

Awareness raising and information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration in Pakistan



Background Report

The PARIM Project

The PARIM project seeks to provide information and raise awareness among potential migrants in Pakistan through a series of campaigns communicating balanced information about the dangers and consequences of irregular migration, options for legal migration, and the legal, social and economic realities of life in Europe.

Research conducted under PARIM

- Survey among potential migrants in Pakistan
- Diaspora mapping report
- Stakeholder mapping
- Validation meetings
- PARIM final research report

The PARIM Background Report

The background report is the first step in the research component, building the evidence base of PARIM.

The report analyses the key concepts and assumptions behind migration information campaigns and gathers lessons learned from previous campaigns.

It reviews relevant evidence on migration patterns from Pakistan and potential migrants' information needs in order to understand how a campaign can support potential migrants' decision-making process.

Migration from Pakistan: What are the patterns?



- **Pakistan is among the most significant emigration countries worldwide.** The majority of emigration from Pakistan is of regular (legal) character, almost exclusively to the Gulf, and mostly low-skilled and short-term.
- **Pakistani emigrants are on average young, male, educated,** and not from the very poorest households. Those going to Europe are also more likely to be unmarried.
- **Economic drivers** are predominant for migration from Pakistan, followed by seeking (better) **education opportunities**, especially for migration toward **Europe**.

- **Legal migration options may not be sufficiently attractive.** Although legal options from Pakistan to the Gulf are in place, they are hampered by very high costs for migrants, as well as exploitation throughout the process – negatively affecting the major alternative to irregular migration.
- **Irregular migration can be attractive for young male Pakistanis,** including because of the associated risks. It can even be perceived as a kind of adventure.
- **The decision to emigrate irregularly is often based on existing social networks.** This means that as one person follows the example of another, and knowledge on how to emigrate irregularly is accumulated within a social network over time (chain migration), irregular migration can become self-perpetuating.

Why do Pakistanis migrate irregularly?



- **Irregular migration may be “worth it” financially,** as costs can be regained within a few years, depending on current cost of smuggling and other illicit services.

Why is information needed?



- **Potential migrants lack concrete and accurate information** about possible negative scenarios that would actually allow them to prepare, and therefore **can fall victim to fraud, exploitation, or human trafficking.**

- **Smugglers are often perceived as sources of trusted information, but can be deceptive.** Migrants (and their families) have been shown to put great care in the choice of smugglers, but they do so under difficult conditions, such as difficulty in confirming reputations.
- **Social networks (extended family and friends) are significant information sources for Pakistani migrants,** but they can contribute to information asymmetries as they may not share the truth about their more negative experiences during the migration process or about their life in Europe.
- **Information available on the internet, and particularly social media, appears to be less effective** than one might assume. Online interactions can be used as an extension or facilitation of face-to-face interaction.
- **Migration information campaigns cannot address the demand side of irregular migration. Considering the lack of legal migration channels** towards Europe, while there continues to be a demand for irregular (low-paid, low-skilled, exploitable) workers, including in (specific sectors in) Europe, migrants may follow the logic of available work opportunities rather than state regulations (when the two are in conflict).

How can an information campaign help?



- Although it is evident that potential migrants need better information, **it is still unclear whether and how migration information campaigns can help:**
- It is very challenging to actually influence someone's intention to (irregularly) migrate. Since migrants have a general awareness that migration is risky, they may receive new information in a filtered way and dismiss it easily, especially if they see the underlying **intention as preventing them** from migrating altogether. Migrants may furthermore discount **stories of failed migration** as not relevant for them, because they see it as **individual bad luck** or bad decision-making. Migrants may **see long-term risks** (such as unemployment) more problematic than the short-term risks to their well-being on the irregular migration journey.

These dynamics make it challenging for a migration information campaign to be **effective**. Nevertheless, there are now a number of soundly evaluated campaigns that show that impacting potential migrants' intentions can still be achieved. This requires firstly that they are based on a sound evidence-based **understanding of the drivers of migration in the country context**, at structural (macro), facilitating (meso) and individual (micro) levels. Secondly, effective campaigns require careful design based on choosing **trusted messengers**, using **appropriate frames** ("angles") for messaging, **relevant content** and **tailoring** to different target groups.

All research findings from the PARIM project are available at: <https://www.budapestprocess.org/our-work/parim>

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