

## Migration Trends Analysis for Pakistan (Report 3)

### **October-November 2023**

*This migration trend analysis note highlights key trends observed among clients serviced by the Migrant Resource Centres in Pakistan. It presents information on the outreach to these migrants, the channels used for outreach and the types of information sought by migrants. The note also outlines broad, emerging migration trends.*

#### **OUTREACH**

##### **Social Media**

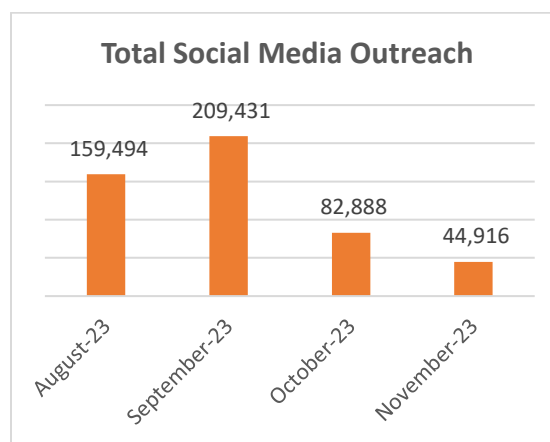
The Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in Islamabad and Lahore reach out to potential migrants all over Pakistan through their social media handles, namely Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp. Through these channels, the MRCs post social media content, videos and announcements on various topics including (1) the pitfalls of irregular migration, (2) legal pathways for emigration towards several destination countries including Europe and (3) contact and reference information of government and other migration actors. Some topics covered in October and November were, among others, information on study scholarships, pointers for finding employment opportunities abroad and common reasons for rejection of student visas abroad and how to avoid this in the future.

In October and November 2023, the MRCs reached a total of 127,804 people through the combined media of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp, a 65 per cent decrease compared to the number of people

reached in August and September 2023. Facebook continues to be the most popular medium through which the MRCs conduct social media outreach to potential migrants. It accounted for 94 per cent of all social media outreach done in October and November. The MRCs also reached 3,593 people through WhatsApp announcements, 2,567 people through Twitter, 834 people through YouTube and 190 people through Instagram.

The social media posts that received the most attention (that is, high reach and engagement) in October and November were posts related to information on study scholarships, a live session with overseas employment promoters (OEPs)<sup>1</sup> and posts made by other government entities that were then re-shared on the MRCs' social media handles. Among the re-shared posts, the top-performing posts were related to OEP information shared by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), fake job alerts posted by the BEOE and announcements by the Pakistani embassy in UAE on passport processing delays.

**Figure 1: Total number of people reached via social media channels from August to November 2023**



<sup>1</sup> OEPs are private entities granted licenses by the Bureau of Emigration and Employment (BEOE) a government entity in Pakistan. Funded by the European Union. Implemented by

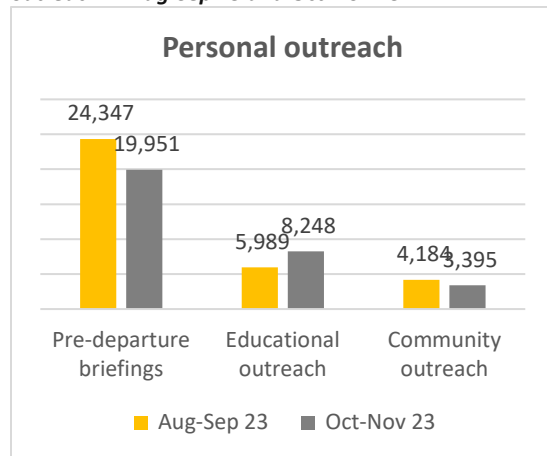
Pakistan to help facilitate the international recruitment of Pakistani job seekers.

### Community/university outreach

Complementing the MRCs’ social media outreach are its outreach activities in migrant communities, vocational training centres (VTCs), educational institutions and the protectorate offices<sup>2</sup>. In the outreach events to communities, VTCs and educational institutions, MRC counsellors provide comprehensive information on migration-related topics, with a particular emphasis on legal channels for migration. In pre-departure briefings in particular, the MRC staff discuss critical travel and destination country-specific information to outgoing migrants who typically already hold employment contracts.

During October-November 2023, the MRCs conducted **100 outreach events and 97 pre-departure briefings**, reaching a total of 31,806 people. Of this group, 19,951 were outgoing migrants who received pre-departure briefings; 4,649 were potential migrants who attended these sessions from VTCs and educational institutions and 3,395 were potential migrants mobilised through community outreach. An additional 179 potential migrants were provided with group counselling and 33 people were given a skills-based training.

**Figure 2: Total number of people reached via personal outreach in Aug-Sep 23 and Oct-Nov 23**



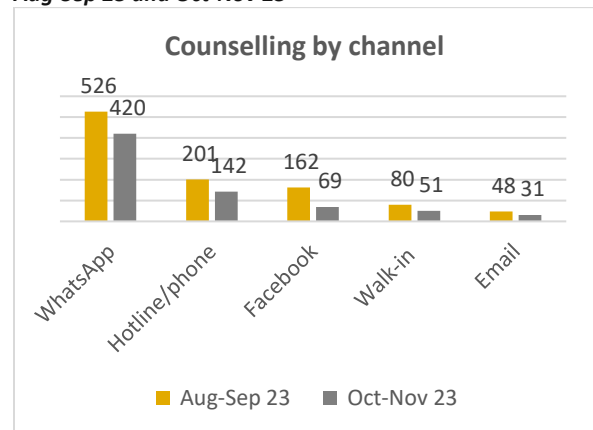
<sup>2</sup> Protectorate of Emigrants offices are emigration centres operated by the BEOE. They offer services such as pre-departure counselling and documentation support to departing migrants.

### Counselling

While social media and personal outreach are means to reach potential migrants with critical migration-related information, they also pave the way for deeper engagement with the MRCs. By learning about the MRCs’ information-provision services through social media and/or personal outreach, potential migrants can then reach out to MRCs for extensive one-to-one counselling on their migration-related enquiries. Potential migrants seeking in-depth counselling can do so through a myriad of channels including WhatsApp, Facebook, Email, the MRC hotline, Telegram, Instagram or by simply walking into the MRCs’ offices to talk to an MRC counsellor.

During October-November 2023, the MRCs provided **one-to-one counselling to a total of 1,099 people**. Of the people counselled, 88 per cent were males and 12 percent were females. In terms of the channels used for counselling, 420 people were counselled on WhatsApp, 142 people through the hotline and 69 people through Facebook. WhatsApp, the MRC hotline and Facebook continue to be the most popular channels used by potential migrants for counselling in October and November.

**Figure 3: Number of people counselled by channel during Aug-Sep 23 and Oct-Nov 23**



### MIGRATION ENQUIRIES

From August until November 2023, the top three migration-related enquiries made by potential migrants were related to (1) employment in Europe, (2) employment in the Gulf countries and (3) study abroad. On average<sup>3</sup>, of all queries posed to MRC counsellors, employment in Europe and the Gulf countries accounts for 36 per cent. Study abroad accounts for 17 per cent of all queries, on average (Table 1).

*Table 1: Top migration enquiries in August - September 2023*

Migration enquiries (% of total queries)	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
Employment in Europe	17%	22%	18%	17%
Employment in the Gulf countries	17%	18%	18%	18%
Study abroad	15%	13%	18%	16%
Employment in other countries	9%	10%	11%	9%
MRC contact information	8%	9%	8%	6%
Family reunification or settlement	6%	4%	8%	7%
Visit abroad (short-term)	5%	5%	6%	10%

Additionally, a new type of enquiry emerged in November 2023, with 11 Afghan nationals residing in Pakistan (2 per cent of the total enquiries for November) enquiring about their eligibility for humanitarian visas. It is worth mentioning here that the MRC Islamabad in particular, is already working on outreach to Afghan nationals with the aim to provide accurate information on citizenship cards and other support services available for Afghan

nationals as well as information on legal channels for onward migration from Pakistan.

Furthermore, the MRC staff have indicated that an increasing number of migrants were enquiring about **work permits for Pakistani nationals in Canada**. In VTCs where some outreach was conducted, a rising number of students have been enquiring about student visa fees in Canada and Italy as well as scholarship opportunities for students more broadly.

### ZOOM IN: KEY MIGRANT OUTCOMES (SATISFACTION WITH MRC AND CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE)

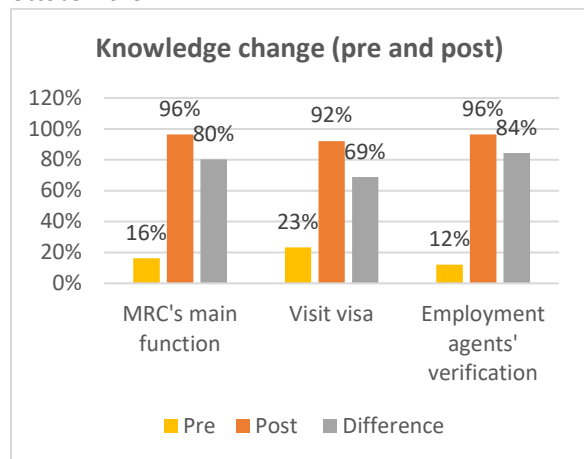
During outreach events and after individual counselling sessions, the MRC staff fielded surveys to examine participant satisfaction with MRC services as well as any changes in knowledge in relation to the topics covered during the events. During the month of October, a total of **470 participants completed both pre and post event surveys and a further 397 answered satisfaction surveys**.

In relation to knowledge change, 81 people, on average answered the pre-event questions correctly, whereas 446 people, on average answered the same questions correctly on the post test, reflecting **an increase of 451 per cent in the number of people demonstrating knowledge of migration topics post-event**. The knowledge change was observed in relation to three important topics, namely, (1) the main function of the MRCs, (2) the purpose of visit visas in destination countries, and (3) the correct way to verify employment agents. The highest knowledge change was noticed in relation to the verification of employment agencies (84

<sup>3</sup> The average here is calculated for the months of August, September, October and November 2023.

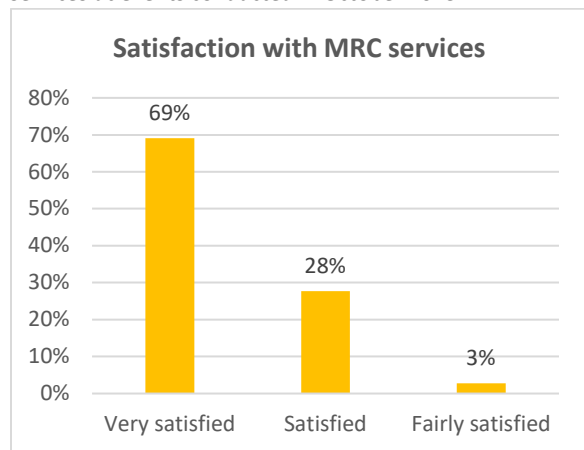
percentage points), followed by the main function of the MRCs (80 percentage points).

**Figure 4: Proportion of respondents answering pre and post questions correctly at outreach events conducted in October 2023**



Finally, of the 867 respondents who answered questions on how satisfied they were with the information and/or services provided by the MRC, the majority indicated that they were very satisfied (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: % respondents indicating satisfaction with MRC services at events conducted in October 2023**



**EMERGING TRENDS/INSIGHTS IN AND FROM PAKISTAN**

A few insights and trends were seen emerging from the MRCs’ monitoring data, through stakeholder meetings conducted by MRC staff, and also in the country as a whole, as evidenced by policy decisions and/or announcements at the national level. These are outlined below:

**Role of agents in facilitating irregular migration from Gujrat:**

In a stakeholder meeting that gathered a range of migration stakeholders in the Gujrat province including representatives from Social Welfare Department, Labour and Human Resource Department and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), as well as employees from local NGOs and the local media, the need for targeted awareness-raising sessions that focus on the role agents play in driving irregular migration was discussed. FIA officials presented the steps taken to crack down on agent networks and reduce irregular migration from Gujrat. It was agreed that stakeholders in Gujrat must complement the MRCs work in disseminating information on the means of irregular migration, including the role of agents in facilitating the movement of migrants through irregular channels.

**Gujranwala zone dominates in terms of the number of identified human smugglers and traffickers in Pakistan, per the latest Red Book released by the FIA:**

The FIA has published the Red Book 2023 which contains an index of the most wanted human smugglers and traffickers in different provinces of Pakistan<sup>4</sup>. Punjab province – where majority of the MRC work is conducted – tops the list where smugglers and traffickers reside and operate. Of the 156 human smugglers and traffickers identified in the report, the

<sup>4</sup> “Twelfth Red Book of the most-wanted human traffickers and smugglers in Pakistan”. Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) (2023).

majority (68 per cent) were from the Punjab province. Seventy-one of these people hail from the Gujranwala zone alone (which also includes Gujrat).

**Legal labour migration trends:** The BEOE is a government entity that facilitates legal emigration from Pakistan through licensed operators known as OEPs. BEOE data indicate that 723,325 workers registered for employment abroad in 2023 (January-October 2023). The following are some findings derived from BEOE data:

- Of the 723,325 workers that registered for emigration through the OEP legal channel, the majority were drivers (44 per cent), followed by labourers (22 per cent)<sup>5</sup>.
- The majority registered for emigration to Saudi Arabia (48 per cent), followed by U.A.E (28 per cent), Oman (7 per cent) and Qatar (7 per cent).
- Malaysia is also an important destination for emigrants through the OEP channel. Per BEOE data, 3 per cent of the total number of workers that registered did so for emigration towards Malaysia.
- Among European countries, Romania and Greece were popular destination choices.
- Iraq and the UK were also preferred by emigrants registered through the OEP channel.

**Mass return of Afghan nationals:** Following the Pakistani government's official announcement

to return Afghan nationals without valid documentation by 1 November 2023, a total of 350,000 Afghan nationals have been reported to have left Pakistan since the announcement was made on October 3<sup>rd</sup> (UNHCR, 2023). According to UNHCR, Pakistan is home to 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees as well as 840,000 Afghan nationals holding citizenship cards that provide them some protection support. A further 1.5 million Afghan nationals were estimated to be living in Pakistan without valid documentation, of which 600,000 entered Pakistan in August 2021<sup>6</sup>.

**Women applying for dependant visas:** MRC staff have found that an increasing number of women are seeking dependant visas to rejoin their family members abroad, particularly in the Gulf countries. However, this is anecdotal evidence at best. Further investigation is needed to verify this trend.

#### **Contacts**

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PAKMRC>

Tel / Viber / Whatsapp

- Lahore: +92 300 0116671

- Islamabad: +92 306 0191919.

Free hotline: 0304 1112123

Skype: mrcislamabad

Email: [info@mrc.org.pk](mailto:info@mrc.org.pk)

Website: <https://www.mrc.org.pk/en/>

<sup>5</sup>'Employment Registration Statistics'. Bureau of Emigration and Employment (BEOE) (2023). <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/2023/category.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> " Forced returns from Pakistan deepen Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis" UNHCR (2023). [Forced returns from Pakistan deepen Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis | UNHCR](#)