Families and Migration: Older People from South Asia
Department for International Development (DFID)

ESA315

SOUTH ASIA COMPARATIVE REPORT

Rural communities in Gujarat and Punjab (India) and Sylhet (Bangladesh): The impact of emigration on older people

March 2003

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BACKGROUND

Migration from developing countries to Europe has been common since the Second World War. In the United Kingdom, the main sending areas have been the Caribbean and South Asia (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh). Most that has been written about immigration in the UK has focused on the settlement of immigrants in the UK. Less attention has been paid to the impact of such immigration on the sending communities.

While most immigrants to the UK from India and Bangladesh have settled in the cities, most came from villages and small towns in rural areas. It has been suggested that migration can lead to an increase in the dependency ratio and changes in inter-family reciprocity (Van Willigen & Chadha 1999). On the other hand, remittances and access to medical treatments in developed countries can enhance an older person's well-being.

In the sending areas it was believed that post-war emigration would relieve over-population, provide economic benefits through remittances, and increase the skills of the work force (Piore 1979, Dusenbery 1986). The economic benefits of emigration are visible in Asia in the form of stone houses built in the sending areas, compared with usual mud and thatch huts elsewhere (Gardner 1993, Kessinger 1979, Watson 1975). However, some literature suggests that international remittances may worsen rural inequality as they are earned mainly by upper-income villagers, that is the families that could afford to send a member abroad (Gilani et al. 1981, Adams 1989, 1991, Gardner 1993). Elsewhere it is reported that remittances may have an egalitarian or neutral effect (Stark et al. 1986, Adams 1992).

The return of a skilled workforce to the sending areas has never fully materialised, as migration streams from all the areas of study have led to the formation of settlements in the UK (and other receiving countries) that contained residents who were more or less permanent (Piore 1979). In all three regions in South Asia, particular communities are identified as having traditions of emigration. Most of those who emigrated belonged to wealthier

rural families who could raise money for education and fares. Pull factors include the desire for higher standards of living and better financial prospects; better prospects for marriage or a non-resident spouse; and, better chances for their children.

This report focuses on emigration from India and Bangladesh and its impact on older people in the sending areas of those countries. The regions from which most South Asian immigrants have come to the UK are Pakistan, Gujarat and Punjab (in west India) and Sylhet (in north-east Bangladesh). This paper focuses on Gujarat, Punjab and Sylhet. It had originally been intended to include Pakistan in the study but this was not possible due to political tensions at the time the research was initiated. The terms “resident” and “non-resident” are used to refer to South Asians living in their country of origin and those who are living abroad respectively.

The Study Areas

Gujarat is situated on the west coast of India on the Arabian Sea. It is bounded by Pakistan in the north and the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra on the south-east and south respectively. It has a population of more than 40 million, of which 65% live in rural areas. Two-thirds of the population are engaged in agriculture. The main crops are wheat, millet, rice, cotton, tobacco and oilseeds. Gujarat is the main producer in India of tobacco, cotton and peanuts. Seventy percent are Hindus.

Punjab is a landlocked state in the north-west corner of India. It is bounded by Pakistan on the west, on the north by Jammu and Kashmir, and by Himachal Pradesh on the east and Haryana and Rajasthan on the south. It has a population of over 20 million of which 70% live in rural areas. Agriculture is the main occupation and 80% of the state is cultivated. The main crops are wheat, maize, rice, pulses, sugarcane and cotton. Sixty percent are Sikhs.

Sylhet is situated in the northeast corner of Bangladesh. In contrast to the two Indian states, which are mainly flat, Sylhet is hilly. It has a population of almost 7 million. Most people are involved in agriculture or fresh-water fishing. The main agricultural products are tea, oranges, pineapples, guava and betelnut. Livestock are also raised. The majority are Muslims but there is a substantial Hindu minority.

All study villages (if not all households) in Gujarat and Punjab have electricity, good bus services linking them with urban areas and access to at least basic medical services. Water comes from a main water tank, wells and ponds. Most people carry water from central points and do laundry in communal washing areas. In Sylhet, most villages have electricity but this is limited to the village centre. Water comes from tube-wells and ponds, but there are seasonal fluctuations in available water. In the winter, the water table is low and water from tube-wells is contaminated by arsenic. In the rainy season, much of the area is under water but there are no village based conservation or management policies. Some households store water for use after the rainy season. Primary health care is available.

Migration History and Patterns

Emigration from all of the study areas discussed is not a recent phenomenon and has been going for more than a hundred years. The major difference has been between Gujarat and the other two areas, inasmuch as most of the Gujaratis in the United Kingdom did not come directly from Gujarat but from Kenya and Uganda in East Africa.

Gujarat

Emigration from Gujarat has been well-established for over a century. By the end of the 19th century, Gujarat had two thousand years of trading experience in Africa (Coupland 1939, Morris 1968). This was supplemented during the period 1896 to 1901 when the British recruited Indian labourers to build the railways in Kenya and Uganda. The South Asian community in Africa expanded due to the natural growth of the original families and the

migration of friends and relatives to the same area to fill the gap in the African market for certain trades and skills (Morris 1968).

The economic success of the Asians in East Africa prompted restrictions on trading for immigrants. The 'Africanisation' of labour in these countries drove many Asians to leave. Gujaratis constituted 70 percent of the Asian population in East Africa at this time and many sought to re-settle in the UK (Kalka 1990). A further wave of emigration ensued in 1972 when President Amin's government expelled Asians from Uganda (Kalka 1990).

The Gujaratis from East Africa, in many cases, had been absent from their homeland for over sixty years and had fewer ties with their country of origin than other South Asian immigrants to the UK had. The East African migrants often arrived in Britain in family units often consisting of three generations, and in many cases had substantial capital (Bhachu 1986).

The villages in Gujarat from which emigration has been common have clearly been wealthier villages for some time. The Gujarati villages included in this study have an average 40% of non-resident Indians. The most prominent caste associated with migration is the 'Patels', the majority of whom are farmers and belong to affluent families. Theirs is a close-knit community, where if one member migrates others are in line to follow. They try to sponsor even distant relatives to follow them. They are a very enterprising group and tend to quickly find jobs abroad. The next most numerous migrating group is the 'Shahs', a business class. The main destinations are the UK or the USA. Few people from the lower socio-economic classes or castes manage to emigrate. When they do, their destination is usually East Africa.

Punjab

Emigration from the Punjab followed a different pattern. The first Punjabi settlers in the UK were members of trading castes and later Sikh soldiers, who remained in the UK after fighting in France during the First World War (Ballard 1986). Military service in the Second World War again offered many young Sikh men the opportunity to settle in the UK (Ballard 1986). Many

emigrants were from the Jalandhar district, a densely populated area in which our study communities are situated. People in Jalandhar suffered from shortage of land and therefore the means of self-support (Marsh 1967). The partition of India in 1947 and the situation of Punjab on the new boundary meant that some villages' resources came under pressure due to the influx of non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan (Helweg 1986). Emigrants to the UK in the 1950s were predominantly men who settled in inner city areas. During the late 1960s and the 1970s families left Punjab to be reunited with their men who had settled abroad (Ballard 1986).

Emigration from both study communities currently takes place to the UK, other European countries (such as Italy, Germany, Greece), North America and to the Middle East. In Bilga and Bhanoke 15% and 25% of families respectively have members living abroad. Some families have been associated with emigration for the past two generations. Emigration is seen as positive and such families are visibly better off. Most emigration is associated with finding a sponsor or a matrimonial alliance. In most cases, men leave alone and are later joined by wives and children, followed by parents and other family members.

Sylhet

Emigration from Sylhet to the United Kingdom goes back to the eighteenth century when trade became established. Communities associated with migration are still referred to in Sylhet as Londoni communities (Gardner 1993). During the 1930s and 1940s single Sylheti men were employed on British ships and Sylhet gradually emerged as the main sending area in Bangladesh for immigrants to the UK (Gardner 1995). By the 1950s small populations of Sylhetis were established in large cities in the UK (Gardner 1993). A community became established in Tower Hamlets (London) but also in the metal manufacturing areas such as the West Midlands and the textile industry in the North West (Runnymede Trust 1980, Mahmood 1995).

Nowadays emigrants go to the United Kingdom, North America, the Middle East, South-east Asia and the Far East. Men tend to migrate to the UK first

and to leave wives and children in Bangladesh for several years before bringing them to the UK when the family is complete. A few men have one wife who manages the property in Bangladesh and another in the UK. As a result of remittances, Sylhet has become one of the wealthier regions of Bangladesh and is a centre from which a high level of emigration takes place. In the study villages, most families have relatives living abroad. However, there is a wide gap between rich and poor and 70% of people in Sylhet have no cultivable land.

Hypotheses

In this report we hypothesise that:

- Older people from emigrating families, who remain in the rural communities of the country of their birth, enjoy a better standard of living than those from resident families.

- Older people from emigrating families, who remain in the rural communities of the country of their birth, have fewer sources of informal social support than those from resident families.

- Communities associated with a tradition of emigration benefit as well as individuals from emigrating families.

METHODOLOGY

The data presented in this paper are from part of a larger study looking at the situations of older people of South Asian origins in the UK and in the sending regions discussed in this paper. The samples in Gujarat, Punjab and Sylhet were drawn from villages and rural towns identified by the collaborating investigators from these areas as having a history of emigration:

Gujarat: Alindra, Dharmaj, Karamsad, Mehlav and Sojitra
Punjab: Bilga, Bhanoke
Sylhet: Bhadeswar, Gopalpganj

Sampling

The target sample was 100, 50 men and 50 women, aged 55+. The achieved sample included: 50 men and 50 women in Gujarat; 54 men and 56 women in Punjab, and 68 men and 38 women in Sylhet. The age limit was set lower than has been used in previous studies of older people in the United Kingdom, because of the shorter life expectancy in South Asia (in 1998: 63 in India; in 2002: 61 in Bangladesh (Virtual Bangladesh 2003)). It has been noted that the marriage of the first son and introduction of a daughter-in-law to the household, is often taken as a sign of old age in India (especially for women), as it signifies shifts in the roles and status in the family (Vatuk 1980, 1982, Sati 1996, Bali 2003, p. 15). It is likely that people over the age of 55 would have married oldest sons, and thus be considered to have entered the life stage of 'old age' (*burhappa*) (Vatuk 1980). However, the Sylheti sample included some respondents below the target age (between 42 and 54 years of age). These respondents have been included in the analyses as the life expectancy in Bangladesh is lower than in India.

Entry to the villages was obtained through village leaders. A household census was taken in all villages from which a random population sample was drawn from all households containing an older person (regardless of class or migration status of household). This was to ensure that the sample was representative of the social structure in the area and would include older

people whose children have emigrated overseas or migrated to other areas of India (however this does not appear to have happened in Sylhet).

Data Collection

Where possible, interviews were conducted in the respondent's own home. The interviews were conducted by interviewers in the first language of the respondent, using an interview schedule. All questions were read to respondents by the interviewers

The interview schedule was written in English by the Project Co-ordinator and the Principal Investigator based on a schedule, which had previously been tested in a pilot project, conducted in Dhaka and Sylhet in Bangladesh and with Bangladeshis living in Tower Hamlets, London, in the UK (Burholt et al. 2000). The interview schedule was subsequently edited and refined based on the outcomes from the pilot study.

The interview schedule was translated into the relevant langagues by one translator and then translated back into English by a second translator. Disagreements were then discussed and best forms negotiated and agreed. The interview schedules used were printed in the appropriate language and script. Where verbatim responses were asked for, responses were recorded in the native language and translated into English at a later date.

The interview schedule included sections on the following topic areas: basic demographic data; health; education and language; work and income; migration; household composition and marital status; family, friends and relatives; sources of support and help; religion; and, funeral rites.

Data Analyses

All completed questionnaires from South Asia were sent to the Principal Investigator in the UK who entered (SPSS version 9.0) and cleaned the data. This was facilitated by all questionnaires using the same numbering system irrespective of language used.

Analysis of the data was completed by the Principal Investigator in the UK. In this report where comparisons are made between migrating families and resident families, Pearson Chi square is used.

FINDINGS

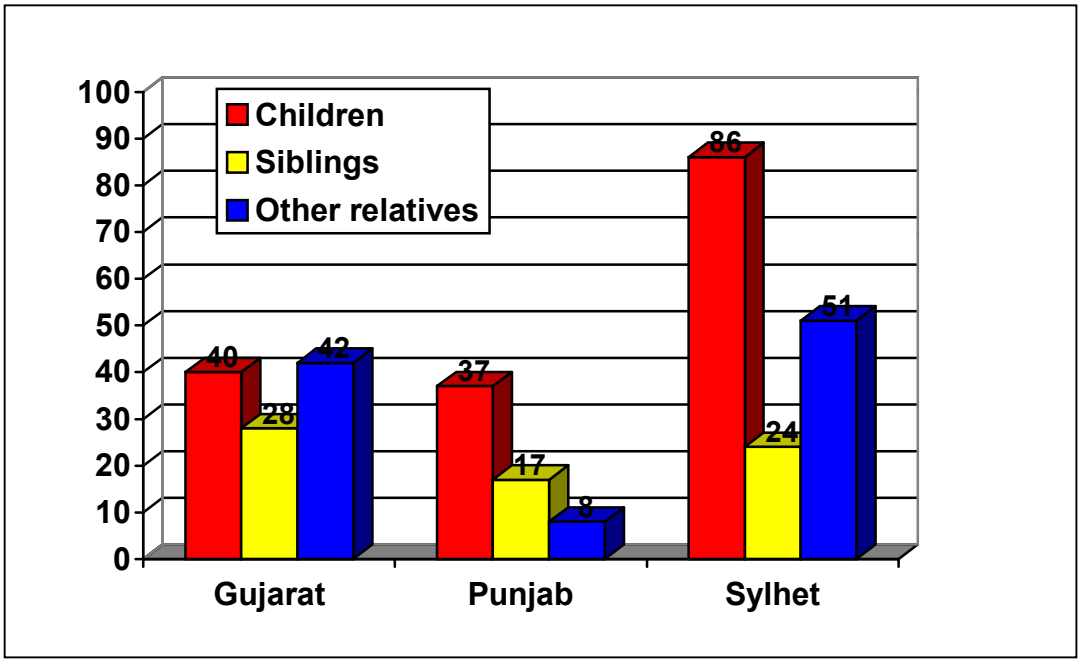
The findings presented in this report compare members of families associated with emigration and families not associated with emigration. For ease of reference, these two groups are referred to as migrating families and resident families. Unfortunately, the Sylhet sample contained only migrating families.

Family Dispersal

Figure 1 shows the proportions of respondents with relatives living abroad. It can be seen that similar proportions of Gujaratis and Punjabis have children in another country. Gujaratis, however, are more likely to have siblings and other relatives living abroad. The figures for Sylhet are not comparable since they reflect only migrating families, 86% of which had children, 24% had siblings and 51% had other relatives living abroad.

For the Gujaratis, there are not great differences between the numbers of children, siblings and other relatives living abroad. Fewer Punjabis have family abroad, mainly children. The Sylheti sample did not include those without children living abroad.

Figure 1. Proportions of respondents with relatives living abroad.



Housing

There are obvious differences in the villages between the economic situations of families with relatives living abroad and others. There is a clear visible difference in house type depending on the economic strata. Those owning land are the wealthiest.

In all the study areas the best houses are described as *pucca*. *Pucca* houses are better constructed and have more modern facilities. In the Indian villages, house types range from *Pucca* houses made of concrete through *Kucha* (or semi-*pucca*) houses made of bricks to huts made of dung and wood, thatched with grass. The houses belonging to migrating families are *Pucca,* larger and more spacious than others. Most of the houses of migrating families have a big courtyard and a garden. The houses of non-resident and affluent Indians have separate worship areas, while other houses worship in one of the ordinary rooms of the house. Non-resident Indians and migrating families are also more likely than others to have electric or electronic household appliances. Amongst the Gujarati study villages, Dharmaj and Karamsad have more *Pucca* houses than the other villages.

In Sylhet also the better off people live in P*ucca* houses that are constructed of masonry, have lavatories and electricity and are more likely to be on paved roads. The less well-off have *semi-pucca* houses constructed of tin sheet. The poorest people live in *jupri* (huts) made of local materials, such as wood and *patkhori* (dried jute stalks), with no facilities such as lavatories or electricity. Those who own most agricultural land have the best houses and are most likely to be receiving remittances from relatives living abroad. Non-resident Sylhetis invest money in the purchase of land and building elegant houses which indicate high status. Emigration is also often associated with upward mobility for the relatives remaining in Sylhet.

Figure 2. Pucca house in Gujarat

Figure 3. Poor house in Sylhet

Living Arrangements

Traditional living arrangements in all three study regions are for daughters to leave home on marriage and to become members of the husband's family/ household. Sons tend to remain at home with their parents and their wives move in. The joint household of two or three generations is valued but starting to become less common. Sons are increasingly more likely to move away and to set up their own separate households. Emigration may be associated with sons leaving parents behind or parents may accompany their sons to another country or join them later. In this paper, data are presented from respondents who had remained in or returned to their own villages/ towns.

Table 1 shows the living arrangements for each of the study regions, showing differences and similarities between those with relatives abroad and those without. It can be seen that the modal living arrangement in all study areas is the 3 or 4-generation household. The large majority in each area live in 2, 3 or 4-generation households. More Gujaratis live alone or with their spouse only, compared with Punjab and Sylhet.

Although not statistically significant, in the Indian study areas, resident families are more likely than migrating families to live in 3-4 generation households. In Gujarat, 81% of older people in Resident families but only 69% in Migrating families live in households including at least one member of a younger generation. In Punjab, migrating families are more likely than resident families to live with a younger generation. Among older people from Migrating families the proportions living in households with younger generation members only in Punjab and Sylhet are similar and higher than in Gujarat.

It had been anticipated that those families with children living abroad might be less likely to live in multi-generation households than resident families. However, statistically, there were no differences between the groups.

Table 1. Living Arrangements

	Gujarat		Punjab		Sylhet	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
Lives alone	8	9	4	4	0	1
Lives with spouse only	11	16	8	4	0	3
Lives with younger generation	22	25	14	31	0	45
Lives in 3 or 4 generation household	58	44	74	61	0	49
Other	0	6	-	-	0	2
Significance level of Pearson Chi Square	P=.450		P=.210		n.a.	

Children

In Table 2 we can see the size of families of procreation of the older people in the study areas. Family size is highest overall in Sylhet. In Gujarat the modal family size is 3-4 children and there are no significant differences between the family size for resident families and migrating families. In Punjab, the modal family size is also 3-4 children. However, there are significant difference betweens resident families and migrating families. Resident families typically have more children with the modal family size being 5-6 children (47% with 5+ children). The modal family size for migrating families is 3-4 children (34% with 5+ children). Among the migrating families in Sylhet, 63% have 5+ children.

Table 2. Numbers of Living Children

	Gujarat		Punjab		Sylhet	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
0	11	6	2	4	0	3
1-2	25	22	18	8	0	8
3-4	42	48	33	55	0	26
5-6	22	17	41	18	0	34
7+	0	6	6	16	0	29
Significance level of Pearson Chi Square	P=.468		P=.018		n.a.	

Given the size of families in the study areas, migration of children is likely to have less impact on parents if other children remain at home. Table 3 shows the proximity of the nearest child. It can be seen that for those older people from migrating families, the likelihood of living in the same household as (or within one mile of) a child is lower than for resident families in both Gujarat and Punjab. However, the differences between resident families and migrating families are not statistically significant and the proportions living in the same household as a child are still high. The proportion of migrating families with their nearest child in another country are negligible.

Table 3. Proximity of nearest child

	Gujarat		Punjab		Sylhet	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
No children	11	6	2	4	0	3
Same house/ < 1 mile	75	63	94	80	0	89
1-5 miles	6	3	2	0	0	2
6-15 miles	6	6	0	0	0	3
16-50 miles	3	8	2	10	0	2
50+ miles	0	5	0	4	0	0
In another country	0	9	0	2	0	1
Significance level of Pearson Chi Square	P=.268		P=.203		n.a.	

Figure 4. Multigeneration household consisting of parents age about 80, three married sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren.

Figure 5. Most respondents live in the same household as at least one son and his family.

Most parents with children living abroad have visited their children in the destination country. Older people visit their children living abroad for many reasons. Some visits are just to see their children but others are to provide help to their non-resident children. They may go to take care of young grandchildren to fulfil their culturally defined responsibilities of caring for grandchildren. These visits are typically for a period of six months to two years. Many parents, especially mothers or mothers-in-law, go abroad when their daughters or daughters-in-law are expecting a baby. These visits are typically for 3-6 months. This pattern follows cultural norms, as in India young women are likely to go to their mother's home for delivery, especially for a first baby.

Emigrants visit their native villages for a number of reasons. Sometimes they return to visit family and friends. Older people sometimes return to their village during the winter if the climate is severe in the receiving country. Many visit to participate in special occasions such as religious ceremonies, weddings or funerals, organised by their relatives or extended family. Many non-resident Hindus come to merge the ashes of a loved one in a designated river such as the Ganges.

Many older Indian people return on retirement and come to settle in their native home and return to their roots. Hindus believe that those who die in their hometown amidst their relatives and close friends will have a peaceful death and their soul will rest in peace. Also, life abroad is perceived as very fast where people tend to be very busy. Although many immigrants have spent their adult life in a foreign country, after retirement they find that they become lonely. So despite a better standard of living, they often return to their country of origin where they have people around who have time to sit and chat and share their feelings and emotions. On the other hand, others who had planned to return to their village remain in the receiving country.

Young non-resident men and women often return to their native village with marriage prospects. Non-resident spouses, particularly bridegrooms, are preferred by both parents and young people from the villages. Among non-

resident Indians a preference exists for a marriage partner from India. Non-resident Indians believe that this reinforces Indian culture and tradition in their adopted country. This trait is particularly marked among the Patels, who prefer their sons and daughters to marry a partner from one of six designated Gujarati villages known as the 'six settlements circle.'

Health Status

Table 4 shows self-assessed health for the study areas. Older Gujaratis were more likely than the other South Asian groups to say that their health was good or excellent. There was a significant difference in Gujarat between resident families and migrating families. More than half (58%) of the older people belonging to resident families stated that their health was only fair or poor (reflecting lower socio-economic status), compared with only 28% of those in emigrating families. Overall amongst the older Gujaratis, those in emigrating families reported better health than those in resident families.

Amongst older Punjabis, there were no significant differences in self-reported health between resident families and migrating families. In Sylhet, where we only have data for those from migrating families, 58% reported that their health was only fair or poor.

Table 4. Self-assessed Health

	Gujarat		**Punjab**		**Sylhet**	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
Good/excellent	22	39	12	18	0	10
All right	19	33	57	61	0	32
Only fair	39	23	25	20	0	26
Poor	19	5	6	2	0	32
Significance level of Pearson Chi Square	P=.016		P=.594		n.a.	

Education and Language

Education is important in terms of social inequalities (Evandrou 2000). Educational attainment is linked to income, health and well-being (Abel-Smith 1994, Blane et al. 1996). The levels of education received by older people in rural areas in India and Bangladesh were low. Elsewhere it has been reported that in India in 1981, the levels of illiteracy for older men and women was 65% and 98% respectively (Ponnuswami 2003).

Table 5 shows the numbers of years of full-time education received by the respondents. Levels of education are highest in Gujarat and the differences between resident and migrating families are statistically significant. In Gujarat fewer migrating families than resident families have received no full-time education (2% vs. 22%), and more migrating families than resident families received more than 11 years of education (48% vs. 14%). Whether these differences reflect the benefits of emigration or the generally higher socio-economic status of emigrating families over the course of history, it is not possible to say from the data.

In Punjab and Sylhet, the majority of older people had received no full-time education. In Sylhet we have no figures for resident families, but in Punjab the educational levels were not significantly higher for those from migrating families.

Table 5. Number of years of full-time education

	Gujarat		**Punjab**		**Sylhet**	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
0	22	2	78	61	0	51
1-5	33	14	10	14	0	28
6-10	31	36	8	20	0	13
11+	14	48	4	6	0	8
Significance level of Pearson Chi Square	P<.001		P=.287		n.a.	

The principal languages in the study regions are Gujarati, Punjabi and Sylheti. However, some people speak more than one language. Language skills such as this may be seen as an economic advantage. Table 6 indicates the proportions of respondents who were able to speak languages other than their first language. We had hypothesized that those from migrating families may have a broader range of linguistic skills than those from resident families.

Table 6. Number of Additional Languages Spoken

	Gujarat		**Punjab**		**Sylhet**	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
0	53	31	92	75	0	87
1 or more	47	69	8	26	0	13
Significance level of Pearson Chi Square	P=.034		P=.021		n.a.	

In Punjab and Sylhet, few older people spoke an additional language. In Punjab, however, 25% of those with relatives abroad spoke at least one other language, compared with only 8% from resident families. In Sylhet only 13% of older people from emigrating families claimed to speak an additional language. In Gujarat, more older people spoke additional languages and the difference between resident families and emigrating families was also marked. Forty-seven percent of those in resident families spoke at least one other language and 69% of those from emigrating families. However, this pattern of familiarity with one or more additional languages is changing over time, more of the younger generations in each of the communities speak additional languages.

Socio-economic Status

Finally, we look at income and, as an indicator of standard of living, possession of various household appliances. Regional differences in employment patterns are reflected in sources of income as shown in Table 7. These also reflect other regional differences and differences between resident families and migrating families.

Regional differences in sources of income show that older Sylhetis are least likely to be engaged in paid employment. Gujaratis were significantly more likely than the other two groups to receive their own income or income from a spouse's work. They were also more likely to be in receipt of a pension from a former employer or earn income from savings. The Punjabis were significantly more likely than other groups to be in receipt of a state pension and Sylhetis were most likely to receive income from children residing elsewhere. Sylhetis were more likely than other groups to receive and income from this source, from other relatives or an 'other' source.

Looking at the differences between resident and migrating families in each region separately, we can see that emigrating families in Gujarat are significantly more likely to receive income from savings (6%) than resident families (3%). In Punjab migrating families are significantly less likely than resident families to receive an income from children residing in the home (20% vs. 53%), on the other hand they are more likely to receive an income from children residing elsewhere (24% vs. 4%). Proportionally half as many migrating families than resident families receive a state pension (18% vs. 36%). The two types of benefits available to older people in India are the National Old Age Pension (75 Rs. per month) and various state pension schemes (ranging from 60 to 250 Rs. per month) (HelpAge India 2000, Subrahmanya & Jhabwala 2000, Bhat & Dhruvarajan 2001). However, the proportion of Punjabi resident families receiving a state pension is particularly high, and greater than the estimated level of receipt of National or State pensions for India as a whole (World Bank 2001).

We only have data for *emigrating families* in Sylhet. Analysis shows that the most likely source of income was children residing elsewhere (84%) – indicating the importance of remittances for the older people in this rural area. The next most frequently mentioned source of income was children residing in the same house (42%). Around one-fifth (22%) of the sample received income from an 'other' source. In addition, 14% received income from "other relatives", which includes sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. Note that 86% of the sample have children living abroad. It is clear that older Sylhetis are dependent on their families and that the largest contribution comes in the form of remittances from abroad.

Table 7. Sources of Income

	Gujarat		**Punjab**		**Sylhet**	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
Own income	42	41	29	37	0	9
Spouse's work	25	22	16	18	0	3
Income from a business	3	6	0	0	0	4
Children residing in home	31	25	51	20	0	42
Children residing elsewhere	6	14	4	24	0	84
Other relatives	3	0	0	4	0	14
Other agency	0	8	2	4	0	3
Pension from former (spouse) employer	14	17	2	10	0	3
Income from savings etc.	14	34	2	6	0	1
State pension	6	6	31	18	0	3
Other source	3	3	2	4	0	22

A minority in the Gujarat and Punjab study areas have children living abroad – 40% and 37% respectively. Only twelve Gujarati parents received remittances from children living abroad, amounting on average to £17 a month. Almost twice as many Punjabi parents (N=34) received remittances. Nearly half (47%) of children abroad sent remittances to their parents. The remittances averaged 725 Rs. (£9.52) per month. Of the respondents who answered, over four-fifths (81%) said that the remittances were used for household expenditure.

Most of the Sylheti sample (85%) had children living abroad and 89% of children abroad sent remittances to their parents. The remittances averaged 1248 Taka (£13.28) per month. Of the respondents who answered, two thirds (65%) said that the remittances were used for household expenditure and one-third (33%) that they were used for upkeep of the house. A large majority of the remittances (92%) were sent to parents from sons abroad, rather than daughters (8%).

An examination of the income variable suggested that respondents had stated the household income, which would be expected as joint families tend to pool income from different sources (van Willigen & Chadha 1999, p. 104). Although pooled money is generally used for household expenses and allocated as required (van Willigen & Chadha 1999, p.104), it was decided for the purpose of this study to divide the household income by the number of household members to give an average income that *could* be allocated per head.

Mean incomes were markedly different in Gujarat. Those from resident families had a mean monthly income of 593 Rs. (approximately £7.72)[1] compared with 3,140 Rs. (approximately £40.86) for those in migrating families. In other words, migrating families had incomes five times higher than those of resident families. The difference was not so marked in Punjab where resident families received a monthly income of 771 Rs. (approximately £10.03) and Migrating families had average mean incomes of 873 Rs. (approximately £11.37) a month. Comparable data were unavailable for

[1] **£1 was equivalent to 77 Rupees at the time of the survey**

Sylhet, but older people in migrating families there had mean incomes of 1752 Takas per month (approximately £13.51)[2]. This is almost certainly higher than older people in non-migrating households.

In attempt to mediate the suspected unreliability of income data and as another indicator of standard of living, respondents were asked whether a range of electrical appliances were present in their homes. This also turned out to be a good indicator of differences in standard of living between resident and emigrating families. Comparisons can only be made in Gujarat and Punjab.

As Table 8 shows, those older people with relatives abroad were more likely to have each of the appliances asked about. The differences were statistically significant for all appliances, except washing machines in Gujarat and radio and televisions in Punjab. The differences in material possessions are more pronounced in Gujarat than in Punjab, as reflected in the reported income levels.

Table 8. Possession of Household Appliances

	Gujarat		Punjab		Sylhet	
	No relatives abroad (N=36) %	Relatives abroad (N=64) %	No relatives abroad (N=49) %	Relatives abroad (N=51) %	No relatives abroad (N=0) %	Relatives abroad (N=100) %
Radio	25	63	80	88	0	91
Television	42	91	84	94	0	75
Video player	3	28	4	26	0	25
Telephone	25	77	22	49	0	15
Refrigerator	33	86	55	84	0	28
Washing machine	6	14	6	22	0	1

[2] **£1 was equivalent to 98 Taka at the time of the survey**

There were regional differences in the possession of electrical appliances. Comparing all older people in the three study areas: radios were most common in Sylhet (91%); television in Punjab (89%); and telephones in Gujarat (58%). Respondents in Bangladesh were less likely than respondents in the other two areas to own refrigerators (28%) and washing machines (1%).

Contributions to Rural Communities by Family Members Abroad

In India, migrants from rural villages and small towns have contributed significantly towards the development of their communities. They contribute towards civic amenities, landscaping and the building of temples or other places of worship. They often continue to make contributions to such amenities. Funds from non-resident Indians have helped beautify villages. For example, roads are paved, drainage systems are enclosed and trees are planted along the side of the roads, providing welcome shade in the hottest months of the year.

Non-resident Indians have also contributed to education. This requires much co-operation and non-resident Indians have enabled villages to progress in the provision of education. Often funds from non-residents are directed towards setting up specialist facilities such as providing computers or providing laboratories in schools or colleges. When they visit they distribute sweets or gifts to the school children and the *Brahmins* (the caste of priests and educators), to appease the souls of departed relatives.

Funds are also directed towards the overall development of villages. In the study village of Alindra in Gujarat, one non-resident Indian is trying to change the entire village. He has gathered money from an Indian organisation abroad to set up a sophisticated computer room in the existing primary school. He has set up computers and hired trained teachers for the students and set up a playgroup with modern educational toys. He has also founded a youth group in the village that works towards beautifying the village. The youth group

maintains the cleanliness of the village and provide volunteers to help people in the village as needed.

In the study village of Dharmaj in Gujarat, non-residents have given money to build rooms in memory of deceased relatives in the old age home. Similarly, they donate money for rooms in the *Dharmashala* (lodging and boarding facility associated with the temple).

In the Punjabi village of Bilga, a general hospital is under construction. It is expected to provide middle level specialist services such as general medicine, orthopaedics, ophthalmology, dentistry etc. It is being administered under a Trust set up by a local man living in the UK.

In Sylhet also, contributions are made towards building mosques, schools, community centres and health centres in the native communities of non-resident members of the rural villages and towns associated with migration. They also help relatives to set up and run businesses in Sylhet. However, most financial aid comes directly to the families of emigrants.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To return to the hypotheses raised at the beginning of this report:

- *Older people from emigrating families, who remain in their own countries, enjoy a better standard of living than those from resident families.*

The absence of resident families in the Sylhet sample makes full comparison impossible. However, older people from emigrating families have better housing in all the study areas. In Gujarat those from emigrating families report better health and have received more education. In all areas migrating families have higher incomes than those in resident families, however this is more pronounced in Gujarat. The evidence suggests that the hypothesis is valid, but indicates that analysis of additional variables or further research is needed to ascertain whether these differences are the effect of migration.

On the basis of these small samples and differences in income levels, it appears that in Gujarat emigration takes place from families who are already better off. This is also the opinion of our Gujarati partners. In Punjab this does not seem to be the case. Due to the absence of resident families in the Sylhet sample we are unable to say anything in this regard, however it does appear that the migration families in Sylhet may not have been initially wealthy families as they are dependent on remittances from abroad. More qualitative data from the rural communities would be needed to support this hypothesis.

- *Older people from emigrating families, who remain in their country of origin, have fewer potential sources of informal support than those from resident families.*

The findings show that family size is similar for both types of families. The majority of older people in all the study areas live in traditional multi-generational households. Fewer from Migrating families live in joint households in Gujarat, but the majority still live with children. In Sylhet,

despite the fact that 86% have children living abroad almost all live in the same household as a child. So the second hypothesis is not proven.

- *Communities as well as individuals benefit from emigration.*

The Indian study communities benefited substantially from non-resident Indians, giving the whole community a better overall standard of living. It is possible that this is the result of the Hindu belief that as one gets older there is a responsibility to make repayment for the blessings received in life and the community orientation of Sikhs. Philanthropic and voluntary contributions, therefore, are expected from those who can afford to do so. We have insufficient data from Sylhet, but the indications from the data are that most contributions are to families rather than communities. Personal communication from our research partner in Sylhet suggests that contributions are regularly made to mosques in the sending communities. The hypothesis appears to be proven but further research into the extent and the types of benefits received is indicated.

What we have tried to do in this report is to suggest that the migration process needs to be studied from the point of view of both the receiving and the sending countries. In the west, most studies have been about the impact of migration on the receiving country. Here we have tried to look at migration from the perspective of the sending communities and particularly on the impact on the ageing experience in rural communities in South Asia.

In the receiving communities it is received wisdom that despite the “myth of return” most immigrants do not return to their natal place. However, in both of the Indian samples, returnees were interviewed. Their skills and spending power represent benefits to their community. Indeed, some of them make conscious efforts to ensure that the community benefits. While such benefits are delayed in terms of the expectations prevalent at the time of migration, there is an ultimate benefit to communities in the sending country.

When most of the immigrants to the UK migrated, their movement was spurred or supported by labour demands in the UK. In the current climate, of unemployment, underemployment of immigrants and ethnic prejudice in the UK, successive governments have tightened immigration controls so that it is more difficult for non-professional immigrants from South Asia to be accepted. At the same time, there is a skills shortage in the UK, particularly for skilled tradesmen, such as carpenters. Many of the older Punjabi immigrants were in fact working as carpenters. The UK is experiencing a shortage of teachers. In those cities in the UK with large proportions of their population with South Asian origins, there is a shortage of teachers with ethnic minority backgrounds. A minority of the older Punjabis interviewed in the UK, as part of this study were teachers. In other words, a case could be made for a continuing need for workers in fields in which South Asians have succeeded.

Recent influxes of refugees and other immigrants from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa have raised the level of ethnic prejudice in the UK. The government has responded with increasingly restrictive legislation to make it difficult for them to stay. Looking at migration from both ends, taking a longer time perspective, recognising that the UK is now a multicultural society and that inter-continental families are an increasing proportion of the majority as well as of minority ethnic groups, suggests that a more global sense of responsibility on the part of governments is due. Perhaps it is time that immigration is perceived transnationally, in the light of benefits to countries and communities at both ends of the multi-stranded social relations and networks that link societies cross-nationally.

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