

# MIGRATION AND URBANIZATION IN ASIA

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Demographically speaking, Asia may be characterized as being the region with the world's largest population size and the most densely populated in addition to being a region which has experienced a relatively high rate of population growth during the last three decades. In 1950, 54.5 per cent of the world's 2.50 billion were to be found in Asia. By 1980, when the world population had increased by 1.95 billion to about 4.45 billion, the population of Asia had also increased by 1.22 billion to about 2.59 billion. Thus, the share of Asia's population in 1980 was 58 per cent of the world's population.

In addition to the above, Asia was also demographically characterized as being the most diversified region in terms of population size, rate of population growth and level of urbanization. In 1980, for example, the estimated population of China was slightly over 1 billion, whereas the estimated population of Oman was about 0.237 million. An average annual rate of growth also varied from 8.8 per cent for Kuwait to 0.7 per cent in Japan and the percentage of urban population ranged from as low as 7.3 to 90.0.

In an attempt to make an overview of population migration and urbanization in Asia, difficulties arise not only from the fact that Asia is demographically the largest and the most diverse of the world's regions but also from the non-availability of appropriate data in many countries. In many cases, the existing data cannot be compared because of difference in definitions used in countries and even in the same country; variations in definition used at different time periods and in various sources of data such as population censuses and population registers are not uncommon. With a view to minimizing problems mentioned subregional instead of country-by-country comparison will be made.

## II. INTERNAL MIGRATION IN ASIA

In countries for which data are available, the movements of population from one area to another seemed to be dominated by two main patterns: movement to urban destination (urban to urban and rural to urban) and, movement to rural destination (urban to rural and rural to rural). In Korea, for example, "over three quarters of recent migrants captured by the census moved to an urban destination. At the other end of the spectrum, three countries, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, were dominated by movement to rural destinations. Recent migration in other countries appeared to be more finely balanced, with between 40 and 50 per cent of migrants moving to either urban or rural areas"<sup>1</sup> Within the movement to urban destination category, migrants originating from other urban areas also constituted a significant proportion, ranging from 45 to 77 per cent of all migrants to urban areas. However, rural to urban migration could still be considered as one of the major components which contribute to the growth of some urban areas in Asia. (Table 1)

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Table 1. Direction of internal migration from latest censuses (both sexes)

		Direction of migration flow							
		Percentage		Urban to		Rural to		To rural	
		urban		urban areas		urban		rural areas	
		urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural	urban	rural
Bangladesh (1974)		100		11.0	40.2	51.2	1.6	47.2	48.8
India (1966-1971)	A	100		13.9	16.2	30.1	8.7	61.1	69.9
	B	100		27.1	22.1	49.2	11.0	39.7	50.7
	C	100		31.4	25.5	56.9	11.6	31.2	42.8
Malaysia (1970) estimate		100		33.1	15.3	48.4	12.3	39.3	51.6
Pakistan (1970-1973)	A	100		39.2	11.7	50.9	7.6	41.5	49.1
	B	100		37.0	17.5	54.5	11.4	34.1	42.5
	C	100		43.8	18.6	62.4	13.5	24.1	37.6
Philippines (1970-1975)	A	100		32.5	19.9	52.4	15.3	32.3	47.6
	B	100		29.8	23.1	52.9	18.0	29.1	47.1
	C	100		26.3	24.5	50.8	22.6	26.6	49.2
Republic of Korea (1965-1970)		100		34.3	42.2	76.5	8.9	14.7	23.6
Thailand (1965-1970)		100		10.6	12.4	23.0	6.1	70.9	77.0
Indonesia (1971)		100				54.4			45.6
Sri Lanka (1966-1971)		100				32.1			67.9

Notes: 1. As far as possible, period migration for the five years before the census is given.

However, for Indonesia and Malaysia, data based on "place of previous residence" at no particular time period are given and for Papua New Guinea lifetime data based on birth place are used.

2. For India, Pakistan and the Philippines, data for several levels of spatial aggregation are available and these are presented as A, B and C. In India, A represents all migration, intra-district, inter-district and inter-state, B represents inter-district and inter-state, and C inter-state migrants only. For Pakistan, the progression is similar for districts and provinces. For the Philippines, A is inter-barangay, B inter-municipality and C inter-province.

Source: "Internal migration in the countries of the ESCAP region" paper presented by ESCAP population Division at the Third Asia and Pacific Population Conference, Colombo, 20-29 September 1982.

### III. URBANIZATION AND THE GROWTH OF LARGE CITIES

In 1980, Asia, with the exception of Japan and several other countries, was less urbanized than Europe, Latin America and Northern America. Although the projected annual growth rates of urban areas for Asia between 1980 and 2000 were relatively high, the projected proportions of population living in urban areas by the year 2000 for all subregions of Asia, except Japan, Other East Asia and Western South Asia, will still be below 50.0 per cent. (Table 2)

Table 2. Proportion of population living in urban areas and average annual growth rates of urban areas in major areas and regions, 1980-2000

(Percentages)

Region	Proportions of population living in urban areas			Average annual growth rates of urban areas	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000
Africa	28.85	35.70	42.49	5.00	4.56
Latin America	64.74	70.70	75.21	3.56	3.06
Northern America	73.66	77.20	80.76	1.47	1.19
Europe	68.83	73.25	77.11	1.36	1.19
Oceania	75.93	80.37	82.97	2.37	1.84
U.S.S.R.	64.77	71.28	76.06	1.87	1.35
East Asia	35.05	38.63	45.43	2.82	2.67
China	25.41	31.07	38.61	3.29	3.25
Japan	78.24	82.93	85.86	1.29	0.87
Other East Asia	58.85	67.51	73.03	3.33	2.36
South Asia	23.95	29.10	36.13	4.47	4.27
Eastern South Asia	23.15	28.10	35.10	4.49	4.34
Middle South Asia	22.53	27.48	34.48	4.46	4.33
Western South Asia	55.75	63.49	68.50	4.50	3.63
World Total	41.31	45.88	51.29	2.93	2.81

Source: Patterns of Urban and Rural Population Growth (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.xlII.9), pp. 13 & 16.

Despite the low level of urbanization, growth of the large cities in Asia compared with other regions of the world since 1950 may be called "explosive". In 1950, of the world's seven cities with a population of 5 million or more, only two Asian cities (Tokyo/Yokohama and Shanghai) with a combined population of 12.5 million were in this size class. By 1980, the number of these cities in Asia had increased to 14, compared to the world's increase to 28. Whereas the number of population residing in these cities for the world as a whole had increased by 4.8 times, the increase for Asia was 9 times, which has slightly surpassed by Latin America. By the end of the century, it is projected that the number in this size class of cities for the world will have increased by 16, three-fifths of which will be in Asia, and the population residing in these cities will be about 287.4 million – another two-and-one-half fold increase. Asia's share of world population residing in cities of 5 million population or more had increased from 23.6 per cent in 1950 to 44.6 per cent in 1980 and will increase to 55.1 per cent by the end of the century. (Table 3) In fact, of the world's projected 25 mega-cities (city with 10 million population or more) in the year 2000, about 15 cities will be found in Asia, with the population in each city ranging in size from about 11 million (Baghdad, New Delhi, Osaka/Kobe and Tehran) to about 20 million or more (Beijing, Shanghai, Tokyo/Yokohama).

**Table 3. Largest agglomerations in the world, ranked by size**

Region	Number of cities			Population (in million)		
	1950	1980	2000	1950	1980	2000
Africa	-	1	1	-	7.5	13.1
Latin America	1	4	5	5.3	49.3	99.6
Northern America	1	3	5	12.3	40.4	57.6
Europe	3	5	5	22.8	36.0	49.3
Oceania	-	-	-	-	-	-
U.S.S.R.	-	1	2	-	7.8	14.4
Asia	2	14	26	12.5	113.4	287.4
Tokyo/Yokohama	1	1	1	6.7	20.0	24.2
Shanghai	1	1	1	5.8	13.4	22.7
Beijing	-	1	1	-	10.7	19.9
Bombay (Greater)	-	1	1	-	8.3	17.1
Culcutta	-	1	1	-	8.8	16.7
Jarkata	-	1	1	-	7.3	16.6
Seoul	-	1	1	-	8.5	14.2
Madras	-	1	1	-	5.4	12.9
Manila	-	1	1	-	5.7	12.3
Bangkok-Thonburi	-	-	1	-	-	11.9
Karachi	-	1	1	-	5.0	11.8
New Delhi	-	1	1	-	5.4	11.2
Tehran	-	1	1	-	5.4	11.3
Osaka/Kobe	-	1	1	-	9.5	11.1
Baghdad	-	1	1	-	5.1	11.1
Other Cities in Asia	-	-	11	-	-	62.4
World Total	7	28	44	52.9	254.4	521.4

Source: Same as table 2, Table 48, pp. 125-154.

### **Casues of Excessive Urbanization**

Urban areas can grow in three ways, by "natural increase" or the excess of births over deaths, by migration and by reclassification. Reclassification includes the change of rural places into urban ones; the last two categories are often calculated together. On the basis of 65 observations, the United Nations had estimated that in the developed countries, the mean contribution of migration and reclassification to urban growth was 60 per cent, leaving 40 per cent to be the contribution of natural increase. In the developing countries, however, migration and reclassification contributed only 39 per cent. Natural increase was more important and contributed 61 per cent of urban growth. During the period between 1960s and 1970s, the Asia's mean contribution of migration and reclassification to urban growth was 47 per cent, ranging from 32.3 per cent for India to about 60 per cent for Korea. Thus, natural increase of population seemed to play the major role in the growth of urban places in Asia during the 1960-1970 period with the possible exception of Bangladesh and Republic of Korea and Turkey. Similarly, natural increase also contributed most of the growth of some selected large cities in Asia, except Seoul, Republic of Korea and Amman, Jordan where migration contributed 73 and 67 per cent of the growth of these two cities, respectively.

**Table 4. Estimated percentage of growth of urban population attributable to internal migration and reclassification.**

Country	Year	Percentage of growth of urban population attributable to internal migration and reclassification
Bangladesh	1961-1974	55.4
India	1951-1961	30.1
	1961-1971	32.3
Indonesia	1961-1971	35.7
Iran	1956-1966	43.4
Iraq	1957-1965	45.7
Japan	1955-1965	64.4
	1965-1975	39.5
Nepal	1961-1971	37.2
Republic of Korea	1960-1970	60.5
Sri Lanka	1953-1963	51.4
	1963-1971	48.7
Syrian Arab Rep.	1960-1970	31.5
Turkey	1955-1960	61.0
	1960-1970	61.9
Mean Asia		(46.6)

Source: Patterns of Urban and Rural Population Growth (United Nations publication, sales No. E. 79.XIII.9), p. 24.

### **Policies and Programmes on Internal Migration and Urbanization**

Internal migration which gives rise to problems of spatial distribution of population, notable among which is the rapid growth of urban areas and large cities, has long been one of the major concerns of a majority of countries in Asia. According to the United Nations' "Fourth Population Inquiry among Governments in 1978", most governments perceived their existing spatial distributions of population as either "inappropriate" (13 out of 35) or "partially appropriate" (18 out of 35). Only four governments (with a combined population in 1980 of 4.3 million) viewed the existing pattern of population distribution as "appropriate." On the policies concerning basic trends in internal migration, 7 governments wanted to reverse the trends, 19 governments had policies to decelerate internal migration and only one government wanted to accelerate.<sup>2</sup>

Results of governments' policy measures to discourage migration or to influence migration flow to the desired direction such as rural development, regional development, development of small or medium-sized towns, agricultural settlement, etc., have been mixed. Some countries have also relied on legislative measures such as control of individual movement by passes and permits or setting limitations on urban housing, education, health and employment. Application of administrative measures such as zoning regulations on housing, commercial or industrial locations are not uncommon. Experiences of some Asian countries which have implemented one or more types of administrative/legal, social and economic measures seem to indicate that a certain degree of success could be achieved when all these policies are centrally administered at the nation level.<sup>3</sup> Trends in several countries in Asia are to integrate comprehensive national population policies and programmes (population redistribution included) in the overall national development policies and programmes.

### **IV. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Lack of reliable data on external migration and the conceptual problem of variation in definition adopted by either migrant sending or receiving countries make it extremely difficult to estimate the direction of flow and the magnitude of international migration as well as its effects on countries of origin and destination. Nevertheless, as far as external migration in Asia is concerned, leading international flows of migrants fall mainly into one of the two broad categories: a continuing movement of long-term or permanent migrants toward the more highly developed countries of traditional settlement and, more importantly, the large recent growth in the number of migrant workers and members of their families, who have moved from countries throughout Asia and elsewhere into the oil-producing countries of Western South Asia.



From data presented in Table 5 showing the average annual number of admissions of permanent immigrants to the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand for each 5-year period since 1956, it may be seen that the average annual number of admissions peaked during 1966-1970 and have declined during the subsequent quinquennia (except for the USA). Reductions in the average annual admissions to Canada, Australia and New Zealand have also occurred since 1971-1975. Had it not been for the steady increase in the average annual immigration to the United States, the average annual number of admissions of permanent immigrants to these four countries during the 1971-1975 and 1976-1980 quinquennia would have been much lower than the 1966-1970 quinquennium. However, during each 5-year period since 1956, permanent immigrants originating in Asia have increased steadily both in terms of number of annual admissions and of proportion of immigrants admitted annually. The average annual number of immigrants originating in Asia has increased from about 30 thousand during the 1956-1960 period to about 230 thousand during the 1976-1980 period. During the 1976-1980 period, permanent immigrants originating in Asia represented about one third of all permanent migrants admitted annually by United States, Canada and Australia. Part of the sharp rise in the number of immigrants originating in Asia during the 1970s was due to the measure adopted by these countries to permit the entrance of Indochinese refugees.

Another leading immigrant receiving country is the United Kingdom. As of mid-1976, it was estimated that about 750,000 persons of Asian origin were residing in the United Kingdom. Over one half were from India and most of the rest from Bangladesh and Pakistan which mostly entered the United Kingdom during the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1960s, leading countries of emigration in Asia to the five leading immigrant receiving countries were China, Philippines and India, followed by Japan and Hong Kong. During the 1971-1980 period, leading emigrant sending countries were Philippines, Republic of Korea, Vietnam, India, China, Hong Kong and Lebanon. It may be noted that the first five Asian countries ranked from 3 to 10 among all sending countries during 1971-1980 period. (Table 6)

**Table 5. Average annual number of admissions of permanent immigrants from Asia<sup>a/</sup>, 1956-1980: United States, Canada, Austria and New Zealand.**

Country or region of origin	Receiving country	1956-1960	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980 <sup>b/</sup>
World				Total (000)		
	United States	285.6	290.1	374.3	387.3	476.8
	Canada	156.6	99.8	182.2	166.9	121.2
	Australia	-	118.8	161.4	98.9	80.5
	New Zealand	23.2	34.1	31.8	27.8	12.2
Asia	United States	22.3	22.6	66.5	122.4	157.2
	Canada	4.2	5.5	20.6	37.7	44.7
	Australia	-	4.8	13.3	15.5	26.0
	New Zealand	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.3
Asia				Percentages		
	United States	7.8	7.8	17.8	31.6	33.0
	Canada	2.7	5.5	11.3	22.6	36.9
	Australia	-	4.0	8.2	22.9	32.3
	New Zealand	3.0	2.6	3.1	3.2	10.7

<sup>a/</sup> For the United States, Australia and New Zealand, data are classified by place of birth, for Canada the classification is by place of previous residence.

<sup>b/</sup> For the United States the data refer to 1976-1979 (July 1976 to September 1979).

Source: "International migration: levels and trends" paper presented by the Population Hammanet (Tunisia), 21-25 March, tables 1 and 3, pp. 44 and 46.

**Table 6. Permanent immigrants by the main receiving countries, 1961-1970 and 1971-1980, according to selected countries of Asia<sup>a/</sup>: United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel.**

1961-1970			1971-1980		
Country of origin	Immigrants (000)	World rank	Country of origin	Immigrants (000)	World rank
China	135.9	11	Philippines	388.9	3
Philippines	115.1	12	Rep. of Korea	254.3	5
India	78.0	18	Viet Nam <sup>b/</sup>	250.2	6
Japan	43.8	26	India	243.2	8
Hong Kong	37.2	30	China	194.0	10
			Hong Kong	136.3	15
			Lebanon	81.2	20

<sup>a/</sup> For the United States, Australia and New Zealand, data are classified by place of birth; for Canada and Israel the classification is by place of previous residence.

<sup>b/</sup> The data include all immigrants listed under "other Asia" in the Australian data.

Source: Same as table 5, table 6, p. 49.

Table 7. Number of foreign workers in Western South Asia by group of countries of origin and country of employment 1975 and 1980.

(Thousands)

Receiving countries	Arab countries in Western South Asia <sup>a/</sup>		Other Arab countries		All Arab countries		Other Asian countries		Others		Total	
	1975	1980	1975	1980	1975	1980	1975	1980	1975	1980	1975	1980
Bahrain	5.0	6.2	1.2	2.8	6.2	9.0	18.6	51.9	4.5	6.9	29.3	67.7
Iraq	8.2	12.5	7.0	100.0	15.2	112.5	50.0	11.0	0.5	2.0	65.7	125.5
Jordan	27.5	-	5.3	68.5	32.8	68.5	-	5.5	0.1	2.0	32.9	76.0
Kuwait	105.4	158.0	37.9	85.8	143.3	243.8	62.5	129.6	2.1	5.3	208.0	378.8
Oman	3.8	5.2	5.0	6.8	8.8	12.0	59.1	80.7	2.8	4.1	70.7	96.8
Qatar	12.0	14.6	2.9	5.8	14.9	20.4	38.0	58.6	0.8	1.7	53.7	80.3
Saudi Arabia	599.9	656.7	100.0	163.9	699.9	820.6	48.5	166.7	25.0	36.0	773.4	1,023.3
United Arab Emirates	48.5	66.8	13.5	23.2	62.0	89.7	184.5	308.4	5.0	12.9	251.5	411.0
Yemen	0.4	5.7	2.0	4.5	2.4	10.2	-	5.3	0.1	1.5	1.2	17.0
Total: Workers	810.7	925.7	174.8	461.3	985.5	1,386.7	461.2	817.7	40.9	72.4	1,487.5	2,276.4
Migrant populations	1,744.7	-	352.8	-	2,097.5	-	805.9	-	63.9	-	2,967.3	-

a/ For Jordan which is in this category includes persons of Palestinian origin.  
Source: Same as table 5, tables 11 and 14, pp. 55-56 and 59.

Another pattern of international migration in Asia that emerged around the middle of 1970s and seemed to have persisted during the early 1980s was the substantial build-up of migrant workers and members of their families in resource-rich countries of Western South Asia, chiefly from other Arab countries within Western South Asia and other Asian countries (mainly Pakistan, India, Iran and other countries of Eastern South Asia).

Results of the very recent estimates of foreign workers in Arab countries were presented in Table 7. Of nearly 1.5 million migrant workers in 9 Arab countries in Asia in 1975, about 52 per cent were in Saudi Arabia. The corresponding proportion was about 44 per cent in 1980. Other countries which received migrant workers in a significant number were Kuwait (108 and 379 thousand in 1975 and 1980) and United Arab Emirates (252 and 411 thousand in 1975 and 1980). In 1975, Arab countries in Western South Asia contributed slightly more than half of total migrant workers but their share in 1980 was reduced to 41 per cent. All other countries in Asia also contributed a substantial share, 31 per cent in 1975 and 36 per cent in 1980. Thus, Asian countries contribute more than three quarters of foreign workers in resource-rich countries of South Western Asia. Pakistan, India and Iran were the three leading migrant sending countries from non-Arab Asian countries. Recently migrant workers from Bangladesh, Malaysia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand are also increasing in number. The proportion of migrant workers among all immigrants which was in the magnitude of 50 per cent indicated that the views that flows of migrants into these countries have consisted almost entirely of workers were not correct. Another striking character of migration in these countries was the high proportion of resident population that is foreign, ranging from one fifth or more in each of the leading countries of immigration to over one half in Kuwait and Qatar, and to more than four-fifths for United Arab Emirates. The proportions of migrant workers in the labour force were even higher, about 0.34 for Oman and 0.85 in the United Arab Emirates.<sup>5</sup>

### **Legislation Relating to the Protection of Immigrants their Working Conditions**

A multilateral approach to protect permanent migrants' and migrant workers' rights with respect to their working conditions, welfare, and social and economic opportunities has long been promoted by the International Labour Office (ILO) and other United Nations bodies. Series of ILO's conventions and recommendations could be dated back to as early as 1919. Recently, several Asian migrant worker exporting countries have made vigorous efforts to protect the interests of migrant workers either by entering into the agreement with migrant worker receiving countries or tried to enforce a system of standard or minimum model contract for the engagement of workers abroad.<sup>6</sup> Such practice, of course, is only applicable to the category of workers who are recruited through formal channels. Its effectiveness depends not only on the observation of conditions agreed upon by the employers in, and the authorities of, the countries of employment but also on the economic opportunities of migrant worker sending countries. Recognizing the fact that all member states are sovereign nations, all international instruments which have been adopted to date can at best serve as guidelines for selective application by countries concerned.

### **Refugee Problems in Asia Including Social and Economic Implications**

Of the world's over 8 million refugees reported by the United Nations agencies around 1981, about 5.1 million refugees, or 62 per cent of the global total were in Asia. It was estimated that there were just over 2 million refugees, mostly Palestinians, in Western South Asia. In Eastern South Asia, it was estimated that more than one million refugees had fled their countries, although some have now returned. China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam were the countries which experienced the inflows of refugees in a significant number. United States, France, Australia and Canada were some of the major countries which received refugees for resettlement. During late 1979 and early 1980, there were some 710,000 refugees from Afghanistan. By the end of 1981, it was reported that the estimated number of Afghanistan refugees in Pakistan had risen to about 2.4 million. During the last several years, Indo-China countries have been important sources of refugees seeking first asylum in South Eastern and Eastern Asian countries.<sup>7</sup>

It is quite evident that the influx of refugees in a large number will create a great deal of economic burden and social tension in refugee receiving countries. Moreover, economic and social effects on refugees themselves have to be taken into account by all parties concerned in trying to resolve refugee problems.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 "Internal migration in the countries of the ESCAP region", paper presented by ESCAP Population Division at the Third Asian and Pacific Population Conference, Colombo, 20-29 September 1982, p. 3
- 2 *World Population Trends and Policies*, 1981 Monitoring Report, vol. II, *Population Policies* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E. 82. XIII. 3), table 49, pp. 190-193.
- 3 Alan B. Simmons, "A review and evaluation of attempts to constrain migration to selected urban centres and regions", in *Population Policies in Development Planning*, (United Nations publication, Sales No. E. 81. XIII. 5), p. 99.
- 4 *World Population Trends and Policies*, 1979 Monitoring Report, vol. I, *Population Trends* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E. 79. XIII. 4), p. 114.
- 5 *World Population Trends and Policies*, 1981 Monitoring Report, vol. I, *Population Trends* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E. 82. XIII. 2), pp. 140-141.
- 6 W.R. Boonin, *International Contract Migration in the Light of ILO Instruments, with Special Reference to Asian Migrant Sending Countries* (ILO, MIG WP 8), p. 2.
- 7 "International migration: levels and trends", paper presented by the Population Division/DIESA at the Expert Group in Population, Migration and Development, Hammamet (Tunisia), pp. 68-69.