the capacity building phase where the migrant worker carries the skills learned abroad back to India.

To date, little is known about recruitment agencies. Current information comes largely from two sources: the Indian government and media coverage of recruitment abuses. In 2004 the Indian government created a new ministry to manage India-Gulf migration, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). Its duties include:

- Formulation of policies for improving Emigration Management
- Proposing legislative changes
- Implementing emigration reforms (including institutional changes and e-Governance)
- Formulation of welfare schemes for emigrants
- Promoting bilateral and multilateral co-operation in international migration (MOIA 2010).

In the context of low-skilled India-Gulf migration this translates into formulating policies to govern recruitment agencies and workers seeking employment abroad. It further entails implementing legislation, but there is no mention of regulation or oversight in the Ministry's formal duties and objectives. There is also no formally devised duty for regulation or oversight of recruitment agencies in the objectives of the Ministry of External Affairs, which manages diplomatic policy relations. The MOIA has worked to outline the process of India-Gulf migration (Refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1.

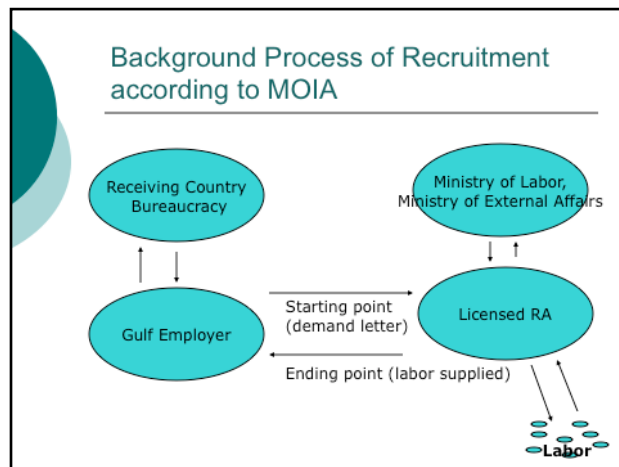


Figure 1 depicts the process of recruitment as outlined by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. When an Indian citizen (labor) wishes to work in the Gulf, he or she must go through a recruitment agent. Recruitment agents are brokers, usually residing in India, who facilitate the process of emigration from India to the Gulf. By law they are required to be registered with the Ministry. Employers based in the Gulf develop working relationships with recruitment agencies in India, and the agencies are responsible for matching qualified job candidates to the employers. When employers need labor, they must first send an official “demand letter” to the recruitment agency they will work with to hire Indian workers.

The recruitment agent finds qualified candidates to meet employers’ needs. In addition the agent helps candidates with the required pre-departure activities, including obtaining approval from the Indian government for the candidate to migrate (MOIA 2010). Recruitment agents are paid by employers, job candidates, or both for their services. The MOIA has set the maximum amount an agent can charge a job candidate at Rs. 10,000 (approximately \$200 USD), but I found the average cost to migrants to be between Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 50,000 (\$800 and \$1000 USD) among twenty-two recruitment agencies I interviewed—a cost that can be the equivalent of one year’s salary for many emigrants. On paper, the recruiter provides a service to both employers’ and job candidates and this results in a win-win situation.

The Real Situation

Results from my research and fieldwork suggest, however, that in practice the outlined policy framework for India-Gulf recruitment presents many challenges.

Information asymmetries between job candidates and recruitment agencies and unregulated recruitment provide opportunities for corruption.

Figure 2

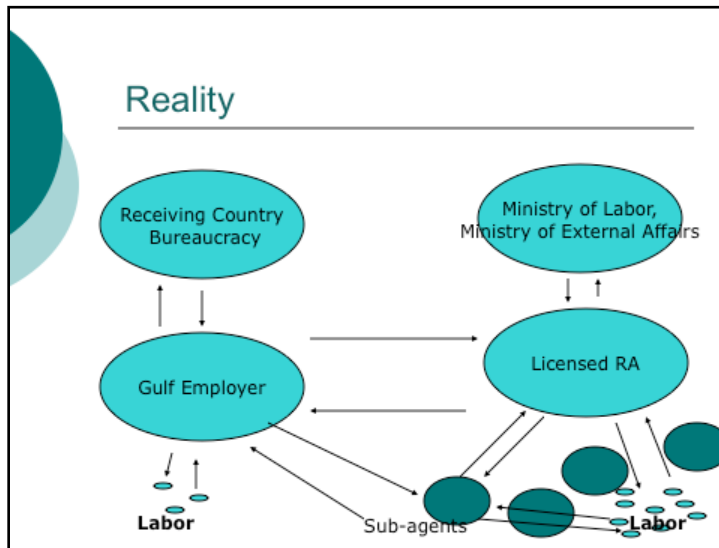


Figure 2 more accurately depicts the kinds of scenarios I encountered in seeking to understand the process of India-Gulf Migration. What I quickly discovered is that there are multiple structures, institutions, and processes for labor migrants, recruitment agencies and employers to use in the process of emigrating to the Gulf. There is a legal structure outlined by the ministry (The Emigration Act, 1983, Section 10). There are also the institutions and processes described by the MOIA's website. The process in Figure 1 is the legal process of recruitment.

There are also several alternative ways operating openly, even advertised daily in newspapers. The most common alternative form of recruitment is through a sub-agent or "consultant" to a registered recruitment agency. While there are a limited number of formally registered recruitment agents (app. 1835), there are thousands of sub-agents. Other routes I learned about in interviews with recruitment agents and informal chats

with return migrants included a variety of scenarios from direct recruitment from employers abroad to the migrant—especially in the instance of domestic servants. I heard several stories of domestic servants who had emigrated with families they had worked for in India, and some domestic workers obtained contacts with Gulf employers through friends who had emigrated and were working for families abroad. For example, in one case a household in Dubai was looking for a domestic worker. They asked a neighborhood household who had emigrated from Karnataka with their Konkani domestic worker, and the household asked the worker if she had any friends who would be interested. In other cases I heard stories of workers who bypassed the system of emigration entirely—particularly in Goa—by illegally taking up work on ships. In these instances the processes and networks for recruitment fall outside the bounds of the legally defined structure of the Indian government. Given this framework, I am interested in two particular types of questions: What are the underlying processes involved in alternative forms of recruitment? And what are the regulatory failures in these processes?

III. Research Design

The research design involves a mixed methods approach including both qualitative and quantitative components. Aside from the qualitative interview material presented, a second component of the research has involved the collection of Indian migration data from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in Delhi to obtain a better understanding of trends in Indian migration to GCC countries over time.

Interviews

The research design includes interviews of three kinds of stakeholders: registered recruitment agencies, unregistered recruitment agencies and government officials in India

and Qatar. The objective of this exercise was to develop a detailed understanding of the process of recruitment in four urban areas: Mumbai, Pune, Goa, and Bangalore. In each of the cities, agencies were randomly selected from a list of registered agencies obtained from the MOIA. At the time the interviews were conducted, the list of registered agencies was not publicly available. Since December 2009 the list has been uploaded on the MOIA's website for public use.³ In total twenty agencies were selected, of those, only fourteen were operational. Others agencies either did not exist or had closed since registering with the MOIA. Interviews with agents lasted between forty-five minutes to 1.5 hours. In local agencies I interviewed the owners, and in corporate agencies I interviewed the managing director.

In addition to the registered recruitment agencies interviewed, I visited several and interviewed eight unregistered recruitment agencies, or “sub-agents.” Agencies were selected through a method of snowball sampling and informal discussions with locals—usually with hotel staff, rickshaw drivers, or local restaurant employees. I would inquire about whether locals whom I encountered knew anyone working and living in the Gulf and how they got there. From this question I would ask about recruitment agents in the area and where they were located. I would then proceed to make my way to find local agencies.

Interviews with both registered and unregistered agencies followed a standard format. I asked a series of questions covering five topics:

- Recruitment agency history—When did the agency begin its work? Are they registered with the MOIA? If so, under what name, and what year did they register?

³ <http://www.moia.gov.in/services.aspx?id1=66&idp=66&mainid=73>

- Local scene—What kinds of job candidates does the agency recruit? What are their processes for selection? How do they operate—locally, regionally, or nationally?
- Gulf Contacts—Who comprises their client-base in the Gulf Region? What countries do they send migrants to? Do they have preferences for working with employers in some Gulf countries over others? Have they ever encountered difficult situations in working with Gulf Clients? Does the agency work directly with the employer or is there an intermediary? If there is an intermediary, who is it?
- Recruitment practice—How does the agent advertise? How does the agent select job candidates for the employer? Does the Gulf employer come and conduct interviews directly with the job candidates, or does the agent conduct interviews with job candidates on the employer's behalf? What fees does the agent charge to the candidate and what fees does the agent charge employers? What is the total cost charged to job candidates going to work in the Gulf? How much do candidates recruited earn while working abroad? Does the agent process emigration clearance documents in house, or are documents outsourced? Who conducts the medical examination of workers for the agent?
- Future Aspirations—How is business currently? What has been the impact of the global economic crisis on the recruitment agent? What is in store for the agency's future? Does the agent see recruitment lucrative in the long run? Why or why not?

These questions provided a base to develop an analytic narrative about the agencies and their recruitment practices.

In addition to these interviews, I visited one migrant receiving country in the Gulf, Qatar. I conducted 10 in-depth interviews with managers in construction companies and hotels to better understand the recruitment practices of employers and to obtain a better understanding of the working and living conditions in a migrant-receiving state. Employers were selected using a list I obtained from the Indian embassy. The Indian Embassy in Doha has a special department that works on behalf of labor migrants and works to mediate any disputes when they arise. They provided a list of employers with contacts for the HR personnel in the companies I contacted. During these interviews I met with HR personnel in construction companies and hotels. Both kinds of employers

formally recruit workers from abroad and provide housing and benefits to their employees. The questions asked of these companies were targeted to understand:

- The country and ethnic composition of their workers
- The kind of contracts they offer
- Their recruitment practice—the firms with whom they work in India
- Whether they were aware of illegal recruitment practices in India
- Their experiences with recruitment agencies
- Working and living conditions of their employees in the Gulf

As with interviews of recruitment agencies, interviews of employees provided another perspective from actors involved in recruitment and helped to build the narrative that follows.

The final type of interviews I conducted were interviews with government and various kinds of public officials in both India and Qatar. The purpose of these interviews and meetings were to have the perspective of policymakers and officials in charge of recruitment and immigration in both countries—to have a more rounded perspective on the process as a whole. These interviews include interviews with officials in the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, national Indian journalists, Indian embassy officials in Qatar, and the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking. In March 2010 I attended a joint meeting hosted by the United Nations and the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking (QFCHT). One agenda item for this meeting was to discuss the definition of human trafficking as applied to labor migration. The meeting brought together public officials from throughout the region. This further provided a comparative perspective into Qatar's position on labor migrants. The QFCHT at least acknowledges the potential for low-skilled labor migrants—outside of domestic workers—to become victims of human trafficking, and offers a commitment to regulating employers and

observing the practices of migration, as compared to countries like Oman and Kuwait which have no such commitments.

IV. Profile of Recruitment Agencies and Employers

The Post-liberalization India sparks a number of images—of industrializing cities where remnants of traditional life meet the global pace of modernization—cows wondering city streets and outsourced call centers—the face of cities such as Mumbai, Pune, Goa and Bangalore. Where do recruitment agencies fit within these modernizing urban spaces? What do they look like? Much like the call center images made popular from movies and TV shows, the first image one might develop of a recruitment agency is the image outlined in Indian newspaper ads—of Corporate Indian environments with modern furniture, air conditioning, and cubicle workspaces with computers. The reality I encountered, however, was different.

Recruitment agencies I interviewed were located in a variety of urban spaces: one in a government office, two small suites in corporate high rises, and the rest in crowded streets among rows of shops. Most agencies were small, with a maximum of five to ten employees. The unregistered agencies I encountered all operated alongside another kind of business either as domestic labor market recruiters or travel agents. Goa was a popular spot for unregistered recruitment agents counteracting as travel agents. I spoke with four such agencies there. Agencies were varied in their resources and the quality of trained staff they employed.

All agencies had at least one computer and usually a small waiting area for job candidates to sit. Most noted that they do their business in the evenings between 5 pm and 9 pm after the regular workday is over. While I observed agencies during this time,

my interviews usually took place in the mornings and early afternoon. In Mumbai the agencies with whom I spoke discussed doing most of their business at a local market on Sundays where job candidates would come with their papers if they were seeking employment abroad. Every Sunday the market acts as a job fair advertising jobs.

Several common themes arose during interviews with agencies, and some of the themes were reinforced during discussions with employers later. A first common theme to arise had to do with a modernizing pattern of recruitment within India. It became clear that trends first outlined in work of social scientists such as Philippe Venier on migrant labor practices in Kerala seem to have changed in recent years. Recruitment agents, once local businesses that recruited only from within their localities and in a particular region, have a far wider scope. While many agencies are located in modern urban spaces, their client base is not local. Large registered recruitment agencies headquartered in Mumbai and Delhi, discussed recruiting from rural areas in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. For instance, one agent I interviewed in Pune said:

My office is in Maharashtra, but I never hire Marathis. The few times I have placed young Marathi men, they also cause some problem. This and that, their parents come in with concerns. It's a hassle, and they are lazy. They also know they get better jobs in cities like Bombay or Pune. Most of the construction men we take are from Tamil Nadu.... -Pune RA, 29 December 2009

This was a common theme—agencies, especially registered agencies kept offices in large urban areas, but their candidate bases were elsewhere. Another agent noted: “You see it all depends on the job. You want masons, I contact my men in Rajasthan. You want cooks, I look in Goa. These regions have been specialized for 100s of years” (Bangalore

RA 7 January 2010). When I inquired about who his “men” were, he did not hesitate to note that he worked with consultants. He claimed that it is not feasible for him to operate for international clients without having access to a base of migrants across India.

The influence of the global financial crisis was a second striking theme to emerge from my interviews. Of the twenty registered agencies randomly selected, six of them had closed in the previous two years. I was able to follow up with two former owners of these agencies. They both indicated that the fall of the market in the UAE in 2009 and the financial crisis in 2008 had destroyed their business. Their clients abroad no longer demanded new workers, and since the costs of keeping their licenses up to date with the MOIA had increased, they decided to shut their doors. Others discussed concerns about the future of their businesses. They noted that they were looking for clients outside of the UAE, namely in Oman, Kuwait and Qatar.

A General Manager of a large corporate recruitment agency I interviewed in Bombay, made a strong case about changes in the Indian workforce relative to the Gulf:

There has been no demand for workers, and even when there is demand we often struggle to find good workers. There is low supply. You see, with what is happening in India today, supply of workers to the Gulf has gone down. Slowly, slowly, earnings in India have been increasing. Workers don't want to go the Gulf unless they live in a remote village and don't know any better. In order to increase supply, Gulf companies are going to have to changes their pay structures. If I'm a semi-skilled worker and I can earn \$1000 per month here, and only \$1200 there-- why go? If I can make \$2400 a month there, then I'll go. But now, Gulf firms

cannot pay that. They cannot complete like they used to. (Interview with General Manager in Mumbai, 4 January 2010).

This Manager captured the essence of many interviews, noting the need to recruit in rural areas as a result of increases in wages of Indian workers in urban areas relative to wages of workers in the Gulf.

A third theme has to do with the costs of recruitment charge to job candidates. The Indian government has set the maximum that recruitment agencies can charge employees at Rs. 10,000 (app. \$200 USD). Only one of the recruitment agencies I interviewed, a government based recruitment agent in Goa, said that is the fee workers are charged. All other recruiters with whom I spoke cited a figure between Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 50,000 (app. \$800-\$1000 USD). This is the fee that job candidates must pay. There are several costs involved in the migration of one worker. These include: cost of the candidate's passport, visa, emigration clearance fees, airline tickets, cost of a mandatory medical exam, and recruitment agent fees. If a subcontractor is involved, he will also charge an additional fee. The overall costs charged to a job candidate ultimately depend on who pays for what: the recruitment agent, the employer, or the job candidate. In the worst case scenario, the burden is entirely placed on the job candidate to cover all fees for traveling abroad. In most cases, however, the employer covers the cost of airfare. Conversely, the government recruitment agency I interviewed in Goa, the agency works only with employers who will cover mandatory costs of going abroad, and in most cases, the recruiter said the worker does not incur any costs. Other recruitment agents had different arrangements, and usually arrangements vary depending on the Gulf employer for whom the recruitment agency is working. With the one exception of the government

recruitment agency I interviewed, job candidates applying to other agencies always end up paying between four and five times more than the maximum a recruitment agent can charge.

Interviews with firms in Doha reinforced these themes. For instance, many employers in the Gulf prefer workers from specific regions in India. As one employer I interviewed noted:

When we first started recruiting workers from India, they all came from one state. We were not aware that workers in different parts of the country have different sets of skills. Over the past thirty years, there are more and more workers from other parts of India. In Rajasthan the masons are good. I like getting masons from there. Also, in Tamil Nadu, the workers are used to the heat and long days.

Their skin is darker and they are able to withstand the sun for many hours. We get our unskilled workers from there (Interview in Doha, January 13, 2010).

This manager of a construction company in Doha makes a few important points. One, he highlights a historical change in India-Gulf migration trends. Two, he reflects several common stereo-types of Indian migrants from different regions that I encountered in other interviews with other employers.

Historically, the majority of India-Gulf migration was comprised of workers from Kerala. Today, however, workers come from all states of India, and workers from other states far outnumber those from Kerala (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1 about here

In 2009 workers from Kerala comprised 19.7% of all emigration clearances to the Gulf. Kerala is still a large migrant-sending state, but in 2009 there were more workers

from Uttar Pradesh, which comprised 20.5% of all workers. As more workers have gone abroad from other regions and parts of India, employers have gained knowledge about capabilities of workers, and it was evident in my interviews with ten employers that they shared common stereotypes about workers from different regions. One of these stereotypes with respect to workers from Kerala is that they are more skilled and better educated. The employers I interviewed said they do not usually try recruiting workers from Kerala in the area of construction, because most Keralites emigrate to the Gulf in more skilled capacities these days—as teachers, nurses, doctors, etc.

Doha employers reinforced another common theme I encountered in my interviews with recruitment agencies when I discussed the process of recruitment with them. Working with subagents is the reality for employers. Out of the ten employers I interviewed only three realized that working with subagents is illegal, and none of them were really versed in the legal framework for recruitment established by the Indian government. They all stated that their responsibility was sending an “offer letter” to the job candidate. Most said it is the responsibility of the recruitment agent to manage the legal framework in India. There was a general tendency to place blame on the recruiter for any illegal practices in India.

Lastly, with respect to the costs of recruitment, Doha employers stated an awareness that the costs to most migrants was more than one or two months of wages the migrant would earn working in Doha. All employers with whom I spoke said they pay for the airline tickets and room and board of workers while in Doha. Most managers I interviewed in Doha said it was the responsibility of the recruitment agent and the job candidate to agree upon a rate for the service, and employers tried to avoid being

involved in this process. Doha employers highlighted the amenities and services they offer to their employees—good living conditions and dorms as well as work uniforms, medical and health benefits, and leisure facilities (TV, Internet, etc. in living areas).

Overall most employers avoided taking responsibility for their recruitment practices in India. The five hotel managers I interviewed took more responsibility than construction companies. In one instance, a manager said:

Our hotel is one in a chain of hotels in the Gulf and we all have one common pool of recruited workers from which we can hire. Since I came to this hotel one year ago, I have tried to work with our recruitment headquarters in Dubai to learn about the different agencies from where our workers are recruited. We have a very international staff, and Indians comprise about 15% of our employees. I know we were working with one agent, but I found that the agent was overcharging workers. Now headquarters had hired a new agent in Bombay (Interview with Manager in Doha, 24 January 2010).

In this instance, the manager of this hotel was working very closely with her core staff to make sure they were both recruited fairly and earning a fair wage. The nightly hotel cleaning services, however, were contracted out to another company that recruits. She said she has really no idea where the company gets its workers. She said she as one person, could only do so much, and her job as a manager was to look after her direct employees.

V. Corruption and Capacity in Regulating Recruitment Agencies

Arising from these themes, I present three of the most prominent regulatory failures I encountered based on my fieldwork and policy processes for addressing them.

These cases include: unregistered recruitment; incomplete information; and fishing for candidates.

Unregistered Recruitment

First, an obvious disconnect between the Indian government's recruitment framework and what I observed in my fieldwork is the use of unregistered recruitment agents, or "sub-agents." The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs keeps a list of 1835 registered agents. In reality there are 1000s of agencies, mostly illegal. Sub-agents operate out of travel agencies, teashops and their private homes. These agents illegally recruit job candidates on behalf of registered agencies. Many registered agencies I interviewed openly admitted to working with subagents. One subagent I interviewed, doubling as a travel agent in Goa, noted that he prefers to call himself a consultant so that he does not encounter hassle by the Ministry. When I asked him if he feared getting caught, his reply was: "My Uncle, owning this travel agency, is with the Congress Party, and he is powerful. No one will touch us, but in the case that I am caught, I know that he will make sure my business stays alive" (Interview in Goa, December 21, 2009). Others were less worried because they perceive very little regulation on the part of the Ministry.

Subagents create an additional principal between the recruitment agency and job candidates. This is where many candidates end up facing fees exceeding the maximum charge set by the Indian government. Subagents result from the failure to regulate recruitment. While there is a fine for subagents who are caught, the reality is that very few agencies are caught. In March of 2009 the Ministry had only listed six such agencies on its website (MOIA 2010). Strengthening the capacity for regulation of subagents is needed to curtail corrupt practices and illegal contract brokering in India-Gulf Migration.

Information Asymmetries and Fishing for Candidates

Two additional observations of the India-Gulf recruitment process are interconnected and result from information asymmetries between agents and job candidates. Two practices observed in interviews include fishing for candidates and not disclosing full information to candidates. These are based on deception and call ethics of the recruitment process into question. Recruitment agents have an incentive to supply as much labor as they can to Gulf employers. Fishing for candidates, for example, occurs when agents seek pockets of candidates in remote rural areas. This process often occurs with the help of subagents who work from villages to attain qualified candidates, who, in many cases, are illiterate. Agents create a picture of Gulf countries as wealthy and often fail to provide full information about the working and living conditions migrants will be entering—working long hours outdoors in high temperatures and living in labor camps. As one recruiter I interviewed noted:

I only recruit in villages. You see, with what is happening in India today, supply of workers to the Gulf has gone down. Slowly, Slowly, earnings in India have been increasing. Workers don't want to go the Gulf unless they live in a remote village and don't know any better.” (Interview, General Manager, Mumbai Recruitment Agency, 4 January 2010).

This manager outlines why he has an incentive to recruit in villages and not to provide full information to potential candidates. If a candidate knows he isn't going to earn more than he could earn by moving to the city, will he still have an interest to move? Likely not. His method of recruitment is luring workers through ignorance, which boils down to exploitation.

In the midst of the economic crisis, India's economy continues to grow while many countries in the Gulf have made cuts, including cuts in wages to migrant labor. Nine out of ten employers I interviewed in the Qatar noted that they had either stopped hiring or let labor go. Three out of ten noted that they had lowered wages. At present recruitment agencies are not required to provide any information about workers' rights, their working and living conditions abroad, or return migration to job candidates. The idea of empowering job candidates about their rights and providing full information is non-existent.

In sum, there is a disconnect between the Indian government's documented policy framework on the recruitment process and the actual operations of recruitment. Notably as a result of failure to regulate recruitment agencies and information asymmetries between recruitment agencies and job candidates, several opportunities for corruption and abuse in the process of recruitment arise. Building capacity for regulation with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and requiring information be disseminated to migrants about their rights in India and in their destination country are two potential steps towards limiting instances of corruption and abuse.

VI. Conclusion

This paper has documented formal and informal processes observed in the recruitment of Indian migrants to Qatar. I have sought to better understand the process by which recruitment of low-skilled labor occurs in India using an analytic narrative compiled from three months of fieldwork in India and Qatar. I have presented findings from interviews with twenty-three recruitment agents and ten employers in the Gulf. Three common themes in observed in the process of recruitment have included: a

diversification of locations from which agencies recruit; a decline in the number of operating agencies after the 2008 financial crisis; and a realized awareness that the costs of migrating to the Gulf are always four to five times the legal costs set by the Government of India. One, as the flow of migrants from India to the Qatar have increased since the early 1970s, more employers are aware of different regions and different kinds of workers seeking emigration abroad. Employers display regional preference for Indian workers based on the kinds of jobs they seek to fill. As a result, recruiters have expanded beyond Kerala and urban areas to attract migrant labor abroad. Two, there was an observed impact of the financial crisis on recruitment of labor to the Gulf. After 2008 many agencies lost business or closed their doors entirely. Out of twenty registered agents randomly selected for initial interviews in this research project, only fourteen were open and had survived the crisis. Three, the Indian government sets the maximum charge to job candidates applying to work abroad at Rs. 10,000 (approximately \$200 USD), but all recruitment agencies I interviewed noted that candidates typically pay between Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 50,000 (\$800 to \$1000 USD).

Three informal processes emerged from these themes: working with subagents; fishing for candidates in rural areas; and information asymmetries over wages workers earn abroad. One, as demands for workers from various regions of India have increased, so has the demand to recruit across India. Several agencies interviewed discussed working with subagents, to recruit job candidates. Subagents are unlicensed illegal recruiters. Two, along with the rise in subagents, there has been a rise in recruitment from rural areas. Three, recruiters, have an incentive to recruit in rural areas where information asymmetries between the recruiter and job candidates over wages are

potentially greater. After the 2008 financial crisis, urban wages in India have continued to rise while wages in the Gulf have been sustained or fallen. Many workers can potentially earn equal wages in urban India without migrating. Job candidates in rural areas have less information about urban wages, and may therefore find India-Gulf migration more attractive. These informal processes, unregulated, potentially undermine the formal process of migration from India to the Gulf, allowing for abuses and corruption in contract brokering between Gulf employers, job candidates, and recruitment agents.

Works Cited

ICOE. 2009. "Impact Assessment of Global Recession on Indian Migrant Workers in Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Malaysia." New Delhi: Indian Council of Overseas Employment.

International Labor Organization. 2009. "Costs of Coercion." Geneva: International Labor Organization.

Khadria, Binod. "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries Labour Migration to the Gulf." Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 2006.

MOIA. 2008. Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs 2008 Annual Report. Delhi: MOIA.

MOIA. 2010. "Emigration Services."

<http://www.moia.gov.in/services.aspx?id1=66&idp=66&mainid=73>, Accessed 15 August, 2010.

Venier, Philippe. 2007. "From Kerala to the UAE: Emerging Trends in a Mature Labour Migration System." Maître de Conférences, Université de Poitiers, CNRS MIGRINTER

Table 1. 2009 Emigration Clearance Data

Statewise Migration data-Jan-Oct-2009

STATE	MALES	FEMALES	TOTALS
Andaman Nicobar	59	7	66
Andhra Pradesh	47363	11162	58525
Arunachal Pradesh	153	4	157
Assam	1501	1	1502
Bihar	42075	4	42079
Chandigarh	811	0	811
Chhattisgarh	39	2	41
Dadar and Nagar Have	2	0	2
Daman and Diu	8	0	8
Delhi	2122	36	2158
Goa	1333	63	1396
Gujrat	7921	43	7964
Haryana	885	1	886
Himachal Pradesh	670	1	671
Jammu Kashmir	3683	0	3683
Jharkhand	2955	5	2960
Karnataka	15619	330	15949
Kerala	100539	1965	102504
Lakshadeep	16	0	16
Madhya Pradesh	1619	6	1625
Maharashtra	16229	338	16567
Manipur	14	0	14
Meghalaya	17	0	17
Mizoram	2	0	2
Nagaland	5	0	5
Orissa	5384	1	5385
Pondicherry	280	7	287
Punjab	23067	16	23083
Rajsthan	37866	13	37879
Sikkim	11	0	11
Tamil Nadu	66760	680	67440
Tripura	272	1	273
Uttar pradesh	106607	22	106629
Uttranchal	500	2	502
West Bengal	17624	47	17671
TOTAL	504011	14757	518768