An Evaluation of the Repatriation Process of Indian Migrant Workers from GCC countries during the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Centre for Indian Migrant Studies
Kerala**

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in ASIA

CIMS
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Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) is a network of grassroots organizations, trade unions, faith-based groups, migrants and their families and individual advocates in Asia working together for social justice for migrant workers and members of their families. Since 1994, MFA has thrived into a formidable migrants' rights advocacy network in Asia affecting significant influence to other networks and processes on the globe. To date, MFA is represented in membership in the region close to 260, and growing each year.Lawyers Beyond Borders is an international network of legal experts interested in advocating for the rights of migrant workers, brought together by Migrant Forum in Asia.

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The Centre for Indian Migrant Studies is a Non Governmental Organization that aims to safeguard the rights of migrant workers. The team also works on various campaigns to encourage the public to take action on human rights abuse particular to migrant workers. CIMS focuses on migrant workers in the Middle East and contributes them to better understanding of how the legal and other system works in those countries and this data will add to the knowledge of human rights groups globally concerned with this situation in these countries.

Acronyms

GCC   Gulf Co-operation Council

VBM   Vande Bharat Mission

PCR   Polymerase Chain Reaction

MEA   Ministry of External Affairs

ICWF   Indian Community Welfare Fund

SOP   Standard Operating Procedure

Norka   Non-Resident Keralites Affairs

CSO   Civil Society Organisation

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Background of the study

The spread of the highly infectious COVID- 19 disease all over the world, from its beginning in Wuhan, China in late December, has been quick and devastating. The spread of the virus has left Governments with few responses in how to tackle the various consequences of the virus- be it political, social or economic. Most countries have enforced a lockdown of their countries to varying degrees, with the most severe being the total lockdown of India, which has restricted life and travel to a large degree. The COVID-19 crisis is no longer just a health crisis. It threatens the health, livelihood and income of workers globally, which in turn has affected a very important section of the workforce globally- that of international migrant workers, especially from developing nations like India.

The increasing impact of the virus in major destinations countries, particularly the GCC countries, Europe and the United States, the limited mobility through air and the impact on economy and employment affects the international migrant workers to a great extent. While there have been major epidemics affected the world in the 21st century such as the SARS outbreak in 2002, the H1N1 outbreak in 2009, Ebola fever in 2014, Zika virus in 2016, none of these epidemics had attained the spread of the COVID- 19 outbreak. The major destination countries for Indian migrants such as the GCC countries, the United States and Italy have been adversely affected, which is a case that India is confronting for the first time. Among these workers, however, the most affected remain temporary workers who work in the GCC countries.

Living and working in less than adequate conditions, where social distancing and other precautionary measures are not possible, there has already been a high incidence of infection already among the workforce.[1] These temporary migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, which will constrain both their ability to access their places of work in destination countries and return to their families particularly the informal and casually-employed workers, all the while having no certainty of their stay in those countries. Moreover, their access to key public services such as health care is often limited. By recognising the need for urgent repatriation of those workers in distress, Indian government also begun repatriation of workers. Unlike many other

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[1] Kuwait and Dubai have already reported a high rate of infection among the Indian workers there and many Indian dominated neighbourhoods have been sealed and quarantined, according to migration experts S. Irudaya Rajan and Ginu Zacharia Oommen. See: "Indian labourers in GCC countries are in dire need of help, say experts", published in the Hindu on April 10, 2020. Accessed at https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-indian-labourers-in-gcc-countries-are-in-dire-need-of-help-say-migration-experts-irudaya-rajan-and-ginu-zacharaia-oommen/article31318501.ece

countries of origin, India, over the years has taken steps when the issue of repatriation has occurred in the past. However, as we can see those repatriation have taken in place in certain unique circumstances and which are completely different from the one it happened during the pandemic. The huge number of workers and the urgency of the process made the repatriation process during the covid19 pandemic different from others.

India's repatriation responses to crisis situations in the destination countries

India has a vast experience in the mass evacuation of its citizens from perilous positions abroad. India has in the past effected over 30 evacuations over the past fifty years, with quite a few notable ones, the most notable of those being the mass evacuation of Indians from Kuwait in 1990 during the Iraqi invasion on its soil and the subsequent Persian Gulf war. More recently, the Indian government had evacuated over 10,000 Indians and foreign nationals from Yemen in 2011 and in 2015, through an operation dubbed "Operation Raahat". This decade itself has seen the Indian Government initiate mass evacuations from countries like Iraq, South Sudan and Libya. Through the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF), set up in 2009, the Ministry of External Affairs has estimated that over 90,000 people, both Indian and foreign nationals, have been evacuated in the past.[2]

However, these evacuations have taken in place in conflict situations and natural disasters in individual countries, with a fewer number of Indian nationals – a task, while impressive but manageable given a functioning protocol measure.

The COVID 19 infection has thrown up a very different challenge to the repatriation of Indians from affected countries. For starters, this is the first time that countries with a significant number of Indian nationals have been affected, and that too all at the same time. To arrange the logistics needed to initiate a mass evacuation of all these Indians, almost simultaneously, must be a herculean task.

What makes these issues more complicated is the problem of transporting suspected infected cases from the destinations back to the

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[2] See: "'90K Indians evacuated from war zones, natural disasters abroad in last few years'", published in the Economic Times on January 20, 2018. Accessed at: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/90k-indians-evacuated-from-war-zones-natural-disasters-abroad-in-last-few-yrs/articleshow/62582490.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

home country. There need to be proper protocols in place to get people back, including taking of temperatures of all passengers from affected countries, maintaining social distancing during the fights and proper isolation and quarantine upon their arrival back in the country. As the first step, India has successfully transported a number of citizens back to the country during the crisis starting with 324 people from Wuhan on February 1, 2020 which was mainly made up of students and working professionals stranded during the lockdown initiated in Wuhan. Since then there have flights in order to repatriate stranded Indians in Iran, Italy and other affected places in Europe. These nationals were then brought into India and isolated and quarantined for the mandatory period of two weeks all over the country.

However, repatriation of a large number of temporary workers who stuck in unsanitary and dangerous conditions, with lack of access to proper precautionary measures as they live in tightly packed single room accommodations with very limited access to primary healthcare is a different challenge for the government. Unfortunately, in a statement given by the Central government to the Kerala High Court in response to a public interest litigation seeking to rescue stranded Indians in the UAE, it was said that a selective evacuation of Indians cannot be done given the present situation of the country as well as a lack of resources to handle their arrival.[3] For a population that provides so much towards their homes, this is a very disappointing response to say the least. Even though the decision of Indian government to repatriate the workers in Gulf countries was a delayed one, the effort carried out by government and other stakeholders made it a unique and the largest repatriation exercise during the pandemic.

Scope of the study

On February 10th, 2020 the first Indian citizen in UAE diagnosed with Covid19 virus and on March 21st UAE reported the first death of an expat in Gulf countries[4]. Now more than 3300 Indian citizens have been diagnosed with Covid19 virus and 25 Indians have died. Out of the total, around 2,061 are in six GCC countries[5]. The three major interventions during this period by the government of India and its mission abroad are the following: In Mid-March Ministry of External Affairs set up a control room for the Indian citizens abroad. It was reported that the control room

[3] See: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/evacuation-of-stranded-indians-not-feasible-centre-tells-hc/article31368166.ece

[4] https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/indian-expat-infected-with-coronavirus-in-uae/articleshow/74077983.cms?from=mdr

[5] https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-3336-indians-infected-by-coronavirus-in-53-countries-say-govt-sources/article31357569.ece

responded to the email queries of 18000 Indians abroad and attended 5000 phone calls in the past one month from across the Globe[6]. The report does not provide a country/region-wise figures. Considering the massive population of Indians, especially workers abroad, this numbers are not enough to deal with the concerns of the workers. Secondly, the Indian missions in Gulf countries have conducted video conferences with Indian community leaders and volunteers to co-ordinate the support services for the Indians in distress. All embassies have hotline services, specifically for covid19 grievances and published various Health advisories in Indian languages in both online and offline. After almost three weeks after the lockdown, the Indian missions begun data collection and efforts to provide quarantine and shelter facilities for the vulnerable population. The final crucial response from the government was the decision to send a rapid response team comprising of doctors and health professionals to Kuwait where around one million Indians are located[7]. The country's response looks better compared to other major countries of origin. But the approach of Indian missions and government to the Indian workers are being criticised heavily and an atmosphere of sheer panic has been created.

The major criticisms were aimed at the Indian missions. The Indian missions in the gulf countries had more than one-month time since the first case was reported in UAE to prepare for the crisis. All the above-mentioned efforts have been carried out after Indian government announced the travel ban. The rapid increase in the number of Indian affected in the gulf countries along with the loss of job and difficulty in identifying quarantine facility for the workers in the labour camp made the Indian workers increasingly vulnerable. By the time when Indian missions started active interventions, an unnecessary panic among the Indians, especially in UAE have already been created. It led to the request for massive repatriation which is a gigantic task. After constant requests from the Indian diaspora and workers Indian government has begun the repatriation of Indians using the national carrier and navy vessals on 7th May. Considering the numbers and conditions of Indian workers in the Gulf countries, the process needed to be carried out with utmost vigil. The process of repatriation is not mere the flight journey from destination countries. The stakeholders such as employers, missions, destination country governments, non-government actors, Indian national and provincial governments have a vital role to play in the process. The process of repatriation is primarily related to the reason for return and the success of the mission is closely correlated with the vulnerability of migrant workers at the destination countries. If migrant

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[6] https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-3336-indians-infected-by-coronavirus-in-53-countries-say-govt-sources/article31357569.ece

[7] https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/kuwait/rapid-response-team-from-india-reaches-kuwait-to-combat-covid-19-1.1586619932751

worker is prone to human and labour rights violation, the access to safe repatriation options is often limited. Even if the workers manage to get access to repatriation options, their vulnerabilities at the destination countries including the discriminatory approach of the bureaucrats at both destination and origin countries, poor access to safety gears and inability to pay for tests and better quarantine facilities etc. may have an impact in the entire process.

In this context, it is important to analyse and understand the massive repatriation operation 'Vande Bharat Mission' undertaken by the government of India, especially from countries where the most vulnerable temporary about migrants are based. As a group of Civil Society organisations who believe that migrant rights are human rights and consider them as one of the most vulnerable population during the covid19 pandemic, the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) partners in India feel the need to understand the process from the perspectives of migrant workers. As the primary stakeholder in the process of migration, the experiences and narratives of repatriated migrant workers can shed light on the role of various stakeholders in the repatriation exercises and may bring out the various challenges faced by the workers during repatriation.

Objectives

- To analyse the process of repatriation of workers who are forced or have decided to come back due to COVID 19-led crisis, and to understand the support provided by the COD and COO governments during the repatriation process

- To examine the life of migrant workers in the immediate post-repatriation period and to understand the measures taken by the governments and agencies in India to facilitate the repatriation.

Research Methods and data collection

The research was carried out among the beneficiaries of the first and second phases of Vande Bharath Mission (VBM) from first week of May, 2020. The data was collected during the period mid-June to mid-July 2020. A scientific sample survey that represents the whole country during the period was difficult due to various factors such as the lockdown and other social distancing measures by the state and national governments, lack of networks in the a few major origin states and absence of state-wise data on returnees. However, the four states and the number of respondents were chosen in proportion with the number of VBM flights to each state. According to Ministry of External Affairs,

during the first and second phases of repatriation, Kerala received 23627 migrant workers, Tamilnadu received 2338 migrant workers, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana together received 5186 migrant workers from six Gulf countries[8]. These four states received 80 percent of the Vande Bharath Flights from Gulf countries during the period. So, an exploratory analysis of these four Indian states will help to provide a detailed picture of the repatriation process. Among the four states, Kerala received highest number of migrants compared to other three states and the number of repatriated workers and flights to Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Telangana were identical. The high number of returnees to Kerala is a reflection of the large presence of Kerala migrants in the Gulf countries and many of them are skilled and semi-skilled workers who are allowed to bring families to the destination countries. The initial repatriation flights gave preferences for families, elderly and sick people. As per the data collected by Norka-roots, the field agency of Non-resident Keralites Department of Kerala, in the first and second Vande Bharat mission, 60 percent of the repatriated people were migrant workers and rest of the travellers were either dependents or family members of the migrant workers. A random sampling to select the respondents was impossible in this context.

The study is following the 'mixed research methods in migration policy'[9]. Mixed methods can be defined as 'research in which the investigator collects and analyse data, integrates the findings, and draw inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in a single study or a program of inquiry' (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). Among several mixed research methods, studies on migration policy usually follow 'Sequential explanatory' research design. This method tends to begin with and place greater weight on quantitative research, which is then connected to the design of follow-up qualitative research.

As per the objectives of the study, a quantitative analysis alone does not reflect the situation and response from the stakeholders. The study aims to substantiate the quantitative research with qualitative information. Here, a questionnaire survey among the returned migrant workers was conducted and it was followed by in-depth personal interviews with semi-structured questionnaire. Precisely, a quantitative overview using the survey connected to qualitative information collected through narratives and personal interviews.

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[8] https://mea.gov.in/vande-bharat-mission-list-of-flights.htm

[9] Creswell (2009) identified some major mixed research methods based on four factors influencing the design of mixed method studies. They are Timing, weighting, mixing and theorising. Based on different combinations of these four factor Creswell identified several types of mixed methods strategy. Among those strategies, most of the policy based researchers follows both sequential exploratory and sequential explanatory research designs. Due to lack of concrete data on migration, migration policy research follows sequential explanatory method.

The four states are selected not only due to the high number of repatriation flights to these states in the first two phase of the mission but also by considering the strong presence of civil society which would be beneficial for the research. In order to justify the proportion of number of returnees to all these four states, the study surveyed 149 repatriated migrant workers from Kerala, 62 from Tamilnadu, 70 from Andhra Pradesh and 72 from Telangana. A total of 353 migrant workers from six gulf countries had been surveyed. These numbers are not chosen by any sampling method, but purely based on the availability of respondents, gender and geographical representation. The data collection made sure that the data is inclusive of skilled/semi-skilled and low skilled workers, irregular migrants and women migrants.

The quantitative data collected is followed by gathering of qualitative information using in-depth personal interview with selected workers. The respondents are selected based on their countries of destination, occupation, gender and the reasons for return. It was conducted immediately after the preliminary analysis of the data collected using the primary survey. The qualitative information was collected from 10 percentage of the total respondents from each state. A total of 35 in-depth personal interviews were conducted. The qualitative information was used to substantiate the information gathered from the primary quantitative data.

Limitations of the study

The major limitation of the study was the difficulties in collecting primary data. The mobility restrictions imposed due to the spread of virus and the absence of reliable data on the returnees prevented from establishing a scientific primary data collection. The inability to conduct a scientific sampling did not allow to gather a representative sample from the total population.

Key finding and Observations

This section provides insights from the primary data. The quantitative information is supported by the qualitative data collected using personal interviews.

Basic profile of return migrants

Among the respondents, 84 percent of the workers were in the working age population (25-49).

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Age	No. of REM	%
<25	21	5.95
25-29	78	22.09
30-34	70	19.83
35-39	63	17.84
40-44	48	13.59
45-49	38	10.76
50-54	19	5.38
55-59	10	2.83
>59	6	1.69
Total	353	100.00

In terms of gender representation, 8.2% of the respondents were female workers. The official ECR (Emigration clearance Required) data by Indian government says that 9 percent of the total Indian workers in the Gulf are female workers.

Figure 1: Gender-wise distribution of the respondents
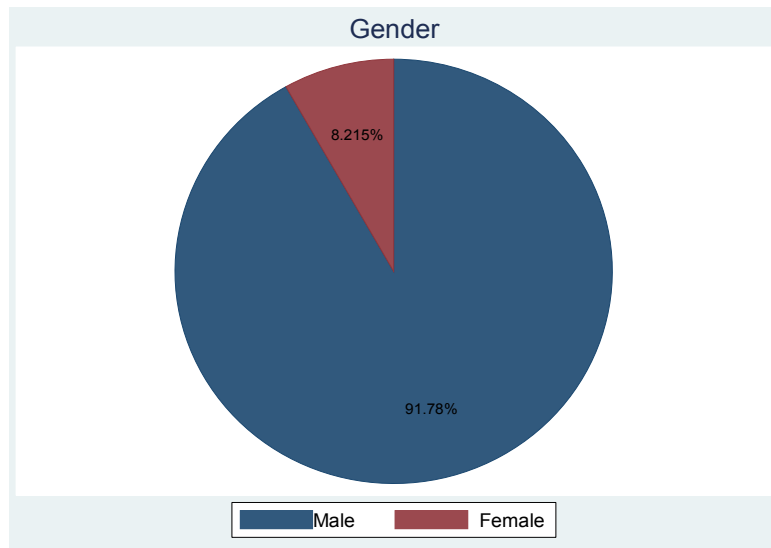
The survey focussed the six countries in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC). Among the respondents, almost two by third of the respondents were repatriated from UAE (35.86%) and Kuwait (30.3%). About10.5 percent of the workers returned from Bahrain and 7.8 percentage of the respondents were from Oman. Qatar was the least represented country with 2.91% of the workers. Even though the figures may not be the actual representation of the returnees, the study managed to cover migrants from all Gulf countries.

Figure 2: Country-wise distribution of respondents
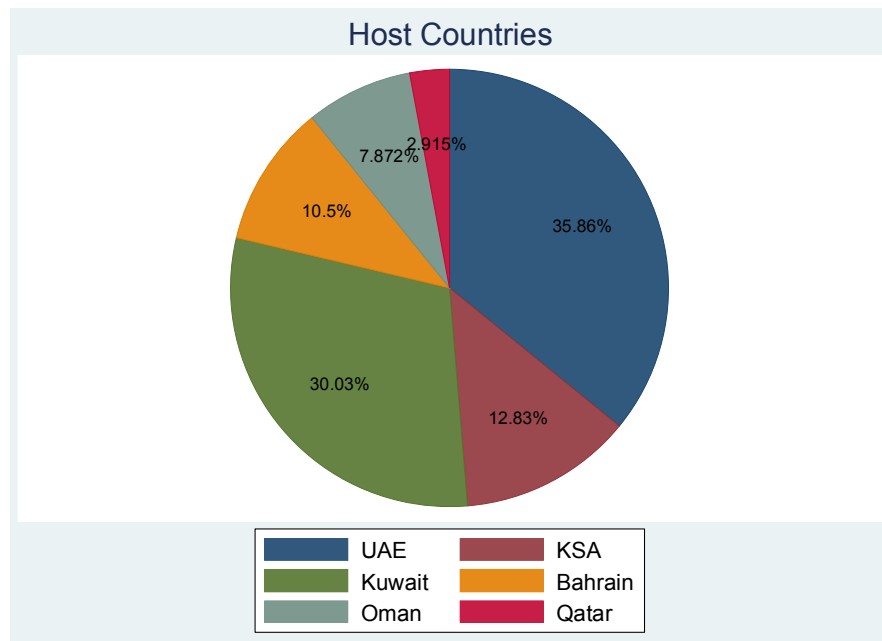
Most of the respondents were either low skilled and semi-skilled workers. 16.5 percentage of the total respondents were construction workers and other semi-skilled workers and drivers (15.9%) were the other major group of returnees. Unsurprisingly, 14.8 percentage of the repatriated workers were domestic workers. The closure of hospitality, retail and service sector in the gulf countries led to the massive return of restaurant staffs (3.1%), managers including HR staffs (4.84) and salesmen (7.12%).

Table 2: Occupation

Occupation	No. of REMs	Percent.
Small Business Owners	6	1.71
Engineers	14	3.99
Foreman	4	1.14
Other unskilled Workers	21	5.98
Managers and HR Staffs	17	4.84
Tourism and Hotel Staffs	7	1.99
Government Occupations	3	0.85
Paramedical staffs	3	0.85
Other occupations	45	12.82
Office Employees	22	6.27
Big Business owners	3	0.85
Salesman	25	7.12
Carpenter, Plumber and other Semi-skilled Occupations	58	16.52
Domestic Worker	52	14.81
Driver	56	15.95
Hotel and Restaurants	11	3.13
Nurses	4	1.14
Total	**351**	**100**

Among the respondents, 67.8 percentage of the migrant workers had less than 9 years of migration experience and half of them have spent less than four years at the destination countries. It shows that most of the established workers have not come back during the initial phases of repatriation. The junior staffs and newly appointed staffs were more vulnerable and forced to over time or to work with low wages. A number

of skilled migrant workers also shared similar concerns. A health worker who has returned in the Phase two of repatriation process stated that:

"I returned to Kerala, India on 26/06/2020 from Oman after quitting job as a nurse. I decided to end job because of heavy work burden and salary deduction as part of pandemic. My salary is 450 riyals and will be getting only 310 riyals after accommodation and various other expenses. There were salary deduction of 7.5 days wages each month while I had to take up additional duties such as attending COVID 19 patients and collecting samples for swab test, which should otherwise be done by doctors. The junior nurses and nursing assistant were forced to work longer than the senior staffs and witness salary cuts"

Table 3: Duration of Migration

Duration of migration	No. of people	Percent.	Cumulative %
<2	62	17.66	17.66
2-4	105	29.91	47.58
5-9	71	20.23	67.80
10-14	47	13.39	81.19
15-19	27	7.69	88.89
20-24	14	3.99	92.88
>25	25	7.12	100.00
Total	**351**	**100.00**	

The above narrative from the health worker portrays the need of listing out the reasons that led to the decision to undergo repatriation process. Majority of the respondents (40%) reported job loss as the major reason for return. The cancellation and expiry of the employment visa also forced 13.2 percentage of the workers to return back to India. The return migrants who lost job constituted only one by third of the Gulf returnees from UAE. However, they constituted more than half of the returnees from KSA and Bahrain implying higher proportion of the job lost from those two countries. Regarding the workers who came back due to employment-visa related issues, 60 percent of them are from Kuwait and half of the returnees who came for annual leave were also repatriated from Kuwait. A closer look at the percentage of people who lost job in each country narrates that at least one by third of the migrants from each country have returned due to the either loss of job or termination from

job. Several workers who worked irregularly at the destination countries also lost their jobs during the pandemic.

Table 4: country-wise reasons for return

Host Country		Reasons for Return							
		Visiting visa expired	Employment visa cancelled/ expired	Annual Vacation	Lost job	Family issues	Health issues	Other issues	Total
UAE	Frequenc	10	8	8	43	3	1	44	117
	Percent.	3.00	2.40	2.40	12.91	0.90	0.30	13.21	35.14
KSA	Frequenc	0	2	1	25	1	5	7	41
	Percent.	0.00	0.60	0.30	7.51	0.30	1.50	2.10	12.31
Kuwait	Frequenc	5	27	11	31	3	7	19	103
	Percent.	1.50	8.11	3.30	9.31	0.90	2.10	5.71	30.93
Bahrain	Frequenc	0	5	2	22	1	0	5	35
	Percent.	0.00	1.50	0.60	6.61	0.30	0.00	1.50	10.51
Oman	Frequenc	1	2	2	9	3	0	10	27
	Percent.	0.30	0.60	0.60	2.70	0.90	0.00	3.00	8.11
Qatar	Frequenc	0	0	0	4	2	1	3	10
	Percent.	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.20	0.60	0.30	0.90	3.0
Total	Frequenc	16	44	24	134	13	14	88	333
	Percent.	4.80	13.21	7.21	40.24	3.90	4.20	26.43	100.00

Numerous respondents took advantage of the amnesty program offered by Kuwait and Bahrain in the initial period of repatriation and returned back to India. A domestic worker from Kuwait narrated that:

"I returned to Kerala on 27th May 2020 from Kuwait with the help of amnesty programme. I went to Kuwait as a house maid but had to run away from my recruiter as work conditions were bad and salary was not

paid. I finally found a good job at a hotel as front office staff but that was when the government declared lockdown and I went unemployed. I was unable to stay there or return through proper channel as I do not have my passport or civil ID, hence eventually applied for amnesty and stayed at the shelter provided by Kuwait government for one month"

The statement from the domestic worker implies that the workers who worked irregularly were hit harder than the regular employees. Most of them had to survive the pandemic without adequate livelihood support and income at the destination countries.

Work life during the pandemic (Pre-repatriation stage)

This section discusses the challenges faced and services received by the repatriated migrant workers before repatriation, mainly from employers. The first and foremost concern was the payment of wages.

Table 5: Wages during the pandemic

Wages Received since February		Non-payment of wages ever before		
		Yes	No	Total
Yes	Frequency	34	154	188
	Row %	18.09	81.91	100.00
	Column %	39.53	59.00	54.18
	Cell%	**9.80**	44.38	54.18
No	Frequency	52	107	159
	Row %	**32.70**	**67.30**	100.00
	Column %	60.47	41.00	**45.82**
	Cell%	14.99	**30.84**	45.82
Total	Frequency	86	261	347
	Row %	**24.78**	**75.22**	100.00
	Column %	100.00	100.00	100.00

Non-payment of wages during repatriation was major concern raised by migrants and civil society during the pandemic[10]. The data in the table 5 underlines the extent of the issue in detail. Among the respondents, 24.78 percent of returnees reported that they have faced non-payment of wages over their stay in Gulf. But 45.84 percentage of the total returnees did not receive their wages since February 2020. Among the workers who experienced non-payment of wages during the pandemic, 32.70 percentage had issues with wages even fore the pandemic. In other words, 67.3 percentage of the workers who did not receive wages since February experience the issue for the first time during their stay in the destination country. From the aggregate figures, it may appear that the pandemic caused non-payment of wages for an additional 21.04 percentage of the returnees. However, the disaggregated data portrays that 30.84% of the returnees faced non-payment of wages for the first time because 9.8% of the returnees who experienced wage issues had received their wages during the pandemic. These figures are a clear indication of the large-scale non-payment of wages during the pandemic. The workers were denied wages and other labour rights. Apart from the non-payment of wages, a section of workers faced substantial reduction in the wages. It affected their livelihood and access to various basic services during the pandemic.

Table 6: Reduction in the wages

Salary reduction	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	109	42.58
No	147	57.42
Total	256	100.00

As per the table 6, 43% of the returnees experienced a reduction in their promised or given wages during the pandemic. It forced the workers to cut down the expenses especially they compromised access to various basic services. Ranjith, a returnee from Tamilnadu pointed out that,

"I only managed to receive 40 percentage of the actual salary. I had to shift to the labour camp from the apartment that I shared with a friend. Since we did not have any health insurance coverage, we hardly had any money to go hospital if I am infected. I was sure that the wages will never go up at least for another year considering the financial situation of the company. Hence, I decided to apply for repatriation"

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[10] https://justiceforwagetheft.org/

The failure to pay dues and end of service benefits before repatriation was another example of the denial of basic labour rights of migrant workers. Most of the employers in Gulf countries are liable to pay end of service benefits as per the contract and domestic labour law. By citing the economic situation many employers did not pay the benefits or promised to pay after a few months. As the table 7 reflects, 30.15% of the respondents did not receive the dues and other end of service benefits before repatriation. A few of them received verbal agreements and only 1% of the workers possess written agreement on the payment of dues and benefits.

Table 7: Payment of dues and benefits before repatriation

Received all the dues and other benefits	Frequency	Percent
Yes	181	66.54
No	82	30.15
Verbal agreement for a future date	6	2.21
Written agreement for a future date	3	1.1
Total	272	100.00

Another major challenge for the workers in the pre-pandemic period is the availability of work. Around 51% of returnees did not managed to work during the period of lockdown. As table 4 indicates, 40% of the workers who did not manged to work during this period site loss of job as the primary reason for return.

Table 8: Availability of work during the pandemic

Work since February 202	Frequency	Percent
Yes	167	49.26
No	172	50.74
Total	339	100.00

Among the workers who manged to continue working in the destination countries, 74% of them faced reduction in the working hours. Only 27 percentage of the workers are managed to work regularly during the pandemic.

Table 9: Reduction in working days

Reduction in working days	Frequency	Percent
No	45	26.94
Yes	122	73.06
Total	167	100.00

The workers with low-wages often found it difficult to spend anything additional from their regular budget. Hence, most of them had to rely on the employers to provide protective gears at both the work place and the accommodation. As table 10 indicates, among the repatriated workers who responded to the question, 78% of the workers received at least minimum support to protect themselves from the virus. But only half of them had received the most common protective gears suggested by World Health Organisation. I.e., mask and sanitiser. The respondents stated that many employers provided protective gears in the labour camps even for the workers who did not have work.

Table 10: Provision of protective gears by employers

Protective gears	Frequency	Percent
No	57	22.01
Mask alone	28	10.81
Sanitizer alone	17	6.56
Mask and Sanitizer	127	49.03
PPE kit	18	6.95
All three	12	4.63
Total	259	100.00

As per any standard employment contract, the employers shall address the needs of migrant workers, especially in the time crisis. A few variables are identified to evaluate the response of the employers to the needs of workers in the pre-repatriation period. First and foremost right of a migrant worker is job security. As per the responses of the returnees, 57% of them were suggested to travel back home. Among them 30.5% were suggested to travel without wages and 26.5% with salary. Among other 15.5% of the respondents were forced to resign and only 1.4% of the workers were offered resignation with advanced payment.

Stand of employer	Frequency	Percent
Asked to resign	40	11.53
Suggested to travel back home with salary	92	26.51
Suggested to travel back home without salary	106	30.55
Threaten to resign	14	4.03
Offered resignation option with advanced payment	5	1.44
Other	90	25.94
Total	347	100.00

Among the Indian returnees, 67.6% reported that they were happy with the supports they received from the employer in the pre-repatriation phase. Nearly one third of the respondents (32.3%) were unhappy with the responses of the employers during the pandemic. An evaluation of the employee-friendliness will provide a detailed picture of the employer-employee relationship during the pandemic.

Based on the standpoints of the employers on jobs in Table 11, an evaluation of whether the employers are employee-friendly or not can be made. The study considers the employers as employee-friendly if they suggested to travel back home with salary or offered resignation option with advance payment. On the other hand, the employers can be considered as not employee-friendly if they asked/threaten to resign or suggested travel back home without salary. As per this criterion, the table 12 portrays that 38% of the returnee workers reported that their employers were employee-friendly.

Table 12: Employee-friendliness of the employer

Employee-friendliness of Employer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	97	37.74
No	160	62.26
Total	257	100.00

It is important to understand the perception of returnees on the employee-friendliness of the employers. In the pre-repatriation period, nearly 86% of the returnees who experienced an employee-friendly

standpoint from the employer shared that they are satisfied with the support received from their employers.

Table 13: Migrant's perception on employee-friendliness

Satisfied if employer is employee-friendly	Frequency	Percent
Yes	83	85.57
No	14	14.43
Total	97	100.00

Contrary to the general expectation during pandemic, 60% of the returnees who did not experience an employee-friendly standpoint from their employers reported that they are satisfied with the support received from their employers. The qualitative narratives of a number of returnees indicates that they respect the decision of employers because of the financial crisis during the pandemic. They may be misinformed about the financial situation of the employer or they failed to understand their rights. In both cases, the labour rights of the workers are violated. The growing insecurity among the already vulnerable working population might have been utilised by the employers to spread the misinformation. Hence, as the table 14 indicates 60 percent of the workers believed that the employer is forced for lay off due to the worsening financial situation during the pandemic. Most of them did not receive their regular wages and other benefits during the pandemic, but believed the employers and their claims about the financial situation.

Table 14: Migrant's perception on non- employment friendliness

Satisfied if employer is not employee-friendly	Frequency	Percent
Yes	96	60.00
No	64	40.00
Total	160	100.00

A repatriated worker narrates:

"Our employer was a nice person. He did not show any discrimination to workers from other countries, even though the pay scale is slightly lower than the nationals. The accommodation, food and relationship in the workplace was cordial. But everything changed since lockdown. Our company is a delivery service company for the airports. Once the airports were shut there was no business. However, we worked without

wages for the first two months. But the employer did not have any option other than asked us to resign. Since we understood the situation most of are satisfied with his decision. He promised to pay the salary dues and PF in three months. I hope that we will receive the dues soon"

The narrative is also a reflection of the gross labour rights violations happened during the period of lockdown. The workers were denied their right to have regular work, wages and other services the employers are entitled to provide. As per the data, minimum 30 percent of the repatriated workers faced various labour rights violations in the initial phases of the pandemic. Since the data was collected from the first two phases of repatriation phases, the figures may not be an exact reflection of denial of labour rights. The misinformation and contract violations by the employers were visible since the beginning of the lockdown in Gulf countries. The process of repatriation cannot be analysed without recognising the labour rights violations happened at the workplace during the pandemic.

Repatriation process

The process of repatriation carried out government of India can be divided into three sections. The process and interventions before repatriation, the interventions and responses during repatriation and the support systems in the post-arrival period. For the easiness of analysis, the study evaluated the responses of migrant workers based on these three different stages of repatriation.

Pre-departure

This section analyses how the workers managed to meet the requirements for repatriation process and the support systems provided by various stakeholders such as employers, Indian missions, destination country governments and civil society. Among the respondents, only 6.5 percent were infected by the covid19 virus at the destination countries.

Figure 3: Covid19 infected respondents
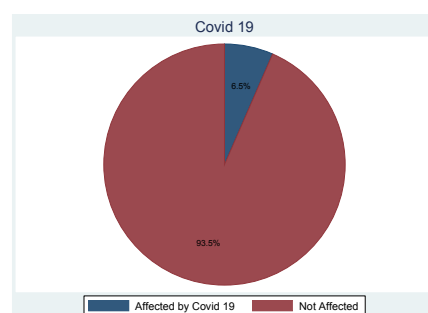
One of major challenges for the migrant workers in the pre-departure period is the access to quarantine facility. Even though only 6.5 percent of the migrants were infected most of them (60%) had to stay in quarantine at least once before their departure. However, 24 percent of the workers remined in labour camps during quarantine and survived with mask, sanitiser and followed social distancing measures. The workers who stay in single room (15.8%) remained in their rooms as well. Among the people who either did not have quarantine facility or symptomatic have sought health services (22%). Some of them (9.5%) received quarantine support from the diaspora organisations as well. Even though only 10 percent of the workers received support from diaspora groups, the support systems offered by diaspora groups often substituted the state machineries at the destination countries. A respondent who lost job during the lockdown narrates:

"I have received immense help from diaspora organisations during the period of lockdown. I was able to sustain myself without any money because of the help provided by various socio-cultural organisations. They brough me regular food kits and helped me register in embassy for return and even took me to the embassy for getting tickets"

The respondents from all four states underlined the important role played by the diaspora organisations in the pre-repatriation phase.

Table 15: Quarantine management at destination countries[11]

Quarantine management	Frequency	Percent
Moved to a friend's place	12	5.00
Remained in the labour camp	58	24.16
Remained in the room	38	15.83
Approached the hospital/health service	53	22.08
Facility arranged by organisations	23	9.58
Others	56	23.33
Total	240	100.00

The quarantine management of the workers at the destination countries is directly associated to the approach of employers during the lockdown. Among the semi-skilled workers who work with a company or an employer, most of them (80.5%) received quarantine support and access to hospitals. However, the irregular workers and low-skill workers who live in labour camps did not receive any assistance from their employers before the repatriation.

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[11] If the respondents or their colleagues show up any symptoms

Knowledge about Repatriation	Frequency	Percent
Through employers	46	13.65
Through friends	75	22.26
Through news and social media platforms	179	53.11
Through embassy announcement	22	6.53
Through diaspora organisations	8	2.37
Other	7	2.08
Total	**337**	**100.00**

The dissemination of information on repatriation process was another crucial aspect of repatriation process to India. Even though many of the workers are well connected through various means, the pandemic prevented the social gatherings, work place interactions etc that often allow the workers to share the information. In such contexts, social media played an important role in the information dissemination. The social media platforms of Indian diaspora groups, Indian missions and popular social media accounts in platforms such as twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram provided real time information about the Vande Bharath mission. Among the respondents, more than half of them (53.1%) depended on social media platforms for information on the mission. The workers have used the social media platforms not only for receiving information, but also for conveying their needs to the missions and Indian government. A respondent stated that:

"*I have posted several videos on Facebook stating the pathetic condition of Indians in the Oman. A few political party representatives from Kerala called to enquire about our situation and said they were helpless as only the Indian government can take decisions of a rescue mission*"

Several workers' groups who were stuck in various conditions at the destination country have used social media to disseminate their request for repatriation. The respondents emphasized the fact that those attempts, especially the video messages through social media assisted them to reach out to the concerned people sooner.

Apart from social media, the information on repatriation is reached to the needy through mouth-to-mouth publicity. Around 22 percent of the workers received information about the repatriation mission from their

friends and co-workers. The employers also assisted the workers to access reliable information either to ensure safe repatriation of the workers or to expedite the repatriation to reduce the financial loses incur from paying wages.

Table 17: Embassy registration

Embassy registration	Frequency	Percent
Self	242	73.55
With help of family members	8	2.43
With help of diaspora organisations	5	1.52
Through friends	55	16.72
Others	19	5.78
Total	**329**	**100.00**

The registration in embassy was a mandatory procedure for repatriation. The list of eligible persons was published based on the details furnished during the registration. Among the respondents, 73.5 percentage of the people managed to register by themselves. It shows that the registration process was simple and easily accessible. However, a set of workers who do not have access to telecommunication facilities and those who are illiterate required assistance from others. The registration process of 16.7% of the respondents were carried out with the help of friends or co-workers.

Table 18: Covid19 Test Results

Covid Test	Frequency	Percent
Compulsory	157	54.70
Not compulsory	130	45.30
Total	287	100

Another prerequisite for the repatriation process was the Covid19 test results. The struggles of workers to conduct Polymerase Chain Reaction test (PCR test)[12] before a stipulated time period was a prominent feature of India's repatriation process. The high cost and lack of access to testing facility were the major hindrances for the workers to carry out covid19 test before the journey. However, only 54.7% the respondents reported

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[12] In most situations, a molecular test is used to detect SARS-CoV-2 and confirm infection. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is the most commonly used molecular test.

that covid19 test was mandatory for travel. Considering the urgency of the repatriation (especially in Phase 1 and 2), the Indian missions and airline companies might have given exemption from producing the covid19 tests. The respondents from UAE reported that they had undergone the rapid antigen test conducted by UAE government at the airport.

Table 19: Covid Test timing

Timing of Covid test	Frequency	Percent
Before the repatriation announcement made	69	19.88
On the day of announcement	22	6.34
Few days before the repatriation	44	12.68
Others	212	61.10
Total	**347**	**100.00**

Even though the covid19 was mandatory at some ports in some countries, only 39 percent of the repatriated workers had carried out covid19 test before the repatriation. Among them only one by third of them tested for virus a few days before the repatriation journey as per the regulations. It shows that covid19 test results were not mandatory or considered as an important prerequisite for the repatriation. However, it might have clearly increased the chance of getting infected during the repatriation journey. Among the people who had carried out the PCR tests, 59 percent of the workers did not have the financial capability to pay for the tests. Thus, more than half of the people did not pay for the tests from their pocket because it was unaffordable.

Table 20: Financial status of the Covid tested Workers

Financial status	Frequency	Percent
Had Money to pay	39	41.05
No money to pay	56	58.95
Total	**95**	**100.00**

Among the people who did not have money to pay for the tests, 59 percent received financial support from the employer, rest of them received support from friends and embassy and 11 percent of the workers borrowed money from others to carry out the test. A lack of reliable

information about the covid19 testing is clearly visible. Even though it was mandatory in the later phases of the repatriation, wrong information about the PCR test made the migrants increasingly vulnerable during the last hours of repatriation.

Table 21: Financing the Covid test

Helped by	Frequency	Percent
Friends	7	12.96
Embassy	8	14.82
Diaspora organisations	1	1.85
Employer	32	59.26
Self	6	11.11
Total	**55**	**100.00**

Another financial burden for the migrant workers before the repatriation was the travel from workplace to airports/seaports where the repatriation took place. While, it is often considered as a minor cost compared to other major costs such as airfare, the transportation during the lockdown was costly, especially for the workers who work remotely in big countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Table 22: Payer of Travel support

Travel support to reach the port paid by	Frequency	Percent
Self	139	39.38
Friends	27	7.65
Relatives	7	1.98
Embassy	4	1.13
Diaspora Organisations/Individuals	4	1.13
Employer	92	26.06
Organisations from India	10	2.83
Destination country Government	67	18.98
Others	3	0.85

Total	353	100

Among the respondents, 39.3 percent of the workers paid by themselves and employer met the cost of transportation for 26 percent of the workers and 19 percent of the workers relied on the support systems by destination country governments to reach the point of repatriation. Some of the workers received support from their friends and well-wishers. Surprisingly, the support of Indian missions and diaspora groups for ensuring the transport of workers from workplace/home to the ports was minimal.

During repatriation

This section discusses the support systems offered by stakeholders during the process of repatriation. All respondents had been repatriated by air from all six Gulf countries. The possibilities of repatriation by sea were discussed in the initial stages of discussion. But the plan was dropped due to the operational inefficiencies. Even though the entire repatriation process was named as 'Vande Bharat Mission', the flights were operated by employers and various diaspora organisations with permission from Ministry of External affairs (MEA).

Table 23: Journey arranger

Journey arranged by	Frequency	Percent
Air India flight for Vande Bharat Mission	146	45.48
Private charted flight by embassy	36	11.22
Private chartered flight by organisations	126	39.25
Private chartered flight by the employer	13	4.05
Total	**336**	**100.00**

Among the respondents, 45.4 percent of the workers have used 'Vande Bharat Mission (VBM)' flights operated by the national carrier Air India. The mission was co-ordinated by the Indian missions and MEA. Similarly, 39.2% of the respondents were repatriated using private chartered flights operated by various diaspora organisations and other socio-cultural groups from India. Apart from these two major streams of operations,

Indian missions (11%) and employers (4%) also operated repatriation flights from the GCC countries. A bed-ridden worker who received support from Philanthropists during the lockdown recollected that:

"There were not enough VBM flights initially. Even though I approached the Indian embassy for financial support for the ticket, the response was poor. A diaspora organisation that arranged charted flights for Indians came to know my situation through my friends. Since I was injured, I needed space equal to three seats. The money for three tickets was shared between my employer and the organisation"

The response portrays the importance of each streams of repatriation process during the covid19 pandemic. The Indian mission also supported the needy based on priority from the available fund. The civil society activists and diaspora organisations criticised the missions for not using the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) for facilitating the repatriation process.

Table 24: Payer of Travel fare

Travel fare paid by	Frequency	Percent
Self	135	38.25
Friends	49	13.88
Relatives	21	5.95
Embassy	58	16.43
Diaspora Organisations	6	1.70
Employer	83	23.51
Organisations from India	1	0.28
Total	353	100.00

Another financial requirement for the repatriation was the payment of the travel ticket. Since the government of India announced that the ticket fare should be borne by the workers, the workers had to search for alternate options to pay for their tickets. As per the respondents, around 40 percent of the workers paid from their pocket, 23.5 percent of them received support from employer, the Indian missions supported 16.4 percentage of the workers and 13.8 percent of the workers relied on financial support from friends. The workers who received support from embassy had mostly used VBM flights and chartered flights by the missions. Since most of the diaspora supported charted flights operated

from June, the survey could not portray the support provided by diaspora organisations in terms of financial support[13].

Table 25: Guideline from Government

Written guideline from government	Frequency	Percent
Received	58	16.43
Not received	295	83.57
Total	353	100.00

Once the worker arrived at the port for repatriation, it is important to provide COVID-19 guidelines for the workers. A mandatory guideline was published by the MEA and Ministry of Health for the repatriated workers. It contains the procedures and steps that should be undertaken throughout their journey from the destination country. However, only 16.4 percent of the workers have received the guideline from the Indian missions. 78.5 percent of the workers among the people who received the document accessed an English copy and rest of them managed to access it in the local vernacular languages. A respondent stated that:

'I have received a document that contain instructions for the flight before departure. However, the document was in Hindi and I can only read and write in my local language. During the flight, it was mandatory for the person who sit in the middle to wear a PPE kit. It was mentioned in the document. The flight attendants and embassy personals cursed me for not following the guidelines. But I could not understand a single word in Hindi'

These systemic failures had already been notified to the Indian missions and government several times. The repatriation processes reproduced those failures in various contexts.

Table 26: Language of the Guideline

Language	Frequency	Percent
English	44	78.57
English and Local Languages	3	5.36
Hindi	1	1.79

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[13] Many migrants did not want to share that they had received support from another person for travel in front of their family during the fieldwork. Such snobbish behaviour had an impact of the analysis of the particular variable.

Local College	5	8.93
Multilingual	3	5.36
Total	56	100.00

During the flight, the key focus was to ensure safety of the workers by preventing the spread of virus. Many of the ports only conducted thermal screening and the absence of mandatory PCR tests underlined the importance of protective equipment during the process. Among the respondents, 83 percentage have received protective gears from the airport and 17 percentage of the total respondents had to carry their own protective gears for the journey.

Table 27: Protective Gears

Protective Gears	Frequency	Percent
Received	292	82.95
Not received	60	17.05
Total	352	100.00

There was no uniform code of conduct for the Indian missions on how to execute the process. More than 70 percent of the returnees only received face mask and shield for the travel and only 23 percentage of the workers received PPE kit, mask and hand sanitiser during the flight. It shows that 67 percentage of the workers were not fully protected during their journey.

Table 28: Social Distance in Flight

Social distance	Frequency	Percent
Strictly followed	66	18.70
Not strictly followed	287	81.30
Total	353	100.00

Another notable measure to ensure the safety during the repatriation was the social distancing in flight. However, 81 percent of the workers pointed out that social distancing was not strictly followed in the flights. Most of the flights carried full capacity and possibilities to follow the social distancing was minimal throughout the process. Such instances

add to the existing vulnerabilities of the migrants and they would always be prone to the risk of contracting the virus. The measures during repatriation were commendable considering the urgency of the operation. However, a lack of Standard Operating procedure, Uniformity in the process and lack of co-ordination between the stakeholders, ministries and the governments were the notable drawbacks.

Post-arrival

The responsibilities during the post-arrival stage of the Indian repatriation process were shared by national and state governments based on the port of arrival. It was important to ensure the safety of both migrants and the natives by providing various measures to contain the spread of the virus. Unlike the previous repatriation exercises by the Indian government the preliminary aim was to ensure health and safety of the returnees. However, the rehabilitation of migrants in distress was also vital in a repatriation process. This section analyses the actions taken by the stakeholders to ensure the welfare of migrants in the post arrival period.

The first and foremost step upon arrival is the documentation of repatriated workers at the airports. However, 97 percent of the migrants reported that the national government did not gather any information apart from the usual passport screening.

"The repatriation flight landed safely. But our actual struggles began from the immigration counters. They considered us as burden for the government and blamed for not coming back early. An official even advised us to stay back in India and search for a job rather than working abroad. It clearly hit on our morale. They just forgot the contributions by 'Pravasi[14]' to this nation"

The approach of officials at the immigration was under scrutiny ever before the pandemic. The experience of migrants during repatriation brought the issue to a wider audience through social media videos and experience sharing.

After the immigration process, the migrants were provided with certain guidelines for quarantine process through a live awareness session. Among the respondents, 47.7 percent of the migrants had received awareness classes at the airport. Almost all migrants (98.5%) from Andhra Pradesh state received the awareness/counselling. In case of other states, 26.1 percent of the Keralites, 18 percent of Tamilians and 70 percent of Telugu migrants have received awareness campaigns. It shows that the approach at each port was different. There was no unified approach to the repatriation process. It could also be noticed that the initiatives beyond the immigration counters were carried out with the

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[14] Pravasi is a common term used to denote international migrants from India

support of state governments and other non-government stakeholders. The state governments had the entire responsibilities of quarantine and rehabilitation of the migrant workers.

Table 29: Counselling or Awareness session upon arrival

Awareness or counselling		Kerala	Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	Telangana	Total
Received	Freq.	39	67	11	49	166
	Perce	*26.17*	*98.53*	*18.03*	*70*	**47.70**
Not received	Freq.	110	1	50	21	182
	Perce	*73.83*	*1.47*	*81.97*	*30*	**52.30**
Total	Freq.	149	68	61	70	348
	Perce	*100*	*100*	*100*	*100*	*100*

After the immigration and counselling, the travel history and health details of the migrants were documented by the state government's health departments. The process was similar across all airports considered for this study. Beyond that the entire responsibility of the migrant worker was vested with the state governments. According to 96 percent of the migrants, the quarantine process was mandatory for the migrant workers.

Table 30: Quarantine decisions

Quarantine		Kerala	Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	Telangana	Total
Compulsory	Freq.	137	69	62	70	338
	Perce	*93.20*	*95.83*	*100*	*100*	**96. 30**
Not compulsory	Freq.	10	3	0	0	13
	Perce	*6.80*	*4.17*	*0.00*	*0.00*	**3.70**
Total	Freq.	147	72	62	70	351
	Perce	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*

As per the official announcement, every migrant worker who were repatriated in the first and second phase of VBM should undergo 28 days quarantine (14 days official quarantine and 14 days home quarantine). The states allowed the workers who has ample quarantine facilities at their own house to undergo 'home quarantine'. The rules and regulations were altered and adopted based on needs and demands by the state governments[15]. Among the repatriated workers to Kerala, 66.4% had undergone home quarantine, 16.1% opted for self-rented houses and 10.7% stayed in government arranged quarantine centres. In case of Andhra Pradesh, 72.8% of the workers opted for rented homes for quarantine and 20% of the workers stayed in hostels. The majority of the migrant workers in Tamil Nadu also opted for rented houses (45.1%), 20.9% stayed at paid hotels and 27.4% managed to undergo quarantine at their own houses. The migrants from Telangana also followed the footsteps of their counterparts from Andhra Pradesh. Among the respondents from Telangana, 32.8 percent relied on rented homes, 24.2% opted for hotel quarantine and 27.1% workers chose hostel accommodations. The selection of quarantine options also shows the economic situation of the migrants. As per the literature, the migrants from Kerala are well off compared to migrants from all three states and the housing pattern of Keralites is different from three other states where even a lower middle-class household has two-bedroom houses. So, the migrants mostly opted for home quarantine. Since the rented homes and hostels are cheaper options, the low-skilled workers and domestic workers in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu opted those accommodations. In the initial days, hotel quarantine was mandatory in Tamil Nadu and Telangana and it is reflected in the response of the migrants as well. Overall, 70.6% of the migrants chose either home or rented home quarantine options.

Table 31: Quarantine Facilities for repatriated workers

Quarantined at		Kerala	Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu	Telangana	Total
Hospital	Freq.	7	0	2	10	19
	Perce	*4.70*	*0.00*	*3.23*	*14.29*	**5.41**
Home	Freq.	99	5	17	1	122
	Perce	*66.44*	*7.14*	*27.42*	*1.43*	**34.76**

[15] https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/home-quarantine-enough-for-those-coming-from-other-states-cm/article31545557.ece

Home	*Perce*	*66.44*	*7.14*	*27.42*	*1.43*	**34.76**
	Freq.	3	0	13	17	33
Hotel	*Perce*	*2.01*	*0.00*	*20.97*	*24.29*	**9.40**
Rented home	Freq.	24	51	28	23	126
	Perce	*16.11*	*72.86*	*45.16*	*32.86*	**35.90**
	Freq.	13	14	2	19	48
Hostel	*Perce*	*8.73*	*20*	*3.23*	*27.14*	**13.68**
Other Government facilities	Freq.	3	0	0	0	3
	Perce nt	*2.01*	*0.00*	*0.00*	*0.00*	**0.85**
	Freq.	149	70	62	70	351
Total	*Perce*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*

A closer evaluation of the quarantine process from the narratives of the migrants may provide a detailed picture of the approaches of each government. In case of Tamil Nadu, the respondents were happy with the quarantine facilities provided at the capital city, Chennai. But those who opted for quarantine at towns and villages faced various challenges such as lack of proper sanitation facilities, over-crowded dormitories etc. The government instructed a mandatory 14-days quarantine for the repatriated workers and conducted at least two tests during the period of quarantine. The village officers were entitled to monitor the people who opted for home quarantine and provided instructions on how to undergo the quarantine at home. Some of the respondents complained that the authorities accommodated the infected and non-infected people in the same hall during quarantine. There was option for paid and free quarantine facilities for the migrants.

In Andhra Pradesh, the government instructed 14 days mandatory quarantine and allowed the migrants to choose government or self-quarantine facilities. Most of the respondents expressed their satisfaction with the facilities provided by the government. The government arranged shelter homes and hostels in association with civil society groups and philanthropists. There were provisions for food, sanitary kits and entertainment facilities. The tests were conducted twice during the

quarantine. The local government officials, politicians, civil society etc extended various support for the migrants during the quarantine, especially for the women domestic workers.

Compared all other states, the quarantine facility offered by the Telangana government was not free of cost for the first two phases of repatriation. The government forced the workers to pay hotel bills for the 7/14-day mandatory quarantine. A worker narrates:

"The moment we landed in our state, we were made to stand in a queue by placing a form in our hands which included only two options for quarantine. i.e., quarantine facilities cost INR 15000 and 30000 respectively. We were looted by the government for the benefit of hotel owners"

Most of the returnees were either low-skilled workers or migrants in distress. The government forcefully retrieved the payment from each worker upon arrival. The decision was reversed after strong pressure from the migrant groups and civil society organisations in the state. Although the quarantine facilities were good, the forceful mandatory and paid quarantine was a drawback of the repatriation process in Telangana. In Kerala, various options were offered for the migrants upon arrival. As reflected in the response of the migrants, majority of the migrants had the capacity to undergo quarantine at home. A migrant who undergone home-quarantine explains:

"Few officers from Kerala Health Department visited my home before arrival to check the house and see if quarantine facility was available. They also gave my family instructions regarding the process. Upon landing in Kerala, we were given a class on how to dispose the PPE kit and they asked us to where fresh masks. There was a doctor available in the Airport who gave us instructions for quarantine. We also had the opportunity to do COVID 19 test if we wanted for free. Then we moved on to the information counter where a red card was given for hiring prepaid taxi service. The charges are prefixed and was mentioned at airport itself. They also collected personal information such as phone number and our choice of quarantine facility. I reached home safely that night. The police and health authorities called me next day to ensure that I am quarantined"

The migrants who chose institutional quarantine had both paid and free quarantine options. The free quarantine facilities were arranged at pre-identified hostels and the migrants were provided with free

transportation to the quarantine centre from airport. The quarantine centres were mostly school/college hostels, religious institutions facilities, government accommodations etc. The covid19 test was conducted twice during the quarantine. Some of the symptomatic persons had undergone three tests during their quarantine period. The government allowed the affluent migrants to choose hotels for quarantine upon strict monitoring from the health department. But majority of the migrants trusted the government facilities and home quarantine in Kerala.

Table 32: Discrimination during the Quarantine

Discrimination		Kerala	Andhra Prades	Tamil Nadu	Telangana	Total
Faced	Freq.	26	18	18	24	86
	Perce	*17.93*	*25.71*	*29.03*	*34.29*	**24.78**
Not faced	Freq.	119	52	44	46	261
	Perce	*82.07*	*74.29*	*70.97*	*65.71*	**75.22**
Total	Freq.	145	70	62	70	347
	Perce	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*

During the first two phases of repatriation the number of covid19 cases in India was low compared to other major countries of destination. So, the many natives spread the rumours that migrants are the carriers of covid19. Thus, it is important to understand about the discrimination faced by the migrants upon arrival. As per the respondents, 24.7% faced various kinds of discrimination during and post quarantine. Among the states, 34.3% of the migrants from Telangana faced discrimination as a migrant and the least was in Kerala (17.9%). Considering the extensive awareness programs on the pandemic provided by the governments, the rate of discrimination remains high.

"After landing in Trichy we were taken to a hotel for quarantine for 7 days. After that, I came home and quarantined myself for about 10 days. But my area councillor spread a rumour that I tested positive during the quarantine. They forced me to undergo covid19 test once again in the hospital to prove myself" (Migrant from Tamil Nadu)

It shows that the discrimination happens not only from the public but also from the responsible persons in the governance system. Similar experiences were shared by many migrants. Some of them faced abuse and discrimination from neighbours and alleged of breaking the quarantine. The migrants faced false allegations throughout their quarantine period and victimised as carriers of virus to their locality even after 28 days of quarantine.

Table 33: Financial support from Government

Financial support from Government		Kerala	Andhra Prades	Tamil Nadu	Telanga na	Total
Received	Freq.	56	0	0	0	56
	Perce	*37.58*	*0.00*	*0.00*	*0.00*	**16.23**
Not Received	Freq.	93	65	61	70	289
	Perce	*62.42*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	**83.77**
Total	Freq.	149	65	61	70	345
	Perce	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*	*100.00*

The initial rehabilitation of the workers is the final step of repatriation process. The Indian government and state governments provided a subsistence allowance for the repatriated workers in the previous repatriation exercises. Considering the high numbers of returnees in the VBM, the national government the state governments to provide financial support of the repatriated workers. Likewise, the state governments had announced financial support for the immediate rehabilitation of repatriated workers. However, apart from migrants from Kerala, none of them received the financial support from the state governments in the post-quarantine period. Among the migrants from Kerala, only 37.5% had received the financial assistance of INR 5000. All other three states made announcement about the financial assistance, but the details such as the amount and the mode of transfer were not revealed until the beginning of third phase of repatriation. All states provided support in the form of 'free food ration supplies' for the migrant through Public Distribution System. The promises on subsistence allowance were not met even after one month of repatriation.

Assessment of repatriation process – The approach of stakeholders

The process of repatriation cannot be carried without the co-operation of major stakeholders in the migration process. The origin and destination country governments, Indian missions, diaspora organisations, Employers, Civil society organisations, Indian state governments and numerous local governments had an important role to play in the Vande Bharat Mission. The approach of each stakeholder was key in ensuring the smooth repatriation of migrants. However, our quantitative and qualitative analysis reflect the pros and cons in the approach of each stakeholder in the initial phases of repatriation to the country. This section of the study focuses on evaluation of stakeholder-wise approaches.

The repatriation Journey: Narrative of a worker

First, I registered in NORKA (Non-Resident Keralite Affairs). I think it was in April. Then I registered in the Indian embassy as I heard that we need to register there in order to get a return ticket as a part of 'Vande Bharat Mission'. There was more than one lakh registration from the UAE alone. Therefore, diaspora organisations were granted permission to charter flights, as they understood it was nearly impossible for the mission to repatriate such a big number of people. Since then, many more companies and organizations started chartering flights. Then Abu Dhabi (one of the emirates in UAE) where I had been staying declared lockdown on 2nd of June. Even though the lockdown strictly restricted people from entering the city as a way to contain the Covid-19, it allowed people to exit the city. My flight was supposed to depart at 2.00 am on 24th June 2020 from Sharjah international university. I hired a taxi from Abu Dhabi to Dubai, from there I went to the airport with one of my friends. We had been asked to reach the airport before six hours of the departure since a COVID test had to carry out there. After the test, they pasted a 'FIT TO TRAVEL' sticker on my passport. Then we were instructed to wear masks, gloves and face shields. But we did not get a certificate indicating whether or not COVID positive. I think it was because even the government was quite unsure of such a test before the return. Then the flight departed on time and landed at Calicut airport at 8.00 am. Then somebody took our details including the seat number in the flight and mobile number and they asked us which type of quarantine we prefer. Then there was a small awareness class of nearly 10 minutes taken by health workers. After the emigrant clearance procedures, we got into Kerala Road Transport Corporation bus since we had chosen government quarantine. There were around 24 people from who are from various districts ranging from Trivandrum to Calicut. Finally, I reached at the quarantine facility prepared by local government at 12.30 am on 24th June.

Indian Government and Missions

"India has traditionally provided piecemeal responses to the issues faced by Indian workers in the Gulf, reacting to individual crises as they

happen" (Pethiyagoda 2017). The lack of a strong diplomatic foundation to the issues of migrant workers in the Gulf has to be seen in the light of the lack of policies on international labour migration from the country. The absence of long-term welfare and social security programs and strong bilateral or multilateral agreements with the destination countries has been a long-standing weakness of Indian policy in the GCC, which continues on till today (Gamlen 2006, Pethiyagoda 2017). This lack of policy was evident in the previous responses to the crisis situations in the destination countries. Even though the country and its governments have extensive experiences in conducting repatriation operations from the 1980s, the country is yet to institutionalise its best practices[16]. This weakness in the policy was evident in the largest repatriation process ever conducted. The mixed reaction of the respondents from the survey underlines the lack of availability of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

First and foremost, criticism on the missions during the process was the failure to ensure a transparent registration and preparation of priority list. The single window registration prevented the illiterate workers and workers who are employed in the remote places from accessing the online registration platform. The respondents unanimously agreed that the priority list was prepared not based on the needs of the workers and the influential applicants managed to book seats in advance   in the repatriation flights.

Even though the missions co-ordinated the repatriation flights well, they failed to make sure the local transportation of workers as mentioned in the previous section. Similarly, the failure to ensure adequate testing centres at least for the selected workers was another drawback. Another concern was the lack of grievance redressal mechanism apart from the 24*7 call centres and MADAD portal. The specific grievances during the pandemic needed immediate attention. It shows the failure of Indian missions to understand the real needs of the workers at the destination countries. By learning from these lessons, the missions should develop a better communication strategy with the migrant workers at the destination countries.

Amidst the drawbacks, the services provided by Indian missions during the amnesty process were well appreciated throughout the fieldwork. The shelter homes offered for the workers had met the requirements of the male and female migrants. In addition, the missions made sure that every worker travel with protective gears from the destination countries

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[16] https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/Getting-back-home-safely/article17263964.ece

and a representative of mission/government was present at the ports during every repatriation to monitor the process. Another notable aspect of missions' approach is the willingness to co-ordinate with the Indian diaspora groups. There are thousands of registered and non-registered diaspora groups in the Gulf countries. The missions work closely with only a handful of them. However, the Indian missions recognised the good work such organisations and worked closely with them to ensure smooth repatriation of the Indian workers. The effective use of social media platform to disseminate information by Indian mission was also a vital feature of the process. It shows that the responses need to be streamlined to address the drawbacks. By learning from the mistakes, missions and government should develop an SOP for addressing repatriation requests. Even the delay in announcing the repatriation process is directly correlated to the absence of existing repatriation management system. Such a delay created huge panic among the Indian diaspora in the Gulf countries which even led to suicides and death of Indian workers due to medical emergencies.

Destination Country governments

The role of destination country governments is often limited in the repatriation process. They often facilitate the process by providing assistance for Indian workers to reach out to the missions. During the VBM process, a few governments acted pro-actively and provided shelters for the workers who lost jobs and livelihood in the initial months of mobility restrictions. The shelters were open for the workers until the repatriation process was begun. As per the respondents, most of the governments in the GCC region made attempts to distribute food and protective gears for the workers in labour camp. Those attempts were co-ordinated with Indian diaspora groups in Gulf. However, the destination country governments could have provided adequate number of testing services at a low cost for the migrants.

The workers who got approval for repatriation found it difficult to afford the cost of PCR test and could not find enough testing centres. Moreover, many migrants who awaited the repatriation denied access to health facilities in the initial phases of lockdown. On a positive note, Kuwait had announced its willingness to repatriate the Indian workers on free of cost. Apart from that, the destination countries presence was minimal in the facilitation of the repatriation process.

Employers

The employers are entitled to ensure the welfare of the employees. The respondents had mixed experiences from the employers during the VBM process. A set of employers provided quarantine support, protective gears and livelihood support during initial days of virus spread. In addition, a handful of employers operated charted flights for the employees and offered to pay flight fare as well. These are the examples of employer's obligations to the workers and their role in the facilitation of repatriation process.

However, a set of employers took the pandemic as an opportunity to terminate the contract of the workers and to either reduce/cut the wages of the migrant workers. The workers were forced to work for extra hours with reduced wages, especially health professionals. The respondents reported that many employers abandoned their workers at the labour camp and stopped providing livelihood support and food. The workers were denied their basic rights to work and provision of livelihood by the employers during the lockdown. They were misinformed about the financial situation of company and asked/forced to resign from job. There was a clear violation of the contractual obligations by the employers. This widespread negligence or violation of labour rights by the employers is the result of lack of strict laws at the destination countries. It also reveals the need to clearly demarcate the role/obligations of employers during the repatriation process.

Diaspora Organisations

The role of diaspora organisation in ensuring the welfare of Indian migrants at the destination countries was often ignored by the governments and missions. However, the actions of diaspora organisations during the pandemic underlined the importance of diaspora organisation and they responses were recognised by the other stakeholders.

Apart from providing support systems for the migrants such as free quarantine facilities, distribution of food, protective gears and other essentials, the diaspora organisations operated large number of charted flights as part of the repatriation exercises. Even though those flights do not directly come under the official mission, they have managed to assist the repatriation of thousands of Indian migrants. Some of the organisations offered individual tickets for the migrants in distress to travel in the Vande Bharat flights from Gulf based on a priority basis. The

network of diaspora organisations is vast and well connected. The Indian missions have used those networks with good effect to disseminate information on the repatriation operations. The organisations assisted the workers for the 'embassy registration' and co-ordinated well with the missions and destination country governments to reach out to migrants in distress. The willingness of all these stakeholders to establish co-ordinated mechanism with the diaspora organisations had ensured smooth repatriation of majority of Indian workers.

State governments

The role of state governments in the repatriation process ranges from the post-arrival counselling to the distribution of subsistence allowance for the worker in the post-quarantine phase. The state governments were entitled to provide post-arrival support for the repatriated migrant workers. The common features of state government responses were strict monitoring of quarantine, mandatory counselling and provision of subsidised and free food and other essentials after quarantine. However, the responses of state governments differ based on the approach of each governments.

Among the states, Kerala provided free quarantine options, financial subsistence apart from free rations and awareness among the migrants. The co-ordination between state and local government was a constant feature in Kerala during the process and Kerala government created a portal to collect the data of migrants who were willing for repatriation. The data was used to establish facilities of quarantine in advance. However, the national government did not recognise the data collection and followed the priority list provided by the missions for repatriation. Andhra Pradesh also provided free quarantine options and the government provided special care for the women domestic workers who returned through amnesty program. In Andhra Pradesh, Civil Society Organisation supported the government by providing quarantine facilities. Apart from the usual facilities, The government of Telangana came into the limelight due to its decision to implement mandatory paid quarantine for all repatriated workers. The respondents heavily criticised the approach of state government. In case of Tamil Nadu, a major feature of governance was the well-oiled monitoring system involves Police, Local actors and health officials. However, the poor quarantine facility at the village level was notified by many respondents.

The common drawbacks of the states are lack of SOPs for managing the repatriated workers (except Kerala), failure to address the discrimination

faced by migrants during home quarantine and the absence of data gathering platforms to collect the data of repatriated workers for better reintegration. The governments also failed to address the post-quarantine struggles of migrant workers and their families. But the efforts of state governments should be appreciated amidst the financial and operational constraints. The migrants also recognised the state governments as a key stakeholder in the VBM process.

Civil Society Organisations

Even if the role of Indian CSO is limited in the repatriation, the CSOs supported other stakeholders on various fronts. The respondents sought the support of CSOs to reach out to diaspora philanthropists for funding the travel. Many organisations managed to direct such request to either individual or diaspora organisations in Gulf countries. The CSOs used their social media platforms to disseminate the updates, rules and regulations on the VBM process frequently. Most importantly, CSOs have supported the state governments to set up quarantine facilities at their own establishments. The repatriated migrants in the most vulnerable situations were provided with food and other essential commodities after the quarantine. It is true that the avenues of engagement are limited for the CSOs in India, however a better advocacy from the beginning of the pandemic would have expedite the decision to conduct repatriation mission.

Policy Suggestions

- Development of a Standard Operating Procedure

The Indian missions at the destination countries do not have a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for crises such as pandemic, natural disaster, civil wars in the destination countries. An SOP would help the missions to react to the needs to the migrant worker as soon as crisis begins. The delay is response and the lack of effective co-ordination at the destination during the pandemic portrays the need for a SOP for Indian missions.

- Co-ordination mechanism

The Indian government and Missions should establish or revamp the co-ordination mechanism for the welfare of migrant workers. The mechanism should include destination country governments, Indian missions, diaspora actors and other civil society actors. Such mechanism helps for effective interventions during repatriation missions and amnesty programs.

- Recognition of diaspora actors

Based on the good work carried out by the Indian diaspora associations during the pandemic, the missions should create an online platform to ensure registration of diaspora organisation. A recognition from the missions would provide more operational freedom for the organisations that stand for the welfare of migrant workers.

- Use of technology platforms

The use of technology platforms to reach out to migrants at the destination countries would help to narrow the gap between missions and migrants. Such designated platforms would be useful to disseminate information, address the grievances and emergency requests from the Indian migrants.

- Proper documentation of migrants

The missions often failed to ensure registration of migrant workers on arrival if they migrate using the visit visa (any other non-employment visa), especially in Gulf countries. The missions should not only encourage the migrants to register in missions upon arrival

but also co-ordinate with the Indian Bureau of Immigration to capture the details of travellers. A registration portal at the embassy level can be established for registration of migrant workers. The missions failed to anticipate the number of repatriations request due to the lack of information about Indian workers.

- Rehabilitation and Reintegration policy

The responsibility of rehabilitation of Indian migrants is entrusted on the state governments. The national government do not offer any logistical or financial support in the post-arrival phase of a repatriated worker. Thus, a sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration policy should be developed by the Indian government in co-ordination with the state governments. The responsibilities of reintegration should be shared by national government and each state governments.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for the survey

Serial Number:

Passport Number:

Date and time of arrival:

Port of Arrival:

Block A: Basic information

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Name of the respondent	Age	Gender	Country of Destination (Code)	Occupation In the destination country (Code)	Year in which the person first migrated to Gulf	Monthly Income	Nature of the work Place (Code)	Reason for return during lockdown (Code)	Accommodation (Code)

Column 3 – 1- male, 2 – Female

Column 4 – 1- UAE, 2- Saudi Arabia, 3- Kuwait, 4- Bahrain, 5- Oman, 6- Qatar

Column 5 - 1- Small business owners, 2 – Big business owners, 3- Salesman, 4- Carpenter, Plumber and other semi-skilled occupations, 5 – Domestic worker, 6- Driver, 7 – Hotels and restaurants, 8 – Nurses, 9- Doctors, 10- Engineers, 11- Foreman, 12 – Other unskilled workers, 13 – Managers and other HR staffs, 14- Tourism and Hotel staffs, 15- government occupations, 16- Paramedical Staff, 17- Other occupation (specify) 18 – Office employees in private sector and supervisors

Column 8 - 1- Office, 2- Shop, 3- Construction site, 4- House, 5- Factory, 6- Farm, 7- Open space, 8- Workshop, 9- Others, specify

Column 9 – 1- Visiting visa expired, 2- employment visa expired 3- cancellation of employment visa, 4- released from prison, 5- annual vacation, 6- loss of job, 7- Children separated due to lockdown, 8- health concerns, 9- death/other immediate emergency to family members, 10 -others (specify)

Column 10 - (1- Individual Studio apartment, 2- shared apartment with one person, 3- shared apartment with more than one person, 4- single room in labour camp, 5- dormitory bed in labour camp, 6- Other)

Block B: Covid 19 related Queries

11. Did you affect by the Covid 19 disease? (1- Yes, 2- No)

12. From where did you test positive for the virus? (1 – Gulf Countries, 2- India)

13. How long did it take cure the disease? (days)

14. How long you stayed in Quarantine? (days)

15. Where did you stay during the quarantine period?

(1- Government facility, 2- Private facility, 3 – Home, 4 – Others) Specify

Block C: Family, accommodation and other Details

16. Are you married? (1- Yes, 2- No)

If No, skip to question 19

17. Do you live with the family in the Gulf? (1-Yes, 2- No)

18. Did you come back with family during repatriation? If no, please explain the reason

19. what kind of accommodation facility is provided in Gulf? (1- Individual Studio apartment, 2- shared apartment with one person, 3- shared apartment with more than one person, 4- single room in labour camp, 5- dormitory bed in labour camp, 6- Other)

20. Are you happy with the current accommodation? (1- Yes, 2- No)

21. Do you have a valid employment visa during return to India? (1- Yes, 2- No)

22. Did you use Amnesty offered by Gulf countries to return? (1-Yes, 2- No)

23. Have you stayed in embassy shelter before return? (1-Yes, 2-No) If yes Please explain the experience

Block D: Responses during the crisis period at the destination country

1D: Quarantine and sanitisation facilities

24. Did your company/employer has a quarantine provision available? (1-yes, 2- No)

25. Was the quarantine provision available for workers in the labour camps? 'If so, what kind of facilities were available

26. How do you/your colleagues manage to quarantine yourself if any symptoms show up?

(1- moved to a friend's place, 2-remined in the labour camp, 3- remined in the room, 4- approached the hospital/health service, 5- facility arranged by organisations, 6- others(specify))

27. Did you receive protective gears such as mask, gloves, PPE (for nurses) and sanitisers? If yes, describe the support you received.

2D: **Responses from the employer**

28. Have you received Salary in every month from February? If not, for how many months dud you receive salary? Explain

29. Have you ever experienced any issues with Salary over your stay in Gulf? (Yes –1, No-2) Kindly elaborate

30. Did you manage to work during the lockdown? (Yes -1, No-2) If No, skip to Qn. 34

31. Did the employer/government provide protective gears such as mask, gloves and sanitisers at work place?

(1- No, 2- Mask alone, 3- Sanitiser alone, 4- Mask and Sanitiser, 5 – PPE kit and 6- All three)

32. Did you experience any deduction in the salary? (1-yes, 2-No) If yes, how much was the deduction?

33. Any reduction in the number of working days and working hours per day? If yes, provide the number of days and hours lost.

34. Did the company/employer ask you to resign or prepare to go home on non-casual leave?

(1- Asked to resign, 2- suggested to travel back home with salary, 3- travel back home without salary, 4- threaten to resign, 5- offered resignation option with advanced payment, 6-other -specify)

35. Are you happy with the support from the employer during the crisis? (1-yes, 2- No) Explain

36. Did you manage to receive all the dues and other benefits before repatriation?

(1- yes, 2- No, 3- Verbal agreement for a future date, 4- written agreement for a future date)

3D: Repatriation Procedures

37. How did you come to know about the repatriation process

(1- Through employers, 2- Through friends, 3- Through news and social media platforms, 4- Through embassy announcement, 5- Through diaspora organisations, 6- other-specify)

38. Did you make any previous inquiry to the embassy during the crisis about possibilities of repatriation? And explain their response

39. How did you register in the embassy? (1- self, 2- with the help of family members, 3- with the help of diaspora org. 4 - through friends and 5-Explain)

40. Are you happy with the registration procedure of embassy? (1-Yes, 2- No) If no, explain

41. When did you test for the Covid19? (1- before the repatriation announcement made, 2- on the day of announcement, 3-few days before the repatriation, 4- other-specify)

42. Did you have money to pay for the test? (1-yes, 2- No) If no

43. Who helped you to pay for the test?

(1- friends, 2- embassy, 3- Diaspora organisations, 4- employer, 5- self)

44. How did you travel back to India (1-By air, 2- By sea)

45. Who arranged the flight for repatriation? (1- Air India flight for Vande Bharat Mission, 2- Private charted flight by embassy, 3- Private chartered flight by organisations, 4- Private chartered flight by the employer)

46. How much was the airfare/ticket charge in the ship during repatriation?

47. Did you pay the air ticket by yourself? (1-yes, 2- No) If no

48. Who paid your return ticket during repatriation?

(1- friends, 2- relatives, 3- embassy, 4- diaspora organisations, 5 – employer, 6- organisations from India, 7 -other)

49. Was it compulsory to carry the test result during the repatriation

(1-yes, 2- No)

4D. Responses from Indian government

50. who provided the travel support to reach the airport/seaport?

(1- Self paid, 2- friends, 3-Relatives, 4- embassy, 5- diaspora organisations/Individuals, 6 – employer, 7- organisations from India,8-Destination country government, 9 – others)

51. Did you receive any written guidelines before repatriation from Indian government?

(1- yes, 0- No) If yes,

52. Which language was used in the guideline

(1-English, 2- Hindi, 3- Indian local language, 4- Multilingual)

53. Did you receive protective equipment such as mask, sanitiser, PPE upon arrival in India or in the flight?

(1-yes, 2- No)

54. If yes, what all support mechanisms where provided

55. Did the flight follow strict social distancing? (1-yes, 2- No), Explain

56. What kind of tests were done at the departure airport?

(1- Thermal Screening, 2- Thermal screening and rapid test, 3- Rapid test alone, 4- other-specify)

E. Post-arrival Phase

57. Did you show any symptoms during the tests at the airport?

(1-yes, 2- N0) skip to qn. 57 If no

58. Have you taken to the hospital for government quarantine?

(1-yes, 2-No)

59. Have you put in compulsory quarantine after arrival?

(1-yes, 2-No)

60. Where did you stay during quarantine?

(1- at the hospital, 2- home, 3- hotel, 4- hostel facilities, 5- rented home, 6- other government facility)

61. How many days you have stayed in quarantine?

(1- seven days, 2- 14 days, 3- more than 14 days, 4-other)

62. How many times have you undergone testing during the quarantine period?

(1- one time, 2- two times, 3- zero and 4- more than two)

63. Did you face any discrimination from family/friends or society after the quarantine? (1- yes, 2- No) If yes, explain

64. Have you paid money for compulsory government quarantine? (1- Yes, 2- No)

65. How much money you paid for the quarantine?

66. Did you receive food and other essentials during the quarantine?

(1-Yes, 2- No)

67. If yes, have you paid for those services?

(1- Yes, 2- No)

68. Who arranged transportation from airport to the quarantine centre/home?

(1- government for free, 2- government paid, 3- self payment, 4- paid by private parties)

69. Did you receive any counselling or awareness session upon arrival? (1- yes, 2-No) If yes, please elaborate

70. Did you receive any financial support from the government during and after quarantine?

71. If yes, how much

72. Any food and grocery packets and other support received from government (1- yes, 2- No)

73. If yes, please elaborate

74. Are you planning to go back to Gulf countries for work? (1-yes, 2-No) 3 -not decided

75. If no, what is your future plan? Elaborate

F. Responses from the Recruitment Agents

76. Did you migrate with the support of a recruitment agent for work?

(1- Yes, 2- No)

77. If yes, Did the agent contact you during the crisis by offering support? (1 – Yes, 2- No)

78. What kind of support you receive from the recruitment agents during repatriation process.