

Low-skilled Indian construction workers in the Gulf, Singapore and Malaysia

Return to India, reintegration and re-emigration



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Preface and acknowledgements

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Abstract

The global economic crisis has created a context in which return of low- and unskilled migrant workers has increased in pace and amount. South Indians, who have formed an important labor source for the construction sectors in the Gulf and South-East Asia for decades, are among the most severely hit. The goal of this study has been to examine what happens with the labor migrants after return, i.e. their reintegration patterns and their propensity to re-emigrate, and what policies exist to assist them. The most important fieldwork data were gathered through a survey among 143 return migrants in different locations in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Furthermore, several interviews with key informants, phone calls with the return migrants and document study provided additional qualitative data. Results showed that the period after return is greatly influenced by the preliminary phases of the migration project, starting with initial recruitment and social influence and pressure from within the home community. In these preliminary phases the success or failure of a migration project is already largely determined. These factors are therefore also of crucial importance in explaining reintegration patterns or the propensity to re-emigrate. It is not uncommon that migrants get exploited during the whole process of migration, eventually leading to problems back in India that hinder reintegration. Many returnees have to cope with debt problems, sometimes so heavy that they are apparently unsolvable. However, not everybody truly tries to reintegrate, since a lot of returnees have the wish to emigrate again. Migration is for many migrants a continuum and does not stop with the first return to India. This re-emigration can be an additional mission for sufficient resource mobilization, or an ultimate effort to solve the financial problems that have been piling up since migration was started. Policies for *return* migrants hardly exist, although the state of Kerala does have extensive programs for migrants and provides its returnees with welfare and pension schemes.

Keywords: Indian return migrants, construction sector, reintegration, re-emigration, South-India

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Context

As the ILO states: migrants are often “the last to be hired and the first to be fired” (ILO, 2009, 1). The global economic crisis has in many regions of the world created a setting where this turns out to be true for an increasing amount of migrant workers. In the Gulf for example, where millions of migrants from South Asia have come to work, often on temporary labor contracts, and now feel the consequences of the economic downturn the most. Especially Dubai is severely hit, because it was the region's key financial center, which is particularly vulnerable. Furthermore, Dubai does not possess any oil reserves, like other Emirates and Gulf states. But also Singapore and Malaysia are important destinations for low- and unskilled labor migrants from the South of Asia and here retrenchments are followed by return migration as well. An important employer for migrant workers in these migrant receiving countries is the construction sector, where low- and unskilled labor are normally badly needed, since the majority of activities in this sector can be carried out without much education or training.

The biggest South Asian supplier of low- and unskilled labor is India. Since the oil-boom in the Gulf, India has seen thousands of migrant workers crossing the Arabian Sea annually, on a chase for monetary fortune. Singapore and Malaysia had already experienced Indian migrant flows since the 19th century, but are still popular destination countries. Not surprisingly, it is from these countries that labor migrants are taking the same route back now, undergoing the consequences of the global economic recession. No work abroad often means an obligatory or voluntary return to motherland India.

Nevertheless, the exact impact of the economic crisis on Indian return migrants is hard to estimate, because no data exist on the amount of expatriates coming back to India. Therefore, only rough estimations can be made. Furthermore, the migrants themselves often do not know what the bigger global trends behind their retrenchments or salary cuts are. The Center for Development Studies (CDS) in Trivendram states in its 2009 report about the Gulf that:



Figure 1: Indian construction worker in Sharjah, UAE (Source: news.dawn.com)

“In general, there are no signs of sudden exodus return migration from the Gulf region but only slow flows back. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs estimates about 50,000 – 150,000 Indian migrants

have returned home, many of whom have been sent back on leave” (CDS, 2009, 61).

But the crisis has also continued after 2009 and more returns to India than usual have most certainly taken place. Furthermore, several reports have been made that many Indian labor migrants are stuck, especially in Dubai, because they lost their job due to the crisis, but have no money to fly back to India. If this group eventually will return, matters in the Indian context might quickly become more critical as well.

1.2 Return migration, reintegration and re-emigration

The above outlined context provides space for many questions concerning return migration. The most fundamental one is: what happens after return? Coming back to the country of origin is often not a sinecure. Old patterns of living can be hard to pick up again and new ones might be tough to establish. Family relations can partly have been eroded due to newly acquired identities or ideas by both the migrant and the family in the home community. Additionally, many Indian migrants have faced extremely tough and harsh conditions while abroad, which almost inevitably will have left an imprint on the life after emigration.

But will all returnees make an effort to reintegrate? What about migrants who desire to go abroad again, despite a recent send-back due to an economic crisis? Low- and unskilled construction workers often do not stop migrating after their first project and a second, third or fourth migration is not uncommon for many Indian labor migrants, especially in the construction sector. Hence it is not unlikely that many of the recently laid off construction workers will try to emigrate again. To what extent do opportunities to re-emigrate prohibit reintegration processes to take place?

Reintegration thus is not a self-evident phenomenon, but not every returnee will have the wish to re-emigrate and for them reintegration issues are very relevant. To what extent do these reintegration issues for the Indian migrants and their families play a role? What kind of issues should we think of? Can reintegration issues be prevented from coming into being in earlier stages of the migration process? Also, are there any policies aimed return migrants and their reintegration, and if so, by whom are they provided and how are they formulated?

The increase in lay-offs can have considerable personal consequences for the return migrants themselves, as well as for the families and Indian communities these migrants return to. However, if most of the return migrants try to re-emigrate, reintegration issues may not be that important, at least not on the short term after return. So this research can help to comprehend processes of reintegration and its importance, depending on the scale of re-emigration efforts. Additionally, an overview will be provided of existing policies for Indian return migrants to understand what certain institutions are already doing for them. Consequently, recommendations can be formulated for policies on reintegration and re-emigration. Furthermore, this research provides a profile of the low-skilled or unskilled Indian return migrant who has been working in construction in the Gulf or South-East Asia. This will give

more insight in the migrants' background characteristics like age, religion, place of residence in India, occupation before going abroad, etc. It is the outlined context of the first paragraphs in combination with the lack of research on reintegration, circular migration and re-emigration of South-Indian migrants which makes this research important.

1.3 Scientific Relevance

The momentum of the economic crisis and its ramifications have created a context in which more migrants have been laid off. Whether it concerns enormous flows or only a small amount of return migrants is only of minor importance: the life after migration is an underrepresented topic and needs further exploration. As Graeme (2003; see 2.2) rightfully observes, temporary and circular migration have not granted the attention they deserve in scientific literature, considering that this form of migration is more and more on the rise. The need for more research on these issues thus seems clear. This research deals with these matters, backed by fieldwork carried out with return migrants who have been working in the construction sector overseas. The Indian case is especially interesting, since its base of temporary migrants is so vast and so many people are involved.

1.4 Outline

This thesis has been structured in 8 chapters. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the main theories while chapter 3 will provide the practical (methodological) framework of the research, covering the research objective, research questions, conceptual model, regional framework and research methods. In chapter 4 Indian labor migration is put into a historical and institutional framework, to provide understanding about the precluding phases of return migration and reintegration, which are considered essential for explaining potential reintegration issues. Chapter 5 portrays the migrants' characteristics based on field data in order to provide a profile of the Indian return migrant in this research. Chapter 6 then goes into detail about the life of the migrant after return; his reintegration issues and vision on the future. Chapter 7 describes the existing policies that already exist for Indian return migrants or at least are in the make. In chapter 8, finally, conclusions will be drawn and recommendations formulated.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

To get a grasp on the main concepts of this research and embed it in the theories that are written on these concepts, this chapter aims to create a theoretical framework. After framing the concepts and theories, they can be used as practical applications for this specific research.

2.1 Globalization and international migration

The Indian labor migration to the Gulf, Singapore and Malaysia can be viewed in the broader light of increased globalization and dependencies, or, as Held et al. formulate (1999, 2): 'the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life'. Castles states that a key indicator of globalization is the rapid rise in cross-border flows of all sorts, including people. These flows are organized with the help of transnational networks, which existence is facilitated by transnational communities, multinational corporations and international organizations (Castles, 2009, 51).

The grown interconnectedness has helped to raise awareness through these transnational networks about opportunities outside the own borders, which are simultaneously easier to reach because of cheaper and easier ways of transport. Furthermore, information about migration routes and work opportunities can easily disseminate through electronic communications. In this way, globalization helps to facilitate the move from poorer to richer regions.

At the same time, globalization has uneven effects. Economic globalization leads to profound transformation of societies through economic restructuring fostered by the infiltration of rich countries in poorer countries. Castells (1996) sees it as a process of inclusion of particular regions and social groups in world capitalist market relations, while other groups and regions are excluded and aggrieved. This process has further widened global inequality, both within, as well as between regions, and therefore the urge for people in the poorer areas to move to the richer areas has increased.

The combination of expanded inequality between regions, enhanced visibility of these inequalities and thus raised awareness of opportunities outside the own region have led to unprecedented large international migration flows. All over the world, and despite tough immigration policies of the destination countries, people from poorer areas try to make their way to more well-off places. Within this global context of international migration flows, the case of Indian low- and unskilled workers to the Gulf and South-East Asia is one of the most prominent.

2.2 Return Migration

It took a long time before return migration truly settled as an important concept and research object in

scientific literature. Although according to Gmelch (1980, 135) return migration appeared as early as 1885 in scientific literature with an article of Ravenstein called *The laws of migration*, it took much longer before it became a respected study theme. At that time, international migration was dominated by Europeans and South-Americans making their way to the New World in North America, of whom it was assumed that they would never come back to their countries of origin. Still in 1968, a migration bibliography published by Mangalam contained only 10 of 2051 titles that were on return migration (Mangalam, 1968). Later in 1983, King and Strachan abstracted 300 studies on return of which 76 percent were published between 1972 and 1981. Accordingly, an active, more extensive examination of the concept thus dates from relatively recent times.

In his 1980 article, in which he is only concerned with international migration which crosses cultural boundaries, Gmelch defines the concept of return migration as the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle. He distinguishes three types of return migrants:

- “1. Returnees who intended temporary migration. The time of their return is determined by the objectives they set out to achieve at the time of emigration.*
- 2. Returnees who intended permanent migration but were forced to return. Their preference was to remain abroad, but because of external factors they were required to return.*
- 3. Returnees who intended permanent migration but chose to return. Failure to adjust and/or homesickness led to their decision to return.”*

But also Gmelch acknowledges that this typology is problematic, since most migrants do not have definite plans: “they go on a trial basis, letting their decision of whether or not to return and when to return be guided by the opportunities they find in the new society” (Gmelch, 1980, 136-138). Gmelch's typology is not the only way return migration has been tried to explain. The following paragraphs will elaborate on different theories of return migration which have occurred in scientific literature in the last half of a century.

The New Economics of Labor Migration

The New Economics of Labor Migration can be viewed as a counter theory of neoclassical economics. In this theory, return migration inevitably means failed migration. The neoclassical economics of migration views migrants as individuals who maximize not only their earnings, but also the duration of their stay abroad to achieve permanent settlement and family reunification. When return occurs, the costs of migration have been miscalculated and the experience did not yield the expected benefits.

The New Economics of labor (NELM) says quite the opposite. According to followers of NELM, return migration is the logical outcome of a “calculated strategy” which is defined at the level of a migrant's household. NELM refuses the idea that migration is an act of despair or boundless optimism: migrants plan and try to respond to market uncertainties, both for their decision to go as for their decision to leave. Migrants go abroad for a limited period of time, until they succeed in providing their households with the liquidity and income they expect to earn. The planning of the migration project has a bearing on the behavioral patterns of the migrant in the host society. Return migration will take place

when the set goals have successfully been met. Migrants go abroad for a limited period of time, calculated with reference to the needs of the household, until they succeed in providing their households with the liquidity and income they expect to earn. These household needs should be seen in terms of insurance, purchasing power and savings. Return migration occurs once such needs are satisfied. As Stark put it: return migration goes “beyond a response to negative wage differential”, as the neoclassical economic approach claims (Cassarion, 2004, 255-256; Stark, 1996, 11).

Cassarion observes a growing diversity of returnees. He supports Bimal Ghosh in his statement that return “is largely influenced by the initial motivations for migration, as well as by the duration of the stay abroad and particularly by the conditions under which return takes place” (Ghosh, 2000), but adds the importance of the returnee’s preparedness and patterns of resource mobilization. The preparedness consists of the willingness and readiness of the migrant to return. “Return refers to a *preparation process* that can be optimally invested in development if it takes place autonomously and if the migration experience is long enough to foster resource mobilization” (Cassarion, 2004, 275-276). Additionally, Cassarion states that the returnee's preparedness is dependent on the perception of institutional, economic and political changes at home, which have a bearing on how resources are mobilized and used after return (Cassarion, 2004, 272).

Problematic about NELM (and also the neoclassical economic approach) is that return migration is solely viewed as an economic decision, leaving social, political and psychological motivations aside. This paradigm isolates the decisions and strategies of the returnees from their social and political environment, without correlating them with contextual factors at home. Still, the NELM is a useful approach and contributes to the clarification of the concept of return migration.

Transnationalism and return migration

The rapid globalization trend of the last decades did not miss its impact on international migration patterns either. De Haas recognizes the increased possibilities for migrants and their families to maintain links with the home community through modern communication techniques and also to remit money through globalized banking systems. Cheapening the cost of phone calls, the introduction of e-mail and fax, and the cheapening and speeding up of international travel have not only made it possible for migrants to interact in real time with their country of origin on a regular basis, but also to visit home more frequently on temporary leaves and in emergency situations. This has meant that migrants are able to maintain closer and more intimate linkages with their home area than ever before. In this sense, migrants can live transnationally and adopt transnational identities. De Haas states that “the clear-cut dichotomies of 'origin' or 'destination' and categories such as 'permanent', 'temporary' and 'return' migration are increasingly difficult to sustain in a world in which the lives of migrants are increasingly characterized by circulation and simultaneous commitment to two or more societies” (De Haas, 2003, 1247).

This transnationalism is also underlined by Portes, who states that transnational activities are implemented by “regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders (Portes et al. 1999, 219). According to Cassarion, transnationalists view return migration as part of a circular system

of social and economic relationships and exchanges that make the reintegration of these migrants easier, because of their conveyance of knowledge, information and membership. In the transnationalist view, this also means that the migrants periodically and regularly visit their home countries (Cassarion, 2004, 275-276).

Social Network Theory and Return Migration

Just like the transnational approach, social network theory views returnees as migrants who maintain strong linkages with their former places of settlement in the countries of origin. According to Cassarion (2004, 268), in a network theoretical stance, these linkages reflect an experience of migration that may provide a significant additional help to the returnee's initiatives at home. Resources needed to secure return back home also stem from patterns of interpersonal relationships that may derive from the returnees' past experiences of migration. Social structures increase the availability of resources and information and at the same time they secure return migrant's effective initiatives.

Cassarion states that “the formation and maintenance of networks require long-standing interpersonal relationships, as well as the regular exchange of mutually valuable items between actors.” Due to circularity inherent in these networks this pattern of exchange is maintained. Social capital which benefited return migrants before migration is also important in the access to resources. In this context, social capital has to be viewed as resources provided by the returnee's families or households. Social and financial resources provided by the family may shape the performance of return migrants. Fundamentally, returnees should be viewed as social actors who may find ways to ensure their return to their homelands and secure their reintegration by gathering information about the context and opportunities in their origin countries. They participate in the dynamics of cross-border networks, consisting both of migrants and non-migrants and their decision to return should be seen as a consideration shaped by social, economic and institutional opportunities at home as well as by relevance of own resources (Cassarion, 2004, 265-266).

2.3 Circular migration

In a chapter on territorial mobility, Zelinsky (1971) describes migration as “a spatial transfer from one social unit or neighborhood to another, which strains or ruptures previous social bonds”. In addition, he describes circulation, which can mean a range of different types of movements, usually short-term, repetitive or cyclical in nature, but the lack of any declared intention of a permanent or long-lasting change in residence binds them all (Zelinsky, 1971, 225).

Newland, discussing the concept of circular migration more recently, states that the labor-market needs of receiving countries are more and more met by impermanent immigration, which they consider as unwanted, while many sending countries look for ways to reduce unemployment, increase remittance flows and retain or regain access to skilled nationals who are employed abroad (Newland, 2009, 1). Newland continues that many individuals will like the option to move back and forward between home

and destination country, allowing them to avoid the definitive choice for settlement and giving them the possibility to maintain significant ties in both and maximize the capabilities of themselves and their families. According to Newland, individuals with secure residential status in country of origin and destination are best able to pursue this kind of transnational life, because they can travel back and forth without fear of losing status in either country. This situation is quite different for people who can not freely circulate, depending on the terms of a visa or contract that requires them to leave the country of destination after a specified period, with the obligation to return home but the possibility of re-emigration. Their capabilities are limited, though still greater than those of someone who is unable to move at all, or must do so through irregular channels (Newland, 2009, 2).

Graeme (2003) also stresses the importance of non-permanent migration. He states that in the contemporary world international circular migration is occurring on an unprecedentedly large scale, involving a greater cross-section of groups and taking a wider variety of forms than ever before. He states that the bulk of the international migration data collection and empirical knowledge and theory is anchored in a permanent settlement migration paradigm. Temporary residents are either excluded altogether or collected data about them are not processed or tabulated.

Transnationalism (see 2.1.3) also plays an important role in the worldwide upsurge of circular migration. Graeme points at modern forms of transport and communication which have greatly reduced the relative distance and established social networks linking origin countries with communities of expatriates in destination countries. The pressure to bring entire families is not as great as it used to be. These social networks facilitate information flows back to potential movers in origin areas, which has reduced the risk perception among potential movers and raised consciousness that communities in the receiving country will assist new migrants in entering the labor market and adjustment to the new place of living. Graeme indicates that not only countries prefer temporary over permanent migration nowadays, but also migrants will more often voluntarily opt for non-permanent migration because of these developments. Lastly, many labor markets have turned from national to international and labor market segmentation has in some countries led to situations where native workers have totally shunned certain low-status jobs, which consequently have become the domain of temporary labor migrants.

But as mentioned before, the massive shifts that have occurred in global international migration have not seen a similar shift in data collection systems, theoretical knowledge, and research efforts into these new important areas (Graeme, 2003). It is therefore important to stress that return may be temporary or permanent and states that it often can not be viewed as the end of the migration cycle. According to Cassarion, advocates of transnationalism and the network theory have demonstrated that return constitutes one stage in the migration cycle (2008, 28).

2.4 Reintegration

The Oxford Dictionary defines reintegration as “the process of integrating back into society”, with 'integration' being defined as the intermixing of persons previously segregated (Arowolo, 2000, 62).

According to Preston (1993, 2-4), the process of integration within migratory cycles is one of adaption, in which newcomers and the host community give and take in order to learn to live together. For return migration this is similar, except that it concerns places of origin where this process of give and take takes place between those who have returned and those who remained at home.

Arowolo, in a research on return migrants and their reintegration in Namibia, adds another dimension, namely the integration experience at the home community prior to migration. According to her, integration or reintegration can and will take place in the face of changes in the economy, society and the environment of the home community. Arowolo states that if it can be assumed that a potential migrant is fully integrated in his place of origin, migration should not take away his status as a formerly integrated member of his home base. When returning from a chosen place of destination, the migrant needs to reintegrate into the society he was already acculturated in, although this society will have changed (Arowolo, 2000, 62).

Economic aspects of reintegration

Arowolo states that the single most important hindrance to full reintegration for the return migrants in Namibia was being unable to secure wage employment. Many return migrants tended to rely on education and experience acquired during their time of migration to obtain appropriate wage employment. However, the labor market in the country of origin is often very different from the country of migration and the acquired skills may not match with job opportunities at home. Furthermore, in countries of origin where unemployment is already high, return migrants can further exacerbate the problem (Arowolo, 2000, 69).

In a research on Sri Lankan return migrants in the late 1980s by Athukorala, 44 % of the return migrants who had been home for one year or more already, were not looking for a job. Moreover, every manpower category, except housemaids, showed a more than 50 % rate of return migrants who desired to re-emigrate. This was not mainly due to problems of finding a job, but to the large wage differential between home and foreign employment. Only being paid 4 to 8 times less than for the same kind of employment abroad was by many return migrants considered as beneath their newly acquired statuses. Living on accumulated savings, possibly waiting for the opportunity to emigrate again, was for most of them more appealing. Athukorala also found that most migrants after one year, when staying in Sri Lanka and active on the labor market, preferred establishing self-employment (62 % of the employed return migrants and 30 % of the total amount of return migrants) than working in loan service, while the percentage of self-employed before migration was only 10 % (Athukorala, 1990, 335). This trend is further stressed by the research of Zachariah et al., where 44 % of gainfully employed return migrants in Kerala were self-employed and about an equal amount was casual worker. Only 14 % of the employed return migrants in this research were in regular employment. But the percentage of people deliberately staying out of the labor force was much lower here, with only a little less than 25 % (Zachariah et al., 2001, 13-14).

Social aspects of reintegration

For social reintegration, understanding of the cultural environment, both in the destination country as the home base of the migrants, is needed. Arowolo argues that adjustment to life in the migrants' destination inevitably means changing lifestyles and living conditions. In the case of rural-to-urban migrants for example, return migration means that the old or traditional way of life must be relearned with return migration. Some intervening factors are described which can influence the toughness of the social reintegration process: duration of stay away from home, age at the time of departure, extent of assimilation to foreign culture and nature and intensity of links with home while away. Additionally, the reception by family and friends and the personal disposition of the returnee could be vital for a sound social integration. Identity crises which can lead to personality disorders can further compound the situation (Arowolo, 2000, 70). Returnees may be faced with social pressures or perceive a marginalization by their own origin society, as Khadria describes, because they can be seen as “deserters of the motherland” (Khadria, 2006, 19). The same Khadria states that this recently may have changed for Indian returnees though, due to the Indian diaspora of professional migrants who actually defied the anticipated doom by rising to unforeseeable economic success in the destination countries of the north. Migration is more and more seen as an option for turning the challenge of migration into a gainful opportunity and hence more accepted with the stayers (Khadria, 2006, 29-30).

At the same time the returnees will try to negotiate their places in society without denying their own specifications (Cassarion, 2004, 264). Transnationalists in this case would state that transnational identities will occur, resulting from the combination of migrants' origins with the identities they acquire in the country of emigration. This will, according to them, not lead to conflicting identities, but rather to double identities. The return migrants need to “adapt” rather than adjust or assimilate. The regular contacts maintained with the households in the countries of origin maybe even further reinforced by periodical trips when still on loan service in the country of emigration. If so, this will allow their return to be better prepared and facilitate the social reintegration (Cassarion, 2004, 262).

Cassarion (2008, 26), in a very extensive research on return migrants to the Maghreb countries and their reintegration patterns, states that an increase in the types of return migration has both led to a growing complexity in the reasons for return as well as more diversity in the methods of reintegration and the ways resource mobilization for resettlement in the homeland is obtained. This reflects the returnees' migration experiences in their former country of immigration. The social, economic, institutional and political conditions after return further help shaping reintegration.

Furthermore, both transnationalists as social network theorists emphasize the extent to which the returnees' reintegration process may be shaped by their involvement in cross-border networks of relationships between the migrants and their relatives at home (Cassarion, 2008, 28). According to Cassarion, reintegration patterns are mainly shaped by the place of reintegration, the duration and type of migration experience, the factors and circumstances that motivated return and the preparedness for return (2008, 29, 36).

Chapter 3. *Research Framework*

Now the topic of this thesis has been introduced and theoretically embedded, the research design of this research can be outlined. In this chapter the research objective and research question will be formulated, followed by a conceptual model and a clarification and operational definition of the main concepts. Subsequently the regional framework will be provided and this chapter will end with an overview of the used research methods.

3.1 *Research Objective and Research Question*

The economic crisis has created a context in which the case of the Indian return migrant has deserved attention, given the increase of returns that can be witnessed. This return migrant is not only a return migrant. Potentially he is also a re-integrator, circular migrant or re-migrant. In scientific literature, the return migrant, re-integrator, circular migrant and re-migrant have, in past and present, been underrepresented, or even ignored. This research will try to contribute to the filling in of this knowledge gap.

The sketched background and problem definition brings us to the following research objective:

Research Objective: gain insight in the reintegration issues Indian return migrants face, the activities and plans they deploy to overcome them, and the existing policies for addressing their needs, in order to provide policy recommendations to trade unions and other institutions who deal with these migrants.

This leads to the following research question and its further subdivision into subquestions.

Research Question: Which reintegration issues do Indian return migrants face, what do they do to overcome them and which policies exist to provide in the addressing of their needs?

Subquestions

- ***What are the main characteristics of the return migrants?***
- ***What problems do the returnees face when back in India and how were they created?***
- ***Which activities and plans do return migrants deploy when back in India and to what extent do they want to re-emigrate?***
- ***What policies do exist for addressing the needs of Indian return migrants?***
- ***What policy recommendations can be made regarding reintegration of these return migrants?***

3.2 *Conceptual Model*

On the basis of the context and research objective the following conceptual model has been constructed (Figure 2). The global economic crisis is contributory to an increased amount of low- and unskilled Indian return migrants who have been working in the construction sector in the Gulf, Singapore and Malaysia. As follows from the different colors, some countries were more severely hit than others; Dubai e.g. was hit the hardest, which has been visualized by the strong red color. By returning to India the migrants will face certain reintegration issues. Intervening factors will determine to which extent these reintegration issues will play a role. 'Place of residence before and after emigration', destination country, 'migration experience', 'age', 'duration of stay', 'intensity of links with home while away' and 'preparedness for return' are considered important factors, but other factors could be influential as well. At the same time, government bodies, trade unions and NGO's will try to address the needs and help the return migrants in easing their reintegration process.

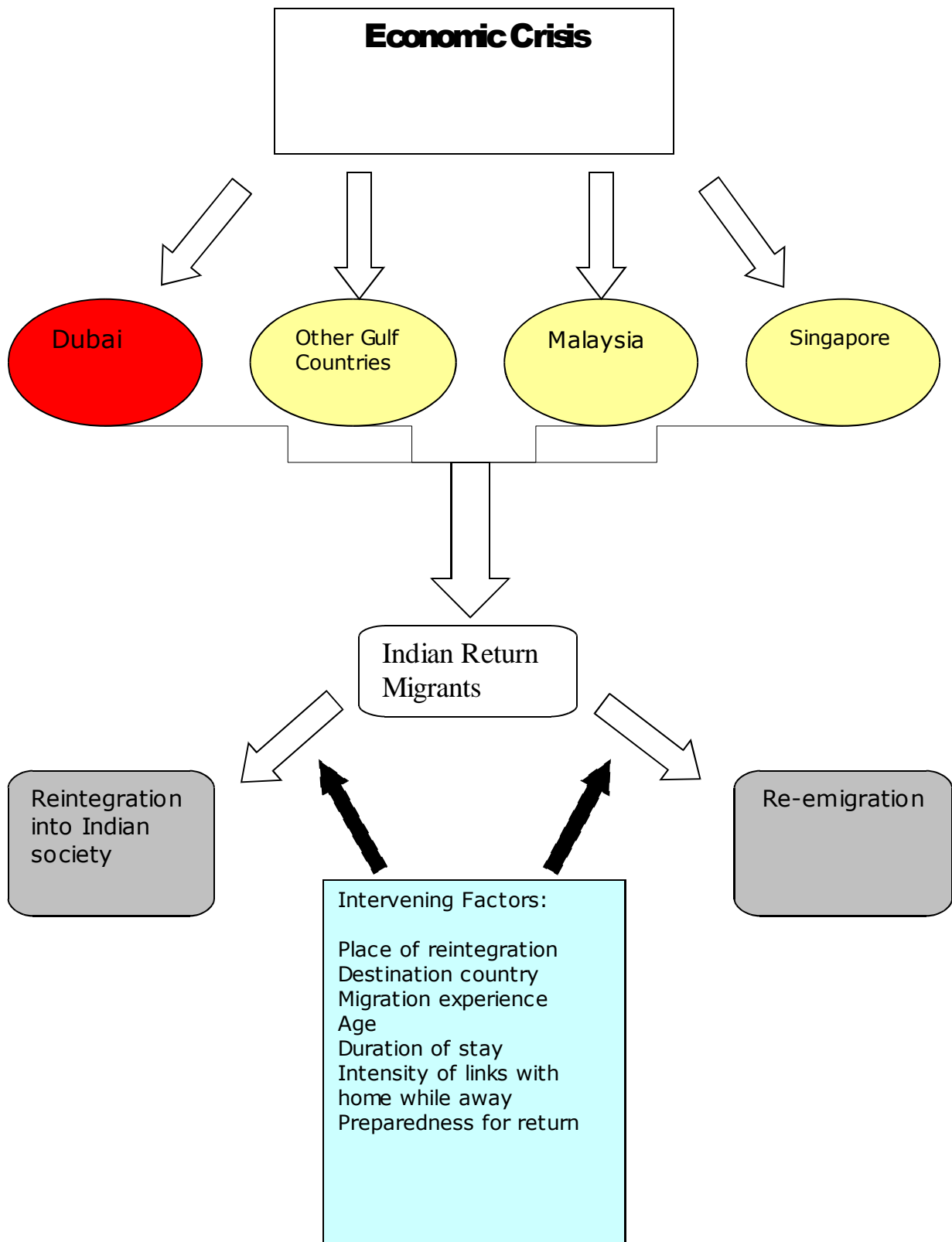
Concepts: to make clear what the key concepts in this research exactly mean, operationalization of these concepts is needed.

Construction sector: In this research, when referred to the construction sector, only that part of the sector is meant that contains the low- and unskilled jobs. The list of low- and unskilled jobs used for this research is derived from the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Act and can be found in Appendix II.

Indian return migrants: Indian people who have been migrating to the Gulf Region, Singapore and Malaysia, to work there in the construction sector for at least half a year, and afterwards went back to live in South-India again. It concerns almost always male labor migrants in the low- and unskilled jobs. In this research, the return migrants can only have returned for a maximum of 5 years already, since the longer the period since return, the less likely the information supplied will be accurate and reliable.

Reintegration: the process of integrating back into society, with 'integration' being defined as the intermixing of persons previously segregated. The reintegration process contains of economic and social aspects and can only fully take place when the migrant does not have the desire to go abroad again, since then he will not focus on integrating back into Indian society. The reintegration of a returnee is influenced by a wide range of intervening variables, most notably place of reintegration, destination country, migration experience, age, duration of stay, intensity of links with home while away and preparedness for return. In this research, psychological reintegration issues will not be dealt with. Due to time constraints and lack of expertise on psychological issues, the focus lies mainly on economic reintegration issues.

Re-emigration: to emigrate again; the migrant has returned to India and now goes abroad once.



3.3 Methodology

The main methodological base of this research is a survey held with returned Indian construction workers in several localities in South-India. For this survey a questionnaire was used to get insight in the characteristics of the migrants, as well as their status, motivations and activities before, during and after emigration (see Appendix 1). Although the focus of the research is more on the situation *after* return, we also asked to the phases of pre-departure and emigration itself, because they turned out to be inextricably connected to each other and for a large part determine the severity and kind of reintegration issues returnees face.

Potential respondents had to meet a couple of conditions. First of all, the return migrant had to have worked as a low- or unskilled worker in the construction sector in one of the Gulf countries (Bahrein, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia or UAE), Malaysia or Singapore. Professions like mason, carpenter, plumber, steel-fitter and helper were typical jobs the migrants could have done while abroad. Second, the return migrant could not have been back in India for longer than 5 years, so 2005 was the oldest year of return allowed. The choice for a period back in India up to 5 years is of course arbitrary, but in accordance with other literature about return migrants it seems a plausible time period to achieve that the memories of the returnees would still be able to provide reliable data (Oberai, 1984, 165). After collecting the data a third condition was formulated; it turned out that a few respondents were not actually returnees, but migrants who were on a regular temporary leave from their company for 1 or 2 months. For them many questions in the questionnaire were not applicable, because they had not actually stopped working for their company abroad, but were only back home temporarily after which they were bound to go back to their last destination country again because they were still on contract.

Before carrying out the real fieldwork, a pilot-study with 9 return migrants in Kalpakkam was held to gain feedback for improvements in the questionnaire. During the real fieldwork, the questionnaires were not filled in by the respondents themselves. Instead, a translator/interpreter did the questionnaire face-to-face with the migrant. If there were any doubts or additional questions the translator/interpreter was instructed to go into this issue with the migrant. Because the survey was held in 3 different language zones, three different translators were needed to assist with the research.

For the accomplishment of the fieldwork I was largely dependent on the local trade unions that were aligned to the Building- and Woodworkers International (BWI), the Global Union Federation for laborers working in these sectors. They had key informants that could bring me into contact with the return migrants. Because of this, the fieldwork was carried out at locations where the key informants had their contacts and this was automatically the way the sample was shaped.

Most of the fieldwork took place at locations where the trade unions were active and key informants could be used to get in contact with former migrants. These locations were:

Andhra Pradesh: - Isrampally (18 questionnaires)

- Narsingi (26 questionnaires)

Kerala: - Around Perumbavoor (18 questionnaires)

Tamil Nadu: - Around Tirupattur and Pudukottai (61 questionnaires)

– In and around Kallakurichi (20 questionnaires) (See also Figure 3, chapter 4.1).

Two main methods were used to meet them. Around Tirupattur, Kallakurichi, in Isrampally and in Kerala we went into the villages itself together with the key informant, to meet up with the migrants in the early morning, evenings or on Sundays to conduct the interviews. We could only go on these specific times because otherwise many migrants would be working and thus not be available. The second method was bringing a group of migrants together in a building or hall, as was done in two sessions in Pudukottai District and Narsingi.

Additionally to the face-to-face interviews, phone calls were made with the interviewed migrants in Tamil Nadu to gather more qualitative data about their return stories, the specific problems they faced since back in India and what kind of support they would want to get if there would be any help available. In the other fieldwork localities, especially in Andhra Pradesh, qualitative data were tried to gather on the spot, by making lengthy notes in the questionnaires themselves, making these interviews more a mixture between a survey-interview and a qualitative interview. Through the phone calls and upgraded questionnaire interviews I have managed to get a lot of qualitative data on the individual level, which is considered even more useful than qualitative data gathered in focus group discussions. To get a clearer picture of the general context of Indian return migration, several semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders in the field of Indian migration and construction workers.

Chapter 4. Geographical, historical and institutional context

To better understand the period after return, it is important to also understand the prelude phases of the migration project as well as the various contexts in which these projects take place. These phases and contexts shape to a great extent the magnitude and nature of potential reintegration issues or plans for re-emigration. In initial stages of the migration process, many events take place that will determine to a large part whether the act of migration will be a success. Successful migration means generation of money and perhaps skills which make it likely to ease reintegration in Indian society after emigration. Bad emigration experiences on the other hand will be detrimental to reintegration, especially when more money was lost than gained by going overseas. Also, structural or a priori factors like the level of education are very important in understanding a success or failure of the act of emigration and the consequent reintegration issues that often follow through because of this. This chapter will sketch the conditions and events that shape the lives of the migrants when they return to India.

4.1 Regional Framework

In the most commonly used demarcation, South-India, also known as Dravidia, consists of the states Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, complemented by the union territories of Lakshadweep and Pondicherry. Together these 4 states occupy 19.31 % of India's surface and the region is inhabited by about 233 million people, again approximately one fifth of India's total population. It is surrounded by the Arabian Sea in the west, the Laccadive Sea and Indian Ocean in the South and the Bay of Bengal in the east and is situated in the Deccan Plateau. South-India contains a wide range of different landscapes and climates, with cool mountain areas like the Ghats running centrally through it, resource- and palm tree rich backwater areas in Kerala and dry, rocky hill landscapes in Andhra Pradesh. A majority of South Indians speak one of the Dravidian languages: Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu. About 83% of South Indians are Hindu, followed by Muslims (11 %) and Christians (5%).

In recent decades, the economic growth of South-Indian states has been higher than India's national average growth. An important, still further upcoming sector is information technology and the biggest cities of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Bangalore and Hyderabad, are renowned for their expertise and leading role in this field. At the same time, agriculture remains the largest contributor to the region's net domestic product and estimates are that 47.5% of the population is involved in agrarian activities. The average literacy rate of South India is approximately 73%, considerably higher than the Indian national average of 60%. On this aspect, Kerala leads the nation with a literacy rate of 91%.

Each of the South Indian states has an elected state government and all of them were created as a result of the States Reorganization Act of 1956, which established states and union territories based on linguistic boundaries. The states are further divided into districts; South India has over 100 of them.

Every state is headed by a Governor, who is a direct appointee of the President of India, while the Chief Minister is the elected head of the state government and represents the states ruling party or coalition. The region is politically dominated by a mix of regional parties and larger national political parties like the Indian National Congress (INC; most important in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP; most important in Karnataka) and the Communist Party of India (CPI; most important in Kerala).

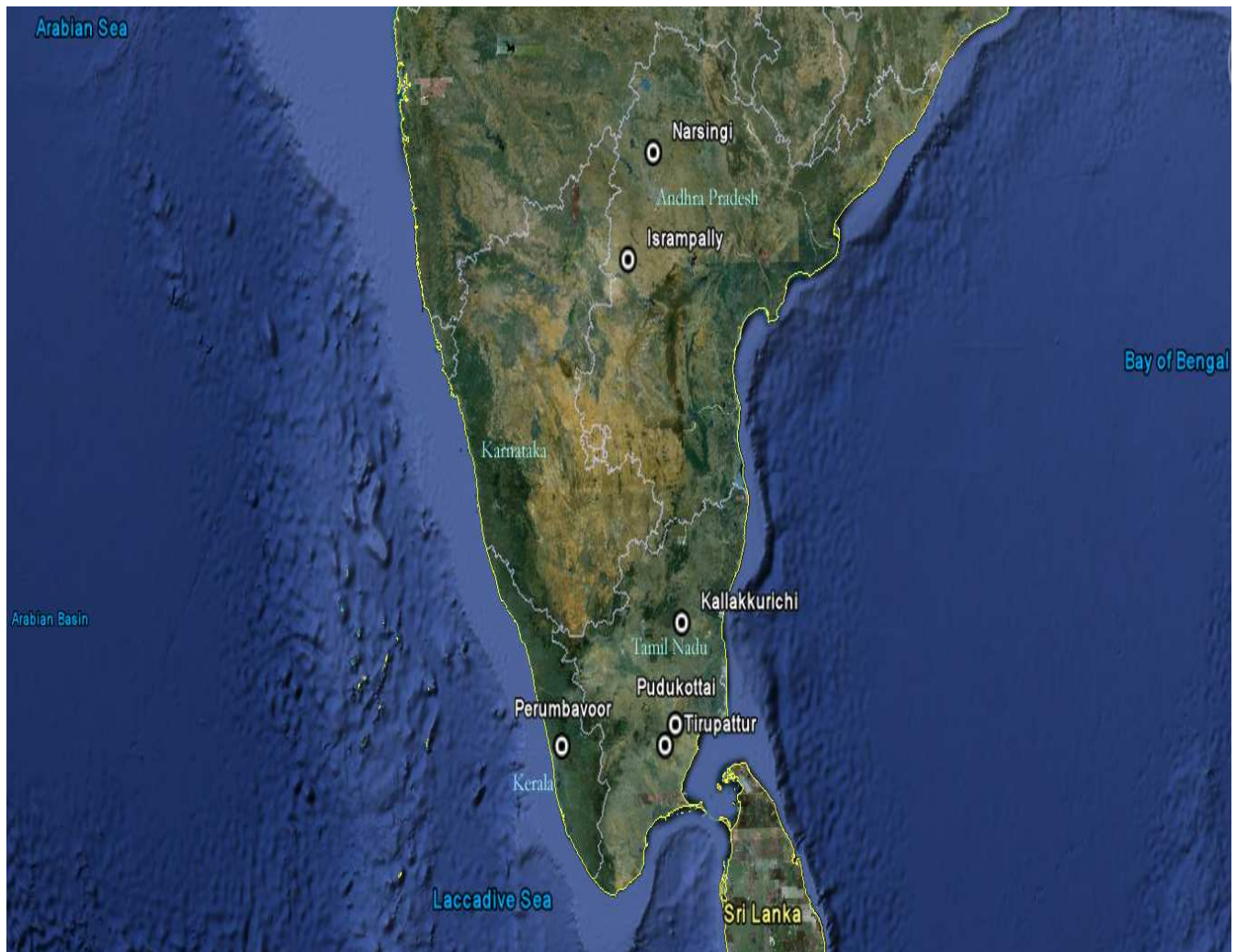


Figure 3: Map with research locations (Source: Google Earth)

4.2 India - Gulf Migration

Approximately 20 million Indian migrants were recorded around the globe at the close of the twentieth century (Khadria, 2006, 5). Khadria describes this stock as a function of the flows of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers and their families, and India as an important source country of the South over the last two centuries. About 19% of the Indian migrants in 2001 was settled in the Gulf (Figure 4).

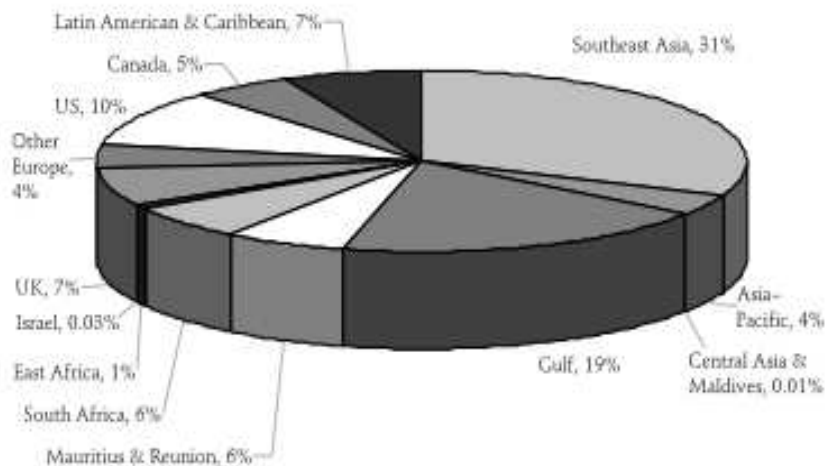


Figure 4: Percentage Distribution of Non-Resident Indians & Persons of Indian Origin by Region. Source: ICWA (2001).

2006, 6).

This migrant population consists for the largest part of low-, semi- and unskilled labor migrants. But despite the low level of education of these migrants, they do form the main source of remittances to India and swelled the country's foreign exchange reserves considerably (Khadria,

The India-Gulf migration finds its origin in the wake of the oil-boom of the 1970s, although Indians already occupied the clerical and technical positions of the oil companies in the Gulf after oil discovery in the 1930s. However, these numbers were still small. Between 1948 and 1970, the amount of Indians in the Gulf gradually increased from about 1400 to 40,000. With the spurt in oil prices in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in 1973, the big flow of Indian migrants to the Gulf began.

In 1975, Indian expatriates constituted 39.1 %, Pakistanis 58.1 %, and other Asians 2.8 % of the total non-Arab expatriates in the Gulf. Since then, Indian migration has overtaken that of Pakistan. More than that, since the Gulf war of 1990-91, Indians have replaced even the non-Arabs in the Gulf: the Jordanians, Yemenis, Palestinians and Egyptians. From less than 258,000 in 1975, the Indian migrant population in the Gulf went up to 3.318 million in 2001. It is estimated that this number at a certain point in the first decade of the 21st century will have crossed 3.5 million (Khadria, 2006, 14). The Gulf countries saw a multiplication of their populations by 8 times in 50 years; from 4 million in 1950 to 40 million in 2006, in which the biggest share has been accounted for by the migration inflow (Kapiszewski, 2006, 3). Unlike with migration to Western-Europe, where foreign migrant workers usually only filled the lower-status jobs, in the Gulf countries they also occupy more advanced jobs which require knowledge and skills the local Arab population does not have. Because of this, migrants

have formed the dominant labor force in most sectors of the economy and government bureaucracy. At the end of 2004, the Gulf states hosted 12.5 million foreigners; not less than 37 percent of the population. In Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates migrants even constituted the majority of the population, in UAE even with a stunning 80 percent of migrants in the total population (Kapiszewski, 2006, 3). The dominance of migrants is even higher in the workforce, which consists for more than 50 % of migrants in every state. According to Kapiszewski this has led to security, economic, social and cultural threats to the local population and this made the governments of these countries impose numerous restrictions on migrants: a rotational system of expatriate labor to limit the duration of migrants' stay, curbs on the naturalization and citizenship rights of those who have been naturalized, etc. These policies did for a large extent not work though, because the free market proved to be more powerful. Hence, many expatriates have stayed much longer than they were supposed to. Also, importing new workers involved additional costs most employers did not want to make (Kapiszewski, 2006, 4).

4.3 India-Malaysia/Singapore Migration

Migration from South-India to Malaysia and Singapore origins from the late 18th and early 19th century. Already then, labor was the main reason to attract Indians to these countries. In Malaya (the former name of Malaysia), the Indian migrants were mainly employed in plantations, mines and harbor ports, while in Singapore, from 1819 onwards Indian laborers began to arrive to work in the sugar, pepper and gambier cultivations (Periasamy, 2007, 6-7). Because the Indian government only allowed recruitment to Malaya and Singapore from the Madras state (present Tamil Nadu), 90 % of the migrants was Tamil-speaking, the remaining being Telugu or Malayalam. According to Kaur, Indian labor migration to Malaysia was regulated from the start and the administrations of both countries were able to impose various conditions on Indian recruitment and circulation. Even in that time, the Indian labor force was a circulatory one, without a possibility to actually settle permanently in Malaysia. Therefore, Indian migrant workers were mainly single adult males. Married men were discouraged to emigrate, since they could not bring their families because of low wages, harsh working conditions and accommodation that was available for single men only. Cessation of employment meant eviction, destitution and subsequent repatriation of the Indian labor migrant (Kaur, 2008, 6; Ramachandran, 1994, 32).

But things started to change in the beginning of the 20th century. A shift of migrant labor took place to the tin and rubber industries. In that period, entry into Malaya was completely free and unrestricted. Worsening economic conditions in the late 1920s and early 1930s led to a major change in immigration policies in Malaysia, but Indians were largely unaffected by these regulations since they were regarded as British subjects. In 1953, the British enacted an Immigration Ordinance that stipulated for the first time the specific categories of immigrants that were allowed entry into Malaya; not based on race or gender, but more on skills. This also affected the Indians, and with the ending of colonial rule immigration laws were further tightened and permanent settlement of unskilled Indian labor became eventually impossible (Kaur, 2008, 5-7).

Nowadays, Indonesia is the major source of migrant workers for Malaysia, but since 2005 migrant numbers from India have been increasing steadily again. Unfortunately, March 2006 was the most recent year in which statistics of Indian migrants to Malaysia were published by the Economic and Social Commission of the United Nations. According to their figures, Indians formed 7.6 % of total international migration in Malaysia at that time: an absolute amount of about 140.000 migrants. The share of



Figure 5: Indian construction workers in Kuala Lumpur

Indians in Singapore's population was 9.2 % (348.000) in 2010, but since labor migrants are not included in the residential population statistics, this figure does not tell anything about the amount of migrant workers. In fact, the latest document of the government of Singapore on population statistics, *Population trends 2010*, does not mention migrants at all (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010, 13). However, Yeoh reports that Singapore's non-resident workforce has been growing steadily and noticed its most rapid increase in the last decade, when there was a rise of 170 %: from 248.000 in 1990 to 670.000 in 2006. Of this number, about 50.000 were low-skilled workers (Yeoh, 2007). No separation was made for ethnic group, so specific statements about the number of Indians in this share can not be provided.

4.4 Migration and recruitment policies

The phases before return shape to an important extent the period afterwards. Therefore, an overview of the most important features of the process and features of Indian low- and unskilled migration is considered essential and follows here.

The Emigration Act and emigration clearance

In 1983, India implemented The Emigration Act. This Act, which replaced the earlier 1922 version, has

been designed mainly to ensure protection of vulnerable categories of unskilled and semi-skilled workers and women going abroad to work as housemaids and domestic workers on a temporary or contractual basis (MOIA, Annual Report 2005–6). In the Act it is decided that potential migrants who do not meet a particular level of education, namely those who have not graduated, will be placed under strict surveillance and regulative regime by making emigration clearance mandatory for this category of citizens. For them the ECR-category has been created: Emigration Check Required. Later, the educational requirements were lowered, first to the Intermediate level (Higher Secondary), but recently even to Matriculation level (high school, tenth grade).

Emigration clearance is issued by the field offices (Protectors of Emigrants, POE) of the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE). The Protector General of Emigrants is responsible for the protection of emigrants and the safeguarding of their welfare along with the systematization of the recruitment practices. The clearance is issued to persons below the prescribed education who go abroad to take up expatriate work in countries listed by the Government of India as countries that require emigration clearance. The list contains, among others, all countries important for this research, except Singapore. The clearance is meant to protect the migrant workers from possibilities of exploitation in the migrant receiving countries and from corrupt practices of recruitment agents in the home country (Rajan, 2008, 12). Other tasks of the PGE are e.g. granting, suspending, canceling or revoking Registration Certificates to recruitment agencies and issuing permits to foreign employers and project exporters (<http://moia.gov.in>).

Till recently, when a holder of an ECR passport intended to go to one of the listed countries for non-employment purposes, he or she was allowed to apply for a 'suspension' of the ECR requirement. However, since October 1, 2007, this requirement for suspension has been revoked, making it possible to visit the listed countries without seeking emigration suspension. Via this way protection from exploitation and corrupt practices can be avoided by private recruiters, simply by sending low- and unskilled workers overseas on a visit visa, and this practice has become a common phenomenon.

Holders of an ECR passport can either ask for clearance directly as individuals or through registered recruitment agencies to the POE. When individually asking for submission, a work agreement and an insurance policy document has to be submitted, next to a valid passport and an employment visa. According to Rajan et al (2008, 13) semi-skilled workers only need to produce a work visa and an employment contract in original, but the unskilled workers also need attestation or a separate permission letter from the concerned Indian Mission (foreign Indian embassy). If these requirements are met, the POE grants the emigration clearance to the intending migrant.

Strikingly, the results of Rajan's study suggest that the emigration clearance system described above is in many ways detrimental to the migrant's interests, many of them still getting exploited at every stage of the emigration process. The ECR category of emigrants receives neither privilege nor protection by virtue of their 'protected' status. In contrast, they are discriminated against and after being in use for 25 years the system has proved it has hardly been beneficial to the concerned emigrants. The emigration clearance system as implemented through the POEs is primarily a document verification exercise. Rajan et al. state that the documents submitted along with applications for emigration clearance are

often deceptively constructed, especially those made by recruitment agents. The POE offices are not equipped with any scientific mechanism to check the truthfulness of the documents produced, a weakness that results in discretionary decision taking. Consequently, they act themselves as an agency that perpetuates the malpractices by colluding with several corrupt elements in the trade, including recruitment agents (Rajan et al., 2008, 71).

Recruitment agents and policies

The Emigration Act specifies that only recruitment agents registered with the Ministry of Overseas Affairs are entitled to conduct recruitment and the Protector General of Emigrants is the authority to issue registration certificates to the recruitment agents. This certificate is issued after detailed screening of the applications for registration. If recruitment agents violate the terms and conditions of the registration certificate, the PGE is entitled to suspend or cancel the registration. In practice, however, many unregistered recruitment agents are on the market. A survey of Rajan et al. shows that 46.8 % of the intending migrants depend on unregistered recruitment agents and 19 % do not know whether the recruitment agencies through which they seek overseas employment are registered or not. Also, only 75 % of the recruitment agents, registered or not, have established offices, the remaining 25 % can therefore better be labeled as field agents. Among the unregistered agencies, 51.4 % are found to work as individuals and the remaining 48.6 % as firms (Rajan et al., 2008, 22). The awareness on the part of the people regarding malpractices of the recruitment agencies in the survey of Rajan et al. was extremely low; most migrants did not worry about the agency being registered or not, as long as they would actually emigrate. The ignorance of people is a key factor that allows such agencies and agents to flourish unabashed (Rajan et al, 2008, 32). Rajan et al. state that the amount of registered recruitment agents actively functioning across the country is much lower than the number of recruitment agents who are given registration certificates, while the public is not yet provided with a directory of registered recruitment agents in the country. The data, thus, are not up to date and need to be made public. Complaints on unregistered recruitment agents are directly referred to police authorities (Rajan et al., 2008, 15).

According to the Act it is also possible for foreign employers to recruit directly without an agent, provided they obtain permission from the concerned Indian Mission or PGE. The emigrant, then, should deposit the fare for a one-way return ticket from the place of employment to the place of origin, making the PGE responsible for repatriation, if necessary, by doing so. The PGE can place a foreign employer or company under 'Prior Approval Category' (PAC) in case of exploitation of Indian workers upon recommendation from the respective Indian Missions. In 2008, 330 international companies were under the PAC list, with the highest number of companies (122) belonging to Malaysia, followed by Saudi-Arabia with 58.

If all requirements are met, the recruitment agents are authorized to submit the applications of the people they recruited and get emigration clearance on their behalf, although true copies of a demand letter and a letter of the of attorney from the employer should be included with the submission, as well as the employment contract verified and authenticated by the Indian Mission in the destination country, indemnity bonds, a duly sworn in affidavits along with valid passport, insurance policy and the

required fee for getting the clearance (Rajan, 2008, 14).

Rajan et al. have a lot of critique on the functioning of licensed recruitment agents. According to them, thousands of registered recruitment agents in India retain licenses without recruiting anybody. Moreover, several of them cheat and deceive emigrants and collude with POE offices to skip certain mandatory requirements. The Gulf labor boom of the 1970s resulted in the emergence of a large number of these recruiting agents who started deploying exploitative practices, including extortion and betrayal. In Tamil Nadu, there is only one government recruitment agency (TNOMC) and they send only about 1000 migrants per year. This is a fraction of the total amount of labor migrants who go abroad each year via a recruitment agency. All other recruited migrants make use of the services of private recruitment agencies. A concomitant problem is that there is a complete lack of proper documentation of emigrants from India. No institution, not even the Ministry of Overseas Affairs, has a detailed picture of the amount and kind of outgoing and returning Indian migrants.

Ministry of Overseas Affairs

A new government ministry was established in May 2004: the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). The demand for this ministry was high, given the almost 5 million Indians workers abroad by 2004 who administratively overburdened the Ministry of labor. Moreover, the sum of remittances of overseas workers had reached an all-time height of US \$ 15 billion dollars in 2004 (even 24 \$ billion in 2005; estimations are that about half of these remittances are from semi-skilled or unskilled labor migrants). Furthermore it was felt that more focused attention should be given to problems of emigrants because of the encroachments taking place with overseas recruitment practices. Media coverage of cheating and exploitation both abroad and in India itself stimulated and called for more stringent measures of regulation and effective procedures for protection, especially for the unskilled and low-skilled workers, who are most vulnerable for such malpractices. Although the Ministry has not managed to do a lot about the exploitation of the unskilled workers yet, its activities are on the rise as is exemplified by its active involvement in the affairs of unskilled women workers in general and housemaids in particular.(Rajan et al., 2008, 15-16). At the same time, Rajan et al. plead for more active intervention of the Ministry, in order to ensure orderly migration to safeguard the welfare of all workers in the countries of destination (Rajan et al, 2008, 47).

4.5 Malpractices during emigration

Many reports have been made about the harsh conditions many South-Asian labor migrants have to face. Especially Dubai has been infamous for its extremely tough policies and grim living and working conditions for migrant workers, while in Singapore the situation tends to be relatively ok due to strict labor laws. Unskilled and (semi)-skilled workers often live in miserable circumstances, being accommodated in small cramped rooms in labor camps with inadequate toilet and kitchen facilities. Rooms are frequently overcrowded and have poor ventilation. There is a lack of clean water and raw sewage is flowing through the camps. Moreover, the work itself can be extremely tough because of

heavy loads, work at perilous heights in combination with a lack of safety measures, insufficient food consumption and lack of breaks and the burning heat that is omnipresent both in the Gulf as in South-Asia all year long.

The situation has been bad for a long time, but since the economic downturn matters have become much worse. Many retrenched labor migrants are stranded in the labor camps without any perspective to get out. Reports of suicides among migrant workers are published more frequently due to wrecked morals, seemingly unsolvable debt burdens and utter despair. It are normally only the more vulnerable, unskilled and semi-skilled categories of expatriate laborer with ECR-passports who have to suffer, while more highly educated migrant workers are faring much better.

Malpractices of construction companies and recruitment agencies

It is common practice that expatriate workers have to hand in their passports immediately after arrival in the destination country, as was the case with 55 % of the return migrants in the research of Rajan et al. (2008, 42). Such cases of harassment happen irrespective of the channel of emigration chosen, but significantly more when emigration is through recruitment agencies. Sometimes the employers even take the employment contract from the labor migrants, making their status comparable to that of bonded laborer, bound down to their employers as long as required. If this happens, running away from the employer by the migrant worker often follows, an action that makes them illegal and even more vulnerable (Rajan et al., 2008, 42-43).

Moreover, recruitment and placement agencies often collude with prospective employers and exploit illiterate job seekers. The exploitation ranges here from withholding of the passports; refusal of promised employment, wages, and overtime wages; undue deduction of permit fee from wages; unsuitable transport; inadequate medical facilities; denial of legal rights to redress complaints; use of migrants as carriers of smuggled goods and victimization and harassment of women recruits in household jobs (Khadria, 2006, 17).

Another pressing issue from a different sort plays in the home communities in India Emigration of married men who left behind the



Figure 6: Migrant workers line up for a bus to return them to the labor camps located outside the city after a day of work in Dubai. (Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk>)

responsibility of the management of the household to women in the family transformed about one million women into efficient home managers, but eventually also created the social and psychological problems of the “Gulf Wives” and loneliness of the “Gulf Parents”, who unlike the relatives of the skilled migrants to the developed countries could not accompany the workers to their destination countries (Khadria, 2006, 27).

Media attention to exploitation of South-Asian workers

The mistreatment of South-Asian migrant workers in countries in the Gulf and South-East Asia has been widely reported by several media and NGO's. Recent headlines from various media provide a clear image: “Gulf expatriates living in deplorable conditions” (The Hindu: Andhra Pradesh, 13-11-2010); “Migrant building workers exploited” (The Deccan Chronicle, 23-01-2010); “Singapore shocker: Migrant workers living in slums” (CNN Go, 06-10-2009); Suffering Lingers at UAE Labor Camps (Voice of America, 11-10-2010); “Majority of migrant workers in Gulf in severe debt” (The China Post, 16-08-2010).

British freelance journalist Nick Hunt made a radio documentary and wrote an article about the situation of Indian migrant workers in Dubai. He visited labor camps and observed horrendous conditions in which the workers have to eek out a living. In his article *Searching for Reality in Dubai* he writes:

“On a rooftop in the district of Satwa, within view of the glittering towers of Financial Centre and the Burj Khalifa, I met a group of Indian men sleeping rough under plastic sheets. Their washing was strung between satellite dishes, along with a few hopeful yellow hardhats, and they had built a crude stove of bricks to cook vegetables and rice. With no home, no jobs, no passports, no visas, not even money to buy food – they survived on weekly donations from a charitable Indian businessman – these men were at the bottom of the bottom of the pile. Some had been stuck here for years, far from their wives and families. They could see no possibility of ever getting home” (nickhuntscrutiny.com).

Human Rights NGO's about destination countries

Human rights NGO's like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also narrated extensively on the migrant workers abuse in especially the Gulf. In countries like Qatar and Bahrein conditions seem to be improving..In Bahrein things have become a lot better due to dramatic labor reforms, although according to Human Rights Watch domestic workers are still exposed to risks of abuse and exploitation (<http://www.hrw.org>, 13-09-2010), while in Qatar allegations of torture and other degrading treatment or punishment remain to exist (amnestyusa.org, 23-04-2010). In Kuwait exploitative labor conditions are still common, including private employers who confiscate workers' passports and do not pay wages. Improvement might be reached though with a labor law that is soon to be implemented and commands more protective provisions on wages, working hours, and safety (<http://www.hrw.org/>). But in UAE the situation remains the worst. Labor migrant abuses here include maintaining unsafe working environments that contribute to avoidable illness or deaths; withholding workers' travel documents; irregular and insufficient payment of wages and the earlier described

horrendous labour camps (<http://www.hrw.org>).

But the Gulf is not the only platform for abuse of low- and unskilled migrant labor; also in Malaysia temporary labor migrants suffer from bad working- and living conditions. Amnesty reports about widespread abuses at the workplace and by the police of the migrant workers who make up more than 20 per cent of the country's workforce. According to Amnesty, migrants from e.g. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and India are forced to work in hazardous situations for 12 hours a day or more. Furthermore, many of them are subject to verbal, physical and sexual abuse (<http://www.amnesty.org>, 24-03-2010).

Even the Kuwaiti foreign minister once said that foreign workers are often treated by unscrupulous contractors as slaves (Kapiszewski, 2006, 12). Much has to be done to come to better agreements between India and the destination countries of its labor migrants to abandon these malpractices and atrocities in the future. For this research, it is important to realize that these are the conditions and situations that many migrants return from. They will have an inevitable impact on and play a role in the activities and experiences of the migrants after return.



Figure 7: Indian construction workers and an Emirati sjaikh in Dubai (Source: oxfamblogs.org)

Chapter 5. *Migrant characteristics*

Now the topic of this research is theoretically and practically embedded, the fieldwork results can be presented. Before it can be explored what happens to the migrants after return, first a profile of the migrants in the sample will be provided. This is done on the basis of the survey among Indian return migrants who have been working as low- and unskilled workers in the construction sector in the Gulf, Singapore and Malaysia. This profile will provide useful information about the research population and help explaining what choices the migrants make and what kind of issues they face after return.

5.1 *General characteristics*

In total, 143 valid survey interviews were conducted. This sample was extremely male-dominated, since 142 respondents were male and only 1 female. The population was relatively young, with an average age of 35.06 and a range of 20 to 66. The marriage rate was 73.4 % married, with 89.4 % of the married people having at least 1 child and a maximum of 7 children and a mean of 2.38. Only the three main Indian religions were represented in the sample: 72.5 % of the respondents was Hindu, 14.8 % Muslim and 12.5 % Christian.

	Frequency	Percent
2005	8	5.6
2006	11	7.7
2007	21	14.7
2008	32	22.4
2009	43	30.1
2010	28	19.6
Total	143	100.0

Table 5.1: Year of last return

The majority of returnees in this research have come back in the last 2.5 years (72 %). Most of them, 81 in total, lived in different communities in Tamil Nadu (56.6 %). In Andhra Pradesh, 12.6 % (18 respondents) was interviewed in the village of Isrampally and 18.2 % (26 respondents) in Narsingi. The rest (12.6 %, 18 respondents) was interviewed around the city of Perumbavoor in Kerala. Table 5.2 shows the destination countries for the different places of residence of the respondents.

Place of Residence before emigration * Last country of emigration Crosstabulation

			Last country of emigration				Total
			Dubai	Other Gulf states	Malaysia	Singapore	
Place of Residence before emigration	Tamil Nadu	Count	18	19	11	33	81
		% within Last country of emigration	32.7%	44.2%	91.7%	100.0%	56.6%
	Kerala	Count	2	16	0	0	18
		% within Last country of emigration	3.6%	37.2%	.0%	.0%	12.6%
	Andhra Pradesh	Count	35	8	1	0	44
		% within Last country of emigration	63.6%	18.6%	8.3%	.0%	30.8%
Total	Count	55	43	12	33	143	
	% within Last country of emigration	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 5.2: Place of residence in India - Last country of emigration

Remarkably, migrants who went to Singapore all came from the state of Tamil Nadu, just as all but one of the migrants to Malaysia. The vast majority of returnees in the communities of Andhra Pradesh went to Dubai. They constitute almost two third of the migrant workers to this Emirate. This physical orientation of migrants from Tamil Nadu to Singapore and Malaysia probably still stems from earlier times, when Madras State was the only state that was allowed to deliver migrant workers to these countries (See 3.2).

Table 5.3 depicts the education level of the return migrants. It shows that most migrants are relatively low-educated. 17.7% has not been to school at all; 14.2 % finished only primary school (class 1-5); 22.7 % has finished middle school (class 6-8); 30.5 % managed to finish high school (class 9-10) and 13.5 % graduated for higher secondary school (class 11-12).

	Frequency	Percent
No education	25	17.5
Finished primary school	20	14.0
Finished middle school	32	22.4
Finished high school	43	30.1
Finished higher secondary school	21	14.7
Total	141	98.6
Missing System	2	1.4
Total	143	100.0

Table 5.3: Education level

Although re-emigration is a common phenomenon for the temporary labor migration of the Indians in the construction sector abroad, in this sample almost two-third (65 %) of the respondents had been working abroad only once so far (see Table 5.4). For respondents who already had lived outside India, 18.2 % had done this for the second time now; 11.2 % for the third time; 4.2 % for the fourth time and 1.4 % of the respondents had been abroad 5 times now, with a mean of 1.58 emigrations per respondent.

	Frequency	Percent
1 departure	93	65.0
2 departures	26	18.2
3 departures	16	11.2
4 departures	6	4.2
5 departures	2	1.4
Total	143	100.0

Table 5.4: Number of departures

5.2 Reasons for emigration

Issues migrants face before emigration can play an important role again after emigration. For example, if a migrant does not have a job before he leaves, it might again be harder to find one if he returns, because he can not pick up his old occupation. Therefore, to get grip on certain problems after return it can be useful to know what drives migrants to leave India. Knowing migrants' motivations for emigration also allows for a comparison with reasons for possible re-emigration. Are these reasons the same, or have different motivations arisen after the last emigration?

Money-related reasons are most important for the migrants to emigrate. Higher salaries was mentioned as either very important (81.7 %) or important by 92.3 % of the returnees, and the correlating variable 'Improve living conditions' was for 80.3 % of the migrants important, although only for 45.1 % very important. Redemption of debts was a very important reason for 43 % of the migrants and important for another 22.5 % (65.5 %). Lack of employment in India was mentioned by 54.2 % as an important reason to leave, but only 19.7 % considered it very important. Only 9.9 % of the respondents indicated that status was a very important reason to go abroad, but 56.3 % considered it at least of some importance. Some migrants added to their money-related motivations that the salaries in India were too low and/or that it is impossible to save money in India.

Other motivations¹ mentioned by the migrants were the adventure of the migration project; forced to go by the family; or the exact opposite: release of family responsibilities in India: Ravi tells: “Abroad, I can work for 30 days without any distractions. If I am in India I have to involve myself in all the family activities. So abroad I can save more money for my family without any disturbances.”

But the most frequently mentioned other reason were relatives, friends or acquaintances who were already working abroad themselves and convinced, lured or attracted their associates to leave India as well. This is not only a necessary condition for many migrants to go, but some indicated even that this was *the sole reason* why they proceeded overseas. Mohammed from Isrampally states: “everybody was going abroad; I felt I also had to go”.

Unfortunately, no specific question(s) in the questionnaire was aimed at investigating the exact importance of social networks in the decision to emigrate. It is expected however that for many, or even most migrants, contacts abroad or social pressure in the home community are also of great importance for their emigration decision, parallel with the social network theory outlined in the theoretical framework. Additional proof for this comes from the research of Rajan, where 53.2 % of the return migrants stated that they received the information for the overseas job opportunity from their friends and relatives (Rajan et al., 2008, 39).

¹ Percentages can not be provided, because the motivations mentioned here were introduced by the respondents themselves and therefore not provided as answer category for all respondents.

5.3 During emigration

A few relevant questions were asked about the period during last emigration, which can be of influence on the reintegration patterns, choices and plans of the migrants after return.

While working abroad, the most frequently executed professions were helper, mason, (steel)fitter, plumber and carpenter (See Table 5.5). As can be seen in the table, it only concerns occupations which require mainly manual labor. The high percentage of helpers indicates the low education and skill level many migrants possessed.

For most respondents, home visits were no option. While on contract, only 32.8 % of the returnees indicated that during last emigration they had the chance to visit their relatives at home, and of this group the great majority was only allowed to do this less than once a year. Other contacts with family members (mainly phone contact) could happen more frequently for most migrants: at least once a month for 90 % of the respondents, once a week for about 54 % and more or less everyday for 11.2 % (Table 5.6). Transnationalism in the case of the Indian low-skilled migrant worker thus seems only partly realized. They can not truly keep on playing their role in both the destination country and South-India. Living a fully transnational life is hampered by tough rules from companies, harsh labor conditions and sometimes lack of financial resources.

5.4 Reasons for return

For the low- and unskilled construction workers, emigration to the Gulf, Singapore or Malaysia will inevitably include return, since for these migrants it is impossible to settle permanently in one of the destination countries. Labor migration is possible; permanent migration is not. Sometimes the migrants manage to extend their working period abroad for several years or even decades and others manage to

	Frequency	Percent
Helper	40	28.0
Mason	20	14.0
(Steel)fitter	19	13.3
Other	16	11.2
Plumber	13	9.1
Carpenter	12	8.4
Electrician	8	5.6
Welder	6	4.2
Painter	4	2.8
Mechanic	2	1.4
Scaffolder	1	.7
Mixerman	1	.7
Road worker	1	.7
Total	143	100.0

Table 5.5: Professions abroad

	Frequency	Percent
Every day	16	11.2
Several times a week	8	5.6
Once a week	53	37.1
One to three times a month	52	36.4
Less than once a month	13	9.1
Not at all	1	.7
Total	143	100.0

Table 5.6: Contact with relatives

re-emigrate soon after return of a former labor adventure abroad. But permanent settlement is effectively banned by the destination authorities and most migrants return within 5 years after the start of the labor contract (in this sample 78.3 %, see Table 5.7).

When return was intended by the migrant, in this research this means that the migrant always had a theoretical choice whether to stay in the destination country or to return, without becoming illegal. So also extreme cases like return due to a migrants' marriage, a passed away relative in the home community or health problems are considered here as chosen return. Forced return could have a range of different stories to it, but always comes down to an obligation to or decree by the company and/or destination country to leave the country after the contract is completed, broken or impossible to extend. If the migrant decides to stay anyway or is not aware of its illegal status, forced removal from the country can be displayed, sometimes precluded by imprisonment.

	Frequency	Percent
less than 1 year	16	11.2
1-2 years	29	20.3
2-3 years	38	26.6
3-4 years	20	14.0
4-5 years	9	6.3
more than 5 years	31	21.7
Total	143	100.0

Table 5.7: Duration of last emigration

In the sample of this research, 76 (53.1 %) respondents said they chose themselves to return, which means that not less than 67 (46.9 %) were forced to do so. When returnees had themselves chosen to return, three reasons from the questionnaire (see Appendix I) proved to be important. 'Low salaries abroad' was for 50.7 % of the voluntary returnees a very important reason to go back to India. This is striking, since the main reason for the vast majority of migrants to carry out their migration project is the pursuit of higher salaries. In a way one can argue that migrants who return because of lower salaries are also forced returnees, since they probably did not earn enough money (anymore) to sustain a living in the destination country for themselves and simultaneously for their families in India. The mobilization of resources had stagnated, and returning to India was either inevitable or at least economically the wisest decision to make. Still, the ultimate choice remains their own. It is likely that the economic crisis has caused some salaries to become lower than at forehand promised and indicated by fellow migrants. Other important reasons for respondents who had chosen to come back were 'family and friends' (for 25.3 % a very important reason; 42.7 % found it at least important) and 'difficult labor conditions' (important reason for 32 %). Reasons like 'difficult living conditions', 'ill health', 'suitable employment in India' and 'homesickness' turned out to be not important for most of the migrants who had chosen to return.

For forced returnees, frequently heard stories were about closed companies, expired visa's and contracts that had come to an end and could not be renewed. But as said, there was a great versatility in the exact nature of the forced returns and often the story was much more complex than a simple ending of the contract. Jianaselan tells: "I was working for a company which did not want to improve my grade and salary, although I managed to get a license as a piling rig operator. Then I got an opportunity at another

company, so I canceled my job at the one. But due to the economic crisis eventually I could not enter the other company, and without a contract I had to return to India”. Rajendran has quite a different story: “my employer in Bahrein asked me to pay money to renew my visa and labor contract, but the sum was too high in comparison with my salary. This is why I had to return to India.”

Sometimes the stories are more poignant. Thandambani tells: I worked for a bad company in Saudi-Arabia, so I switched to another one. This was illegal, however, and I was caught by the police. After 5 months in jail I was sent back to India”. Also Ramesh from Narsingi had tough experiences: “I went on a visit visa to Dubai. At a certain point I lost my job and then I spent illegally 8 months there without employment. Then I decided to go to the police myself, so they put me in jail. Luckily it lasted only 2 days, because after that I had arranged money for my return ticket with another family in Narsingi.”

These are a few narratives of forced returnees in the survey, but this is just to show the versatility of return stories. Many more examples can be brought forward, but for now we conclude this part of the results by giving a description of an example of a typical returnee from a labor migration project in construction in the Gulf or South-East Asia.

5.5 Chapter conclusions

A typical Indian return migrant in this research is a Hindu male of 35 years old who finished 7 years of school. Influenced by friends and relatives both in his rural community as well as abroad he goes to Dubai to work in a company where it is promised to him that he can earn more money than in India. While there, he works in tough conditions as a low-skilled mason for 10 hours a day. He contacts his family on average twice a month. After 3 years he can not get a new contract that is good enough to be able to take care of himself and his family, so he decides to go back to his home community in India.

Obviously, the above is a gross simplification and over-generalization of the research object of this research, but it gives an impression of the type of person one is likely to encounter in the research population under examination. In the next chapter, this research population is further scrutinized from the moment of return and onwards.

Chapter 6. *Reintegration patterns and propensity to re-emigrate*

With more knowledge about some specific features of the migrant in this research, a closer look can be taken on what happens when he has returned. How successful has his migration project been? What issues does he face back in his home community in South-India and with which factors does this correlate? What drives him and what are his plans? This paragraph tries to provide answers for these questions. First, generalizations for the whole sample will be tried to be made. Later, field data from the various geographical entities will be separated, since they show in many ways very distinct results.

6.1 *Financial situation after return and debt problems*

Income and access to money are obviously of crucial importance for setting up or revamping a life back in India. Money also increases the chances on the labor market, e.g. by investing in one's own business, which consequently helps for both economic and social integration.

When comparing the financial situation before the first emigration with the situation after the last emigration, it becomes clear that the migration project for most respondents is not a financial success. Table 6.1 shows that only 37.8 % of the respondents said to be better off now. Another 29.4 %, however, felt their situation had remained the same, while 32.9 % indicated to be in a worse financial situation. So what by many migrants is seen as the key to a more well-off existence often turns out to a disappointment or even nightmare.

Analysis on basis of destination country

It is interesting to investigate whether differences occur when comparing the respondents for destination country. The statistics for Dubai show a striking deviation with the other destinations (Table 6.2). Only 20 % of the respondents who went to Dubai said to have improved their financial situation, while 56.4% of the migrants indicated that their situation has financially worsened. The rest (23.6 %) states their situation has remained unchanged. In contrast, migrants who have been to Singapore told to have improved their financial situation in 63.6 % of the cases, while only 12.1 % said to be worse off now and 21.2 % said their financial situation was more or less the same after coming back.

	Frequency	Percent
Better	54	37.8
Unchanged	42	29.4
Worsened	47	32.9
Total	143	100.0

Table 6.1: Current financial situation compared with financial situation before emigration

Last country of emigration * Current financial situation compared to before emigration Crosstabulation

			Current financial situation compared to before emigration			Total
			Better	Unchanged	Worsened	
Last country of emigration	Dubai	Count	11	13	31	55
		% within Last country of emigration	20.0%	23.6%	56.4%	100.0%
	Other Gulf states	Count	15	18	10	43
		% within Last country of emigration	34.9%	41.9%	23.3%	100.0%
	Malaysia	Count	6	4	2	12
		% within Last country of emigration	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	Singapore	Count	22	7	4	33
		% within Last country of emigration	66.7%	21.2%	12.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	54	42	47	143
		% within Last country of emigration	37.8%	29.4%	32.9%	100.0%

Table 6.2: Last country of emigration - Financial situation after emigration

The most often mentioned problems that respondents have to deal with after return are debts. In the total sample of this research, 40.8 % of the respondents called debts a very problematic issue, while 58.5 % found it problematic at least to some extent (Table 6.3).

Debts are often made when investing in the migration mission. Passports, visas, tickets and recruitment charges cost the migrants often more than they can pay for out of their own savings and therefore loans with private moneylenders or friends and relatives have to be taken. Especially the private moneylenders, sometimes members of a specific money-lending caste that originates from Maharashtra (personal communication, BWI Chennai), will charge high interest rates, which further increase the debt burden in the course of time.

	Frequency	Percent
Very problematic	58	40.6
Problematic	15	10.5
Some problems	10	7.0
No problems	59	41.3
Total	142	99.3
Missing System	1	.7
Total	143	100.0

Table 6.3: Debt problems

Ramamoorthy tells: “For going abroad, I got a loan of 1 lakh (100.000 rupees) from a private lender in the village. Because I lost my job abroad, I could not pay back the money, and due to the interest rate the debt increased. So now I have to go abroad again to repay the loan. However, in India I do not feel my debt as a problem, because I made an agreement with the private moneylender that I can not pay back the money as long as I am in India.” Karyppaiah has a similar story: “I borrowed 175.000 Rupees

from a private lender to pay the recruitment agent. But in Malaysia I earned only 16 Ringgit a day (approximately 225 Rupees), so I could not save enough. The interest rate of the loan is 5 %, so the debt has now increased to 200.000 Rupees.”

It is interesting to investigate the whole sample on the basis of the migrants' destination countries, large differences per receiving country can be observed. Table 6.4 shows that the migrants who had been to Dubai considered debts in 72.7 % of the concerned cases as very problematic or problematic, while for returnees from Singapore this was 45.4 % and for returnees from the other Gulf countries taken together only 30.2 %. These figures show that Dubai seems to be a much riskier destination than the other receiving countries of Indian low- and unskilled labor migrants.

Last country of emigration * Debt problems Crosstabulation

			Debt problems				Total
			Very problematic	Problematic	Some problems	No problems	
Last country of emigration	Dubai	Count	34	6	4	11	55
		% within Last country of emigration	61.8%	10.9%	7.3%	20.0%	100.0%
	Other Gulf states	Count	12	1	5	25	43
		% within Last country of emigration	27.9%	2.3%	11.6%	58.1%	100.0%
	Malaysia	Count	4	1	0	6	11
		% within Last country of emigration	36.4%	9.1%	0.0%	54.5%	100.0%
	Singapore	Count	8	7	1	17	33
		% within Last country of emigration	24.2%	21.2%	3.0%	51.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	58	15	10	59	142
		% within Last country of emigration	40.8%	10.6%	7.0%	41.5%	100.0%

Table 6.4: Last country of emigration - Debt problems

Type of return

When exploring the relation between the type of return (forced or chosen) and the financial situation after emigration, a clear indication emerges that migrants who decide themselves to come back fare often better than migrants who are forced to do so. Voluntary returnees said to have improved their financial situation in 46.1 % of the cases, against 19.7 % of respondents who stated to be financially worse off now (unchanged for 34.2 %). For returnees who were in some way forced to return, only 28.4 % told to be financially better off now; 23.9 % said the situation had remained the same, but for 47.8 % it had worsened (Table 6.5).

			Current financial situation compared to before emigration			Total
			Better	Unchanged	Worsened	
Type of return	Choose to return	Count	35	26	15	76
		% within Type of return	46.1%	34.2%	19.7%	100.0%
	Forced to return	Count	19	16	32	67
		% within Type of return	28.4%	23.9%	47.8%	100.0%
Total	Count		54	42	47	143
	% within Type of return		37.8%	29.4%	32.9%	100.0%

Table 6.5: Type of return - Financial situation after emigration

The figures are more clear-cut even when examining the relation between type of return and debt problems. For voluntary returnees, debt problems are very problematic for 24 %, problematic for another 8 % and somewhat problematic for 9.3 % (41.3 % in total), while 58.7 % of them says to have no debt problems at all. Forced returnees in this sample, however, have very problematic debts in 59.7 % of the cases; 13.4 % says to have problematic debt problems and 4.5 % has some problems (77.6 %). Only 22.4 % of the forced returnees states to have no debt problems at all (Table 6.6).

			Debt problems				Total
			Very problematic	Problematic	Some problems	No problems	
Type of return	Choose to return	Count	18	6	7	44	75
		% within Type of return	24.0%	8.0%	9.3%	58.7%	100.0%
	Forced to return	Count	40	9	3	15	67
		% within Type of return	59.7%	13.4%	4.5%	22.4%	100.0%
Total	Count		58	15	10	59	142
	% within Type of return		40.8%	10.6%	7.0%	41.5%	100.0%

Table 6.6: Type of return - Debt problems

These results are in line with Cassarions theory of preparedness for return, where the migrant is only ready to go back when resource mobilization has been completed. For many Indian construction workers who are forced to come back, resource mobilization has not brought them enough means to make a profit out of their project, but rather leaves them in (further) debts because of the costs of going abroad and coming back to India. They have not finished their mission for resource mobilization and emigration has, at least for now, failed. Back in the South-Indian community, sorrows about money have not been solved and are often stronger than before emigration.

Musagesan, one of the respondents from Tamil Nadu tells: “I got a loan from the brokers. But because I already had to come back to India after 6 months, I could never make enough money to repay these debts”. Veerupandiyan has a similar story: “There was not enough work in the company and according

to Singapore labor laws the company had to reduce the amount of manpower. Luckily Singapore labor laws also oblige the company to provide the return tickets. But still I can not repay the loan I got from a private lender to pay the recruitment agent” (telephone interviews, May 2010).

There are also big differences between the type of return and the country from where this return has to take place. When comparing the last country of emigration with the type of return, it shows that 65.5 % of the respondents who went to Dubai were forced to come back. Singapore also scores relatively high here with 48.5 %, while from the other Gulf States only 27.9 % was forced to return (Table 6.7).

Type of return * Last country of emigration Crosstabulation

			Last country of emigration				Total
			Dubai	Other Gulf states	Malaysia	Singapore	
Type of return	Choose to return	Count	19	31	9	17	76
		% within Last country of emigration	34.5%	72.1%	75.0%	51.5%	53.1%
	Forced to return	Count	36	12	3	16	67
		% within Last country of emigration	65.5%	27.9%	25.0%	48.5%	46.9%
Total		Count	55	43	12	33	143
		% within Last country of emigration	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6.7: Last country of emigration - Type of return

6.2 Other reintegration issues

When asking about problems migrants encountered back in India, other issues than debts were not often mentioned. In the whole sample, housing problems were only 'very problematic' for 9.8 % of the respondents and 'problematic' for 23.8 %. This often meant that the current house was not perceived big enough to live in with the whole family, the quality of the house was too low or it was considered problematic that the migrant and his family were living in a rented house and did own one themselves. Other money-related problems were more commonly mentioned, like 'difficulties with finding a job' (14 % very problematic, 23.8 % problematic) and 'low salaries' (24.5 % very problematic, 28 % problematic). Health problems were hardly mentioned (very problematic or problematic for 8.4 %).

A reason for the lack of evidence for specific reintegration issues in this research might be the safety net of the nuclear family, which plays an important role in Indian society. Family lies at the core of Indian society and livelihood strategies are normally aimed at serving the collective rather than the individual. Often the family can provide a lot of facilities the migrant also had before going abroad. Also, inheritance plays an import role in the peripheral areas where most migrants come from, giving many a solid base of tangible resources already at birth. This all can be seen in line with the social network theory, in which services and resources in India are already secured before going home.

It is also likely that many migrants suffer certain psychological issues which will have their ramifications on family life. After living in harsh conditions in destinations as Dubai, sometimes for a very long time, a mental imprint of this period is hard to avoid. Unfortunately, in this research the time was not available nor could the setting be created to deeply delve into these issues. Also, expertise on psychological issues was missed to examine these problems professionally. Further research with a specific focus on the psychological and social aspects of reintegration in the case of Indian return migrants is needed to investigate these issues further.

6.3 *Activities after return*

Reintegration is largely dependent on the activities one deploys back in the home community. Having a job strongly facilitates participation in community life and sustaining a livelihood and is considered here as one of the key elements for reintegration. When analyzing migrants' activities and wishes after return, some useful comparisons can be made.

Comparing activities before, during and after emigration

Working life before migration is for many returnees a convenient choice to pick up again after return. When taking the total sample of this research, it becomes clear that the majority of returnees (55.2 %) becomes involved in the same occupation or activities he performed before emigration, against 44.8 % who does something else now. A much smaller percentage is doing the same job back in India as during last emigration; 26.6 %. And when taking a closer look at this group, it becomes clear that 81.6 % already had this occupation before emigration (21.7 % of the total sample), indicating that only 4.9 % of the respondents picked up a job abroad which they had not occupied before emigration, and that later also became useful as new occupation back in their home communities.

Just like before going abroad, construction and agriculture remained also after return important sectors to work in. In total, 27.2 % stated to be officially working in construction again, while 26.6 % mentioned agriculture as their main occupation back home in India. Another 23.1 % said to be unemployed since return, but depending on the definition, this rate could be much higher when also including the under-employed returnees in especially Isrampally and Narsingi. Therefore, it is hard to provide clear-cut statistics on the exact occupation of the respondents after coming back to India. What can be said though, is that 50 return migrants (35 %) indicated to be searching for a (different) job within India at the moment of interview. Of this group, 31 (62 %) were trying to get wage-employment, while the other 19 were looking for an opportunity to become self-employed. However, 20 of these 50 jobsearching migrants were from Narsingi, where 76.9 % (20 out of 26) was looking for work.

6.4 *Re-emigration*

Soon after starting the fieldwork in South-India, it became obvious that return is often not the final stage in the migration process of the Indian construction workers abroad. Migration is a continuum and the process can endure a whole working life for some migrants. In this sample, for 35 % of the respondents the last emigration was not the first (See also chapter 5.1).

The percentage of returnees with the *intention* to re-emigrate is higher, however. In the total sample, 39.9 % of the respondents indicate to be absolutely sure about re-emigrating when they would get the chance, while another 25.2 % is at least considering it (65.1 % in total). Of this group, 35.2 % wants to go to the same country as last time and 30.8 % wants to go to another country. Another 33 % is not sure, what often means that the migrant is willing to go anywhere, as long as he will get a good salary for the work he provides. Comparing the actual re-emigration rate and the intention to re-emigrate thus indicates that the former figure is not so much lower than the figure for people who are absolutely certain about re-emigration, but almost twice as low when also the hesitating migrants are involved in the comparison.

Also for re-emigration, money continues to be an important push to leave India. Again 'higher salaries' were the most important reason to go abroad (very important for 78.5 %, important for 94.6 %). Not being able to find a job in India was a very important reason for 18.3 %, an important reason for 21.5 % and of some importance for 9.7 % (49.5 % in total). For 50.5 %, redemption of debts was a very important reason to go abroad again, just important for another 16.1 % and of some importance to 10.8 % (77.4 % in total). Status improvement was very important for 21.5 % and important for another 26.9 %. Not being able to re-adapt in India did not play any significant role in the motivations for potential re-migrants. These results are quite similar to the motivations for first emigrations (see chapter 5.2) and this indicates that initial goals remain important throughout the whole migration trajectory and almost always have financial grounds.

Also unemployment seems an important push to leave India again. Of the unemployed respondents, most have an absolute wish to re-emigrate (23 out of 34, 67.6 %). They constitute 40.3 % of the group of returnees who are certain about their wish to re-emigrate. Of these potential re-migrants who are jobless, 16 respondents say they are also not searching for employment in India. For these returnees reintegration issues seem completely irrelevant, because they are not trying to reintegrate.

6.5 *Analysis for separate research localities*

As mentioned before, very different data were found for the different settings the fieldwork was carried out. Therefore it is considered essential to also describe these localities separately and elaborate on their results distinctively. For Kerala not enough data were gathered to provide a useful analysis here.

Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu questionnaires were held at several locations in two different regions: in villages around Tirupattur, Pudukottai district and in and around the city of Kallakkurichi. In total, 81 valid interviews were conducted in this state.

The research population in Tamil Nadu was relatively young and male-dominated: all but 1 of the returnees were male and 61.2 % was 35 years or younger, while 83.8 % was not older than 40 years. The oldest respondent was only 55 and the average age was 33.6 years old. By far most people were Hindu (85.2 %), followed by Christians (8.6 %) and Muslims (6.2 %). Married was 69.1 % of the returnees, almost all with children, but nobody had more than 4. Most respondents in Tamil Nadu had at least finished middle school (83.8 %), making them more educated than the respondents in the villages in Andhra Pradesh, as we will see later on. Before emigration, most people in the sample were either working in agriculture (40.7 %) or the construction sector (30.9 %). The amount of people that indicate to be unemployed is very low (4.9%), but of the people that state to have a job not all work full-time.

For many respondents, migration seems to have been a rewarding choice. In Tamil Nadu, 55.6 % states to be better off than before emigration. This is a much higher figure than in the other research localities, as we will see later on. 28.4 % stated that their financial situation had remained unchanged compared to before emigration, while only 16 % said to be worse off after emigration. At the same time, 46.9 % of

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very problematic	24	29.6
	Problematic	11	13.6
	Some problems	3	3.7
	No problems	42	51.9
		1	1.2
Total		81	100.0

Table 6.8: Tamil Nadu – Debt problems

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very important	32	39.5
	Important	12	14.8
	Some importance	8	9.9
	Not important	11	13.6
Total		63	77.8
Missing	System	18	22.2
Total		81	100.0

Table 6.9: Tamil Nadu - Redemption of debts as reason to re-emigrate

can be several explanations for this contradiction. First of all, when motivating their re-emigration, the respondents took already into account that when they go abroad again, money has to be borrowed once

the respondents said to be problematically indebted at least to some extent. For some of the returnees this was mainly caused by taking a loan to proceed overseas, although sometimes debts were created due to other reasons. However, there is a contradiction when comparing the percentages of respondents with a debt problem and respondents who give 'redemption of debts' at least some importance when motivating their choice to go abroad again (64.2 %, respondents who do not consider to emigrate again included; Table 6.9). There

more and therefore redemption of debts is given importance for their reason to proceed overseas. This of course would be a contradiction in itself, because since the borrowing of money is only a premise when the migrant actually goes abroad and the debt would not have been made when he would not have gone abroad, it can in itself never be a reason to emigrate again. Still, the migrant might think in a different way and this might be an explanation. A second reason could be that some migrants do not perceive their debt as a problem, but when going abroad again, redemption of debts might still be one of their motivations. The last and most unwanted reason could be that the migrant has lied about his debt problems in the first question, e.g. because of embarrassment, but is more honest when asking him for his reasons to go abroad because he finds that question less confronting.

A more or less equal distribution of people does or does not employ the same activities before emigration as after emigration (48.8 % and 51.2 %), showing the importance of pre-departure occupations, while only 18.8 % occupies the same activities after emigration as during emigration. Re-emigration is considered by 77.8 % of the respondents in Tamil Nadu, with 50.6 % of them absolutely sure that they want to do this. This is a very important observation, because it indicates that for many migrants in Tamil Nadu, despite the economic crisis, reintegration is not really considered or convincingly taking place. Many still see their nearby future abroad and do not fully focus on setting up a living and working life in Tamil Nadu. Of the potential re-migrants, 42.6 % wants to go to the same country as last time, 36.1 % wants to go to a different country and 21.3 % is not sure.



Figure 8: Landscape near Kalakkurichi

%

Case-studies

Two very distinct cases were found in the communities in Andhra Pradesh: Isrampally and Narsingi. The stories of the returnees here show correlation among each other and have a significantly other character than in Tamil Nadu or Kerala. Because it is felt that these communities really have their own story to tell, it is decided to deal with them as case-studies here.

Case-study 1: Isrampally

Isrampally is a tiny village in central Andhra Pradesh, a 40-minute drive from the bigger city Mahabubnagar. There is only one unpaved road connecting Isrampally with its surroundings, making it a remote place to visit. When Isrampally was visited for the survey, it made a very dry appearance where little agricultural or other economic activity can be deployed. It therefore seems a logical step to try your luck somewhere else.

In Isrampally only males were interviewed, 18 in total, with an age spectrum of 23 to 66; 14 of them are Muslim, the other 4 Hindu. The 13 respondents who are married all have children, including 1 respondent with 6 children and another with 7. The education level of the respondents is low, with 12 out of 18 having only primary education or no education at all and only 1 respondent who finished higher secondary school. Before their first emigration, most migrants were either employed in construction (8) or agriculture (7), but often in short-term projects or seasonal work. All but 1 respondent had gone to the Gulf on their last emigration and for 14 of them this had been their only emigration so far. Within the Gulf, Dubai was by far the most popular destination, since 12 people had gone there. A remarkable amount of return migrants in Isrampally had been plumber while abroad; 10, next to 4 helpers, 3 electricians and 1 mechanic.

While abroad, most migrants (15) had contact with their relatives at home only once a week or less. The reason to return was for 7 respondents forced due to dismissal or the end of the labor contract and visa; the other 11 chose to return themselves. But of the returnees who had chosen to come back, 8 indicated that the low salaries in their destination country



Figure 9: Isrampally



Figure 10: Landscape near Isrampally

were an important reason to do so, showing that also these people had little choice than to return. Nobody said to be better off due to emigration: 10 out of 18 stated their situation has remained unchanged, while for the other 8 the financial situation has become worse.

Rasool Miyan says: “the company in Dubai paid insufficient salary and they paid it irregularly, so I decided to return. But now I have heavy debt problems due to loans I had to take from private money lenders.” Also Mohammed took a private loan for his trip. “But when my visa expired, I had to leave Dubai within 15 days. Now I do not have enough money to re-pay the debt”.

After return, 55.6 % has become involved in the same activities as before emigration. However, this often means being unemployed or underemployed (again) and performing some short-term informal money-generating activities with manual labor or seasonal agricultural work. In fact, all respondents indicated to be either employed on short-term, part-time or seasonal basis or to be completely unemployed.

Re-emigration was considered by 12 from the 18 returnees and for most of them this could be anywhere as long as they could make good money. The main issues for the returnees in Isrampally are again debt problems; 15 respondents told it caused at least some problems, and 10 indicated it was a serious problem. The most important conclusion that can be drawn for the Isrampally case is that it has not paid off for the returnees to go abroad. None of them improved their financial situation and for some the situation has even worsened. The created debts would have been less problematic or non-existent when they would not have gone abroad in the first place.

Case-study 2: Narsingi

Narsingi is a small town located about 50 km from the metropolis Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh state. Although Narsingi is well-connected with Hyderabad, economic activity in this community appeared to be very low.

All respondents in Narsingi, 26 in total, were male, Hindu, and the age ranged between 21 and 53, with 19 (73.1 %) being 35 or younger; 22 respondents were married (84.6 %) and from them all but 1 had children. The amount of children ranged from 1 to 4. Out of the 26 returned construction workers in Narsingi, 15 respondents did not have any education at all (57.7 %), another 3 had only finished primary school and again 3 had finished middle school. Most respondents were part-time active in some informal occupation like manual work (12), agriculture (7) or construction (3), but nobody was employed for a company or institution. The employment opportunities in Narsingi were clearly very limited.

The vast majority of respondents in Narsingi had gone to Dubai (23; 88.5 %), while the others had been to Saudi-Arabia. For everybody except one this had been the only emigration project so far. As a profession, 22 had simply been helpers while abroad, having no skills to perform any other job. Higher salaries and redemption of debts were the main reasons to take up the adventure. While abroad, contact with relatives at home was scarce, with 22 being in touch with their family only once a month or less,

while temporary leaves during the contract did not occur.

The majority of labor migrants in Narsingi had gone to the Gulf on a tourist visa, making it illegal for them to actually work there. However, these men were not aware of their upcoming illegal status, or at least not of the full consequences of this situation.

Nagaraju tells: “I went on a visit visa to Dubai, so after a while I became undocumented. I was caught by the police and spent 2 weeks in jail. After that I had managed to borrow money from friends to pay the return ticket, so I could come back to India.” Ganesh also went to Dubai on a visit visa. When he got exploited by the second company he worked for, he handed himself over to the police. “The private agency which had recruited me showed understanding and borrowed money for the return ticket. However, now they are threatening me to let me pay back the money.” Rajkumar went on a work permit to Saudi-Arabia, but the company he was supposed to work for paid very low wages. “So I left that employer and started working outside, but I was legally not allowed to do that. I was arrested and sent to jail. Another family from my home village lend me money for the return ticket, which my family later paid back”.

Many of the respondents in Narsingi have been exploited and were paid much less salary than promised. Some of the respondents had been caught by the police and spent time in jail. Others had handed themselves over to the police or called in the help of the Indian embassy when they found out their illegal status. They only managed to go back to Narsingi by taking another loan from relatives or acquaintances in Narsingi on top of the loan they had taken with private lenders to go abroad plus loans many had already taken before leaving.

After coming back, debts for these migrants had only multiplied. In Narsingi, everybody's financial situation had become worse, most often much worse, and everybody was heavily indebted, mainly due to their emigration. After coming back they found themselves in the same occasional (under)employment (73.1 %) for low salaries again, making the situation even more unfavorable. The hard experiences in the Gulf have demotivated the majority to consider re-emigration, although still 8 of them say they would give it another try (30.7 %).

6.6 *Return migration and development*

Although not directly linked with the topics of reintegration and re-emigration, a brief discussion on the relation between return migration and development in the home communities can be insightful and adds to the comprehension on the impact of migration on the situation after return.

Remittances

India has for years now been the country that earns the most money out of remittances worldwide, which in 2004 amounted up to US\$ 23 billion. Less remittance flows will therefore in general not be beneficial to the development of Indian regions, as long as more can be earned abroad than in a job

back in India. For some regions and communities in South-India, extensive flows of return migrants can be unfavorable at the least and devastating in the worst scenario.

In Kerala, about 185 billion rupees (about US\$ 4 billion, current exchange rate) were sent back in 2003. Rajan and Zachariah state that, distributed among the 32.5 million people of Kerala, this would mean that each citizen would earn about Rs 5,678 per year or Rs 473 per month out of remittances, which is sufficient to buy about 40 kilograms of rice per month (Rajan & Zachariah, 2007, 2, 13-14). Also, Kerala has been able to clear 60 % of its state debts with the help of remittances. This shows how important money flows from especially the Gulf are to this state and how vulnerable it potentially is when large scale return migration would take place. It is also more likely that the impact on a Keralan community, with a long lasting tradition in sending people overseas who annually bring in a steady flow of remittances, will be bigger than a community like Narsingi, where most to all migrants get exploited and can not send back any money anyway.

However, it also depends on how the remittances are used. When the remittances are mainly or solely used for short-term or conspicuous consumption, the development potential will remain low. When instead more sustainable investments like housing, enterprises and education are financed with money out of remittances, development will get a boost. Unfortunately, no clear data were found on how remittances are exactly used and to which extent they are invested in development fostering practices and activities.

As already mentioned in chapter 1.1, the CDS has not observed an exodus of return migration of Indian migrant workers, although it is not clear whether this has changed very recently. However, if return migration due to the economic crisis will increase to really large amounts, this inevitably will have a negative effect on the development potential of many communities in South-India.

Brain gain

Advocates of the positive relation between migration and development point at the potential benefits for the country of origin in terms of transmitted skills and knowledge. Migrants who, after a certain period of emigration, return to their place of birth can bring along a considerable base of useful expertise. In the scientific literature about return migration this is often called brain gain. Through brain gain, developing regions can foster development with the newly acquired ideas and experience from the ex-migrants, who obtained these ideas and this experience by working abroad.

For low- and unskilled Indian labor migrants in construction this seems almost completely irrelevant. As was already shown in the former paragraph, only 4.9 % of the whole sample got involved in an occupation in India after emigration that was also occupied during emigration, but not before going abroad. Because also in the Gulf, Singapore and Malaysia occupied professions in the construction sector are low- or unskilled, few extra competences are gained, let alone knowledge. Additional courses

or trainings are not provided. Sometimes the slightly more sophisticated professions like carpentry and welding can be learned and these skills can later be used again in India, for example by starting one's own carpentry or welding workshop. But normally the migrant workers just have to work very hard in relatively unsophisticated manual labor.

6.7 *Chapter conclusions*

Dependent on a range of factors, often linked to earlier phases in the migration project, reintegration issues will manifest itself or are avoided by efforts to re-emigrate. Due to cross-border social networks, social pressure and influence, and recruitment agencies who recruit several workers in the same village for one company, there is within communities a tendency to go to the same country or even the same company. This explains why significant other data were collected in Tamil Nadu compared to the two communities examined in Andhra Pradesh.

Chapter 7. Policies for return migrants

Although there are multiple institutions which try to address the needs of Indian labor migrants before they emigrate, e.g. by providing pre-departure trainings, or during emigration, for returned migrants not many support policies exist. In fact, none of the respondents in the survey indicated to have received support from which institution whatsoever when back in India, except for bank loans (with concomitant interest rates) in a few cases. Especially in Kerala it seems that returned migrants need their awareness raised about the possibilities that actually exist for them to receive support.

7.1 Non-Resident Keralites Affairs Department

The Non-Resident Keralites Affairs Department (NORKA) is a special government department for international and internal migrants from Kerala, which also provides some schemes for returned migrants. Returnees are still recognized by NORKA as Non-Resident Keralites (NRK's) for a certain amount of time, depending on how long the person has been working abroad. For example: when somebody has been working in the Gulf for 25 years, he is still considered a NRK 10 years afterwards and has right on certain welfare schemes.

NORKA describes its own role for Non-Resident Keralites (NRK's) on their website as follows: “In order to ensure the welfare of the Non Resident Keralites, redress their grievances and safeguard their rights, the Non Resident Keralites Affairs Department was set up by the Government of Kerala in 1996. Since then, NORKA has been playing a vital role in the lives of NRKs, supporting them in times of need and lending them a helping hand in every possible means” (<http://www.norka.gov.in/>).

Norka-Roots is the field agency of the Department of NORKA. This field agency “acts as an interface between the Non-Resident Keralites and the Government of Kerala and a forum for addressing the NRKs’ problems, safeguarding their rights and rehabilitating the returnees”. Norka-Roots can therefore be seen as the implementation agent of NORKA-policies (<http://www.norka.gov.in/>). According to S.M. Najeeb of NORKA Roots, an important recent scheme NORKA has set up for returned migrants is the NRK-welfare fund (also Pravasis welfare fund), set up in January 2009. Keralites in the age group 18-55 years old working abroad are the main contributors and can donate a minimum of 300 rupees a month. Next to that, the government of Kerala also contributes to the fund. Also the returnees can participate in the fund for 100 rupees minimum. With this fund currently only pension schemes are created. This scheme is meant for the payment of pension to the members and deemed members who have completed sixty years of age and remitted contribution for not less than five years. Also, family pensions are paid from this scheme on the death of a member or a deemed member who has remitted contribution for not less than five years

Already 35.000 to 40.000 members have enrolled, but considering the total amount of Indian expatriates this is only a fraction. In the future the fund should also be used for purposes like insurance

benefits, scholarships benefits, as there are:

- “For the refund of the amount of contribution remitted by the members who had become unable to work for more than two years due to permanent physical disability or died while being a member or had completed sixty years of age.
- for the payment of financial assistance on the death of a member due to illness or accident;
- for the payment of financial assistance for the medical treatment of the members affected with serious illness;
- for the payment of financial assistance for the marriage of the women members and daughters of the members and for maternity benefit to women members;
- for giving financial assistance or loans or advances for the members for the construction of dwelling house or for the purchase of land or for the purchase of land and building or for the maintenance of house or for education facilities, including higher education, to the children of members;
- for the payment of self-employment assistance or loans to seek self employment to the repatriated persons;
- for the payment of financial assistance to a member who suffers from permanent physical disability which incapacitated him to attend any work for his livelihood;
- for investment in nay company or firm or co-operative society or in any other society or institution constituted under the provisions of this Act; and
- for any other purpose specified in the Scheme” (<http://www.pravasiwelfarefund.org>).

7.2 PMLU

The Palamoori Migrant Labor Union, based in Mahabubnagar (formerly named Palamooru) in Andhra Pradesh, claims to be the only trade union in India that works solely with migrant workers. They have been very active with repatriating Indian construction workers (mainly from the Gulf) who went on a tourist visa and ended up in jail. The PMLU does not have specific policies for return migrants, but they do form labor cooperative societies for this group. This means that, if there is any government construction work available, PMLU will write these labor cooperative societies to make the returned migrants aware of the availability of this labor. Next to that, PMLU pushes the government to create employment opportunities for returned migrants. But according to the chairman of the PMLU, P. Narayanaswamy, the government is not taking up the issue and does not respond to PMLU's requests (interview with P. Narayanaswamy, chairman of PMLU, 06-05-2010).

Other trade unions like TCWF and KKNTC, counterparts of the PMLU in respectively Tamil Nadu and Kerala, perform similar tasks, but all of them are for now mainly focused on assisting the migrants before (pre-departure and para-legal trainings) and during emigration.

7.3 Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs – Indo-UAE Pilot Project

In a meeting in Abu Dhabi, 20 Asian governments participated in a “Ministerial Consultation on Overseas Employment and Contractual labor for Countries of Origin and Destination in Asia.” In this meeting, the Abu Dhabi Declaration was adopted, which called for a collaborative approach to better manage temporary labor mobility and maximize its benefits for the foreign workers and development of both the countries of origin and destination. The Declaration called for the launching of a series of partnerships for development, aiming on increasing the benefits of temporary contractual labor to workers, employers and economies and societies of both origin and receiving countries.

Subsequently, a Pilot Project on Temporary Labor Mobility Partnership was launched by the Governments of India, Philippines, and United Arab Emirates to test and identify the best practices in the administration of the contractual employment cycle. The partners envisage that the lessons learned from the Pilot Project will form the basis for the development of a draft comprehensive regional multilateral framework for the larger group of Asian Countries of origin and destination that participated in the Abu Dhabi Declaration. Two of the specific policies of the Pilot project should improve both the preparation of temporary contractual workers for their return to their countries of origin and the successful reintegration of temporary contractual workers in their respective home communities. The Pilot Project focuses on three specific sectors, one of them being the construction sector. The Project Management Team based in the United Arab Emirates oversees the implementation of the Pilot Project in India which is under the charge of a Country Coordinator. The Project Management Team will identify workers in Construction, Health Care and Hospitality Sectors and oversee their recruitment and employment in four different phases (Ministry of Overseas Affairs, 2010, 28-29).

Apparently, the amount of policies in India specifically aimed at return migrants is very limited, since the above was all that was found. Professor Bernard d'Sami from Loyola College in Chennai underlines this lack of attention, especially by the Indian government, for migrants in general and return migrants in particular. According to him, attention for migrant issues is still in an infancy state (Personal communication, 18-02-2010).

Chapter 8. Conclusions and recommendations

In this final chapter we come back to the research objective and the corresponding research question. The aim has been to gain insight in the reintegration issues that Indian return migrants face, what activities and plans they deploy to overcome them and the existing policies for addressing their need, which was summarized in the following research question:

Which reintegration issues do Indian return migrants face, what do they do to overcome them and which policies exist to provide in the addressing of their needs?

In the former chapters this research question has been tried to answer, so in this chapter recommendations can be formulated. But before doing so, the main conclusions of this research will be drawn.

8.1 Main conclusions

The story of the low- and unskilled return migrant who worked in construction is versatile. On the one hand, there is the successful returnee who worked for years in a construction company for a decent wage and has managed to build a concrete house for him and his family; on the other hand, there is the wrecked returnee who has been exploited throughout the whole process of migration and has to find a way to deal with his enormous debt burden now. Depending on many factors, some migrants succeed and others fail. Consequently, reintegration patterns and tendencies to re-emigrate are shaped. A wide range of factors can be decisive in the success rate of a migration project and these precluding phases are considered essential here for explaining the period after emigration. They elucidate to a large extent how the situation of the individual returnee and his family back in South-India was created.

The place of origin seems a major structural factor that influences a returnee's destiny to a great extent. It makes a huge difference in this research whether a migrant lived in Tamil Nadu before emigration or one of the communities in Andhra Pradesh. In line with the social network theory, migrants and potential migrants influence each other and to a large degree help determine each others' paths. Additionally, recruitment agencies who choose certain communities for their practices make it more likely that migrants in these communities make similar choices, most notably going to the same destination country and working for the same company. Hence, migrants from the same origin communities will often have similar experiences. Consequently, there is a strong correlation between place of origin, destination country and situation after return. Most unlucky respondents from Narsingi for example had been to Dubai, while more successful migration experiences were found in Tamil Nadu where the returnees had often been to Singapore. After their rough experiences in Dubai, the returnees in Narsingi found themselves in dreadful financial situations with unbearable debts and no prospects on a decent future. Many respondents in Tamil Nadu stated to be better off than before going abroad and their future seemed to look much brighter. In Isrampally, where most returnees also came

back from Dubai, nobody had gained from the migration project, but for most of them the situation was less precarious than in Narsingi.

A second important factor on the success rate of the migration experience is the type of return. Respondents who were forced to come back had more often financial problems than migrants who chose themselves to return. Forced return automatically means being unprepared and this made it in most cases impossible to fulfill the resource mobilization needed for a gainful migration mission. Voluntary return gave space for preparations and rational decision making and therefore increased the chances on a more successful migration project and less problems to deal with in India.

The major reintegration issues returnees had to deal with were debt problems. These debts often find their origin in the investments made for the migration project, e.g. for tickets, visas, passports and fees for the recruitment agents and become direr due to interest rates. Especially in Narsingi the migration project has often led to so many debts that the precarious financial situation has become unsolvable. Debt problems correlated with other economic problems like unemployment, underemployment and low salaries. Often within one year employment is found again, but frequently in a low-paid job or with insufficient working hours. Other important reintegration problems were not discovered, but it is likely that not only money issues play an important role.

After return, more than half of the migrants (55.2 %) gets involved in the same activities and occupation as before emigration, showing the importance of pre-departure situations and social and family networks in acquiring employment, also after return. Moreover, professions abroad are rarely mimicked back in India and additional skills or knowledge are hardly gained. Brain gain is an irrelevant concept for the origin communities of the low- and unskilled returnees.

Re-emigration is an important phenomenon in Indian low- and unskilled labor migration and the returnees indicated that higher salaries abroad were the main motivation for doing so. In this sample, 39.8 % of the respondents indicated to be absolutely sure about going abroad again and another 25.1 % was considering it. This makes clear that reintegration is for many returnees not self-evident, or at least not granted priority. Especially in Tamil Nadu, where migration in most cases was a financial success, migrants seemed eager to go abroad again. Much more respondents here indicated to be willing to re-emigrate than in other research locations.

Policies specifically designed for return migrants are scarce. Only in Kerala clear policies have been established. The government department for Non-Resident Keralites, NORKA, provides an important welfare fund, which will be extended and diversified in the nearby future. Other initiatives are more small-scale or only in an infancy state, as with the Indo-UAE Pilot Project. The role of trade unions in the addressing of needs of migrants is important, but for return migrants they normally do not have any specific policies.

8.2 *Recommendations*

Given the high amount of returnees who keep on coming back to India with debts and the incessant reports about terrible labor and living conditions and foul treatment in the destination countries, the need for a stop to these malpractices during the migration project is evident. Unavoidably, these harsh experiences leave a mental imprint with the returnees and have their bearing on the life in India after return. The government of India and state governments of especially Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh should display more effort to stop the exploitation and extortion of migrant workers that persistently takes place during the entire migration process.

As long as malpractices take place during the migration process, a better solution for underemployment in peripheral communities in South-India than undertaking an international migration project abroad could be migration to the urban areas within India, where employment opportunities for construction workers are increasing and wages are rising. Late August 2010, India's Central Statistical Organization reported a 7.5 % increase in construction (english.aljazeera.net, 31-08-2010) In contrast with especially the nearly bankrupt Emirate of Dubai, this indicates that India's urban areas provide great opportunities for people from less affluent rural regions in India. An internal migration project brings also fewer risks and will prohibit most debt problems to evolve in the first place. Therefore it is recommended here to government institutions, NGO's and trade unions to promote internal migration to urban areas among potential migrants.

When Indian low- and unskilled laborers like to go abroad anyway, pre-departure trainings can prevent them for common pitfalls. Awareness raising about safe and proper recruitment is essential. Falling for malevolent recruiters, contractors and sub-contractors can be prevented by visits of trade unions to (mostly rural) communities, to educate the potential migrants there about recruitment procedures, labor laws in destination countries and the process of migration. This said, it is known that trade unions aligned to BWI and NGO's like Arunodaya are already providing pre-departure trainings and awareness-raising programs to educate potential migrants in rural communities

To prevent big problems after return, Arowolo suggests some measures that can be taken. Reintegration issues of return migrants are not a new phenomenon and several cases of government and agency intervention have been carried out in the past to tackle the potential problems return migrants bring and face regarding reintegration. Government institutions, trade unions and other civil society groups could organize pre-return or on-arrival orientation sessions for the migrants, to prepare for changes and difficulties to be encountered. This could be done by the promotion of employment opportunities, provision of education and vocational training and counseling and career guidance. Furthermore, awareness creation on political developments and social change in India and the sub-states could be useful. Another policy measure can be the provision of financial and investment advice for those hoping to start business or acquire property and the provision of information about qualification and skill recognition for labor market entry (Arowolo, 2000, p.67-68).

8.3 Further research

This research has not been able to provide in all kinds of reintegration issues Indian return migrants face. Respondents did not mention psychological problems or problems in the private sphere, but this does of course not mean that they were always absent. Unfortunately, no opportunity was found to explore these issues with individual migrants and expertise was lacking to professionally do so. Further research is needed to investigate the social and psychological issues of the returnees, which in many cases inevitably will exist due to grim experiences in destination countries. Other interesting aspects of the Indian case that were not dealt with here are the importance of the caste system in reintegration patterns and a further exploration of the role of the social network in the whole migration project, but especially the period after return.

Return migration and concomitant reintegration patterns have for a long time been underrepresented in scientific literature. More than that, circular migration and re-emigration are still almost non-existent topics in academic literature about migration. Given the increase in especially the last two phenomena, it is time that these fields get more attention and are further explored. This research has, besides the main objective, also tried to contribute to this exploration, with a specific focus on the case of low- and unskilled construction workers from South-India.

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Appendix I: Questionnaire

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey. With this survey we try to get insight in the characteristics of Indian return migrants who have been working in the construction sector in the Gulf, Malaysia and Singapore, as well as their status, motivations and activities before, during and after emigration. The data will be analyzed and processed, which eventually will lead to a research report. On the basis of this report policy recommendations to trade unions and government bodies will be made. It is important that respondents do their utmost best in answering the questions to the best of their knowledge and give honest answers. The data gathered through this questionnaire will be used in a strictly confidential way and solely be used for this research. The conduction of this questionnaire should not last longer than 30 minutes.

Section A: Social characteristics

A1. Name:

A2. Date of birth: Day..... Month Year.....

A3. Sex: 1. O Male 2. O Female

A4. Religion: 1. O Hindu
2. O Muslim
3. O Christian
4. O Other, namely

A5. Marital status: 1. O Married 2. O Not married

A6. Do you have children? 1. O Yes
2. O No --> go to A8

A7 How many?

A8. Education: 1. O No education
2. O Finished primary school
3. O Finished middle school
4. O Finished high school
5. O Finished higher secondary
6. O Diploma

- 7. O Degree
- 8. O Other, namely ...

B. Situation before emigration

B1. Where in India did you live before emigration?

City/village State.....

B2. What was your professional status in India before emigration?

-
- 1. O Permanent job
 - 2. O Employed on short-term basis
 - 3. O Employed on part-time basis
 - 4. O Seasonal worker
 - 5. O Employer / Entrepreneur
 - 6. O Family helper
 - 7. O Student
 - 8. O Unemployed
 - 9. O Other, namely

B3. How would you describe your financial situation before (the first) emigration?

- 1. O Very good
- 2. O Good
- 3. O Not good, not bad
- 4. O Bad
- 5. O Very bad

C. Situation during emigration

C1. Please give your emigration details

1st emigration: Country: _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____
2nd emigration: Country: _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____
3rd emigration: Country: _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____
4th emigration: Country: _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____
5th emigration: Country: _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____

6th emigration: Country _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____
7th emigration: Country _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____
8th emigration: Country _____ From Month/Year _____ to Month/Year _____

C2.1 Please rate the importance of the following factors in your decision to emigrate:

a) Higher salary

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

b) Lack of employment opportunities at home

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

c) Improve living conditions of household in India

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

d) Redemption of debts

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

e) Improve status

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

f) Other, namely ...

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance

C2.2 Starting with the MOST important, please list the 3 main reasons why you emigrated. If there are only 1 or 2 reasons why you emigrated, leave the other answer categories blank:

- i. _____
ii. _____
iii. _____

C3. Job during (last) emigration:

C4. How often did you visit India during (your last) emigration?

1. Twice or more a year
2. Once a year
3. Less than once a year
4. Never
5. Irregularly

C5 Did you have contact with your family and friends at home during the emigration period?

1. Every day
2. Several times a week
3. Once a week
4. 1 to 3 times a month
5. Less than once a month
6. No, not at all

C6 Did you choose to return or were you forced to do so?

1. I chose to return
2. I was forced to --> go to C8

C7.1 Please rate the importance of the following factors in your decision to return to India.

a) Family and friends

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

b) Difficult labor conditions in country of emigration

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

c) Difficult living conditions in country of emigration

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

d) Low salary in country of emigration

1. Very important. 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

e) Ill health, injuries, accident

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

f) The availability of suitable employment in India:

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

g) Homesickness:

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

h) Business opportunity in India:

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

i) Retirement:

- b) 2. Employed on short-term basis
- c) 3. Employed on part-time basis
- d) 4. Seasonal worker
- e) 5. Employer / Entrepreneur
- f) 6. Family helper
- g) 7. Student
- h) 8. Unemployed
- i) 9. Other, namely

D4. How would you describe your current financial situation compared to before emigration?

- 1. Much better
- 2. Better
- 3. Unchanged
- 4. Worse
- 5. Much worse
- 6. Don't know

D5.1 Please rate the extent of problems you encounter for the following factors since your return in India.

a) Housing problems?

- 1. Very problematic
- 2. Problematic
- 3. Some problems
- 4. No problems

b) Difficulties with finding a job?

- 1. Very problematic
- 2. Problematic
- 3. Some problems
- 4. No problems

c) Low salaries?

- 1. Very problematic
- 2. Problematic
- 3. Some problems
- 4. No problems

d) Debt problems?

- 1. Very problematic
- 2. Problematic
- 3. Some problems
- 4. No problems

e) Family problems?

- 1. Very problematic
- 2. Problematic
- 3. Some problems
- 4. No problems

f) Medical problems?

- 1. Very problematic
- 2. Problematic
- 3. Some problems
- 4. No problems

g) Other, namely

1. Very problematic 2. Problematic 3. Some problems

D 5.2. Starting with the MOST problematic, please list the 3 main problems you encountered since your return in India. If you encountered only 1 or 2 problems, leave the other answer categories blank:

- i. ____
ii. ____
iii. ____

D6. Are you searching for (different) employment in India?

1. Yes
2. No --> go to D8

D7. What kind of employment are you searching for?

1. Self-employment 2. Wage employment

D8. Do you consider to emigrate again?

1. Yes, absolutely
2. Yes, sometimes
3. No, not at all --> go to D11

D9. Do you consider emigrating to the same country as last time?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure

D10.1 Why do you consider to emigrate again?

a) New job opportunities abroad

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

b) I can not find a job in India

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

c) Higher salaries abroad

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

d) Improve living conditions of family

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

e) Redemption of debts

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

f) I can not re-adapt in India

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

g) Improvement of status

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance 4. Not important

h) Other, namely

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Some importance

D10.2. Starting with the MOST important, please list the 3 main reasons why you want to emigrate again. If you have only 1 or 2 reasons, leave the other answer categories blank:

- i. ____
ii. ____
iii. ____

D11. Do you consider migrating to a different Indian state?

1. Yes, absolutely 2. Yes, sometimes 3. No, not at all

D12. Do you consider migrating to a different city or village within your state?

1. Yes, absolutely 2. Yes, sometimes 3. No, not at all

E. Institutional help since return

E1 Did you get any institutional help with regards to your reintegration in India after your return? (More than one answer possible)

Yes

No → If no, end of questionnaire

E2 Who gave you help?

.....

E3 What kind of help did you get?

.....

Thank you very much for filling in this questionnaire!

Phone Nr.:

Appendix II: list of professions for low- and unskilled construction workers

1. Stone cutter, breaker of crusher
2. Mason or brick layer
3. Carpenter
4. Painter or varnisher
5. Fitter including bar bender
6. Plumber for road pipe work
7. Electrician
8. Mechanic
9. Well sinker
10. Welder
11. Head Mazdoor
12. Mazdoor
13. Sprayman or mixerman (road surfacing)
14. Wooden or stone packer
15. Well diver for removing silt
16. Hammerman
17. Thatcher
18. Maistry
19. Blacksmith
20. Sawyer
21. Caulker
22. Mixer
23. Pump operator
24. Mixer driver
25. Roller driver
26. Kalasis or Sarang engaged in heavy engineering construction
27. Watchman
28. Mosaic polisher
29. Tunnel worker
30. Marble / kadappa stone worker
31. Road worker
32. Rock breaker and Quarry worker
33. Earth worker connected with construction work
34. Worker engaged in processing lime
35. Worker engaged in anti sea erosion work
36. Any other category of workers who is actually engaged in the employment in construction or maintenance of dams, bridges, road, or in any building operation (Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Act, 1982, Chennai)