

# ROOTS & ROUTES

Vol 11, No. 3, March 2022



## DOWNWARDLY GLOBAL Lalaie Ameeriar

Women, Work, and Citizenship in the Pakistani Diaspora



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# Editor's Note



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Dear Readers,

Greetings!

The Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) has been organising webinar series discussing all 23 objectives of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). Against such background, the current issue of GRFDT's monthly newsletter includes a report describing the panel discussion on Objective 7: Address and Reduce Vulnerabilities in Migration written by M Abdul Fathah, a research student at Jamia Madeenathunnoor and Graduate Student at IGNOU.

You may also find other reports on our [The Migration News](http://The Migration News) website or watch the recordings of all of the webinars on [Diaspora Transnationalism YouTube channel](http://Diaspora Transnationalism YouTube channel).

In the current issue you will also find a detailed analysis of the 28<sup>th</sup> Africa- France summit by Jean Edwidge PETIT-FRERE, an MSc candidate in Migrations Studies, whose work is concerned with actors and institutions of migration, reception, and international solidarity in France. The summit ought to promote the relations between Africa and France and was organized by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and took place between 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 in Montpellier.

Finally, this issue includes a review of "*Downwardly Global: Women, Work, and Citizenship in the Pakistani Diaspora*". The book was published in 2017 and is an ethnographic study conducted by Lalaie Ameeriar which examines the intimate and affective dimensions of multicultural belonging of Pakistani professional female workers in Canada.

We hope you will enjoy reading our new issue of *Roots and Routes* and be enriched with new perspectives. If you have any comments or suggestions, the GRFDT team can be reached through email [editorinchief@grfdt.com](mailto:editorinchief@grfdt.com). We would be pleased to hear from you!

Happy Reading!

Indriga Valiukaite

# GCM Report

## Addressing Vulnerabilities: An Inclusive Approach For a Better World

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021, [the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism \(GRFDT\)](#), [the Migrant Forum in Asia \(MFA\)](#), [the Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants \(CCRM\)](#), [International Institute for Migration and Development\(IIMAD\)](#) and [Metropolis Asia-Pacific \(MAP\)](#) jointly organized a panel discussion on the Objective 7 of the [Global Compact for Migration](#). The session was moderated by Mr. William Gois, Regional Coordinator of the Migrant Forum in Asia and attended by three prominent panelists and various other experts who presented their ideas on the topic “Address and Reduce Vulnerabilities in Migration”

### **The failure of states to implement right-based governance**

The moderator began the session by asking how we can bring the change that is necessary for a much more justice-oriented kind of governance program on migration. He gave a glimpse into the previous discussion that concluded how our response in migration governance are not nuanced in ways that involve the institutionalized and weaponized forms of discriminations along race, religion and nationality. Reflecting on the objective of the panel “Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration”, Gois critically examined various shades of reducing vulnerabilities and probed into the reason why member states have used the word “reduce” and not other alternatives. For him, vulnerabilities are much constructed by the member states who as duty bearers fails to implement a right-based governance approach. He drew a typical

example of vulnerability by stating how allowing market forces to dominate the recruitment process result in irregular channels of migration and leads to xenophobic narratives about migrants. Gois then turned to panelists to have a deep look into the emerging issues of broader discussion on vulnerabilities and review some of the policy governance options.

### **Balancing the rights of migrants and sovereignty of member states**

Aron Gebremariam is a migration and development specialist and has worked with the Commission for Africa and with International Organization for Migration in Gambia. He pointed out progressive developments in the GCM document with regard to recognizing access to business services and recognizing migratory status as a positive factor in reducing vulnerabilities.

He also pointed out certain low points i.e., the document has not addressed root causes in terms of expanding legal pathways for regularizing migratory status of irregular migrants. GCM also fell short of completely avoiding forced repatriation as the document qualifies it as ‘arbitrary’. Therefore, Aron says that GCM had treaded a unique balancing act by keeping human rights of the migrants at the center of the discussion while simultaneously respecting the sovereignty of member states. Answering moderator’s question whether states would be willing to bear the costs of basic services of the migrants at a time welfare states are facing resource constraints and also opposition from domestic forces, Aron highlighted why there is no evidence to support that migrants are consuming disproportionate resources



Metropolis  
Asia - Pacific

**Thurs 24 March 2022**  
**13.00 - 14.30(CET)**



**GCM OBJECTIVE 23: STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION**

**Speakers**



**Sanusha Naidu**  
Senior Foreign Policy Analyst  
Institute for Global Dialogue



**Dr Raj Bardouille**  
Former Senior Official - United Nations  
Commonwealth of Dominica

**Moderator**



**Paddy Siyanga Knudsen**  
Vice President - Global Research Forum on Diaspora & Transnationalism



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Metropolis  
Asia - Pacific

**Thurs 10 March 2022**  
**13.00 - 14.30(CET)**



**GCM OBJECTIVE 22: ESTABLISH MECHANISMS FOR THE PORTABILITY OF SOCIAL SECURITY ENTITLEMENTS AND EARNED BENEFITS**

**Speakers**



**Laxman Basnet**  
General Secretary  
South Asian Regional Trade Union Council



**Dr Kennedy Achakoma**  
Labour Economist  
Ghana Labour College of Trades Union Congress



**Ellene Sana**  
Executive Director  
Center for Migrant Advocacy Philippines (CMA)

**Moderator**



**Paddy Siyanga Knudsen**  
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from natives.

**“The evidence suggests that migrants are actually contributing a lot more than non-migrants. If you look at the global GDP, the figure for 2020 is that migrant’s contribution to the global GDP is about 9 percent of total GDP while the number of international migrants only account for a little more than three percent”:** Aron Gebremariam

Further, for him, it is not primarily a question of resources, but of human rights and administrative and legal procedures that expel and detain irregular migrants. Aron also answered a question on regional configurations at African level that are looking at right-based approach to migration. He listed a host of institutional processes such as the Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) that have played a very critical role in expanding our understanding of south-south migration dynamics and gave practical example of what can be done when there is an alignment of objectives in interstate dialogues. Though very effective in creating a political climate facilitating the GCM objective, he states that contrary to Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) that has resulted in policy developments in the form of regional free-movement protocol, the former has remained as a programmatic approach rather than a policy process. Aron however does not miss a common challenge to these interstate dialogues when there is a misalignment of objectives among member countries.

### **The lived reality of Somali diaspora and their potential for community development**

Sara Ahmed, who is a PhD candidate in gender and Somali diaspora and Founder Director of Somalia Gender Hub focused her presentation specifically on

youth vulnerability from a gender perspective. With a personal experience of being a refugee in Europe, she moved beyond considering vulnerability as a concept and rather examines it as a lived reality from stories enveloping vulnerabilities from the point of departure to the point of destination via transit. **“Vulnerability is very much linked to insecurity and inequality”** she stated as she points to the inequality at multiple levels of gender, ethnicity and disability that compounds to make the lives of migrants doubly problematic.

It is the unfortunate image of the western world as a dream destination and the economic imperatives that pressure young people with unprecedented burden to choose such a scenario. To address those multiple challenges and distinctive nature of each migrant that is usually missed in the analysis, she had made use of feminist tools and the concept of intersectionality. She narrates a story of young Somali man who aspires to migrate to Europe to alleviate the difficult circumstance of his family, but ends up in the hands of smugglers who demands an exorbitant amount of ransom from his family. **“There is little known about the families that are left behind”** she adds as she reflects on the vulnerability of the policies and rules that are put in place for these already vulnerable migrants. African people migrating to Europe are understood as a burden while western people coming to Africa are generally seen as expatriates encouraged for their expertise. She pointed out this contradictory perception to recognize the potential of those African youths fleeing from conflict to be utilized properly so that they can be the agents who can go back home and bring about concrete change.

She also replied to a question from the moderator regarding the policies member states could do to initiate this potential, where she highlighted that refugee measures in Europe, except in some organizations like

the **Shabaka** are not conducive to build an individual who can go home and contribute. By inviting listener's attention to the role Somali diaspora has been playing in responding early and effectively to calamities, she asked them to think about how more robust migration policies could build resilient African communities better able to cope with these challenges. The potential is huge because as the speaker notes: **“they are doing so with the intention of building their lives, bettering their own family's lives and contributing significantly to their communities”**

### **The refugee children: Inclusive decision making**

Memory Mandikiana, who is working on the effects of COVID-19 on the displaced children of the Tongogara refugee camp in Zimbabwe specifically mentioned about the forced migration from the four different categories of migration. She listed labour migration, forced migration, retirement migration and internal migration as other categories where similar kind of structural and procedural violence exist. She understands the encampment policy of Zimbabwe government resulting in sexual abuse, mental challenges, child labour and language barriers for the asylum-seeking children coming from francophone countries. The other vulnerabilities she charts include early marriages, teenage pregnancies and other subtler issues like limited dietary diversity and lack of basic services like leisure activities for children that are enshrined in the Article 31 of the UNHCR Convention.

**“As much as refugees are perceived as a vulnerable group, refugee children are at the crux of that vulnerability complex”** she states. Memory sheds light on some revolutionary practices in the field: the foster care system in Zimbabwe where minors are attached to a certain family who are willing to take and nurture them and other practices like offering training

and counselling services to hear their problem from themselves. She said that these are applied through a partnership approach where organizations, UNHCR and the government pool resources together. She also lamented about the encampment policy of the Zimbabwe government in reservation of Articles 17 and 26 of the 1951 UN convention on refugees: **“this is sort of like a temporary situation. Unfortunately, it ends up being permanent somewhat because we have got refugees that have been in the camp for at least a decade or so”**. Finally, she stressed that as far as vulnerability of children is considered, it is not just about making decision for them, but also to find out from them their condition and their understanding of the solution.

### **“Anything for us without us is not for us”: Memory Mandikiana**

Wholly, the conversation explored a wide range of discourses on vulnerability, including vulnerabilities that are structural, personal and from the perspectives of children and feminist theories. The panelists gave due significance to the context of these vulnerabilities and how dialogue with the victims could unearth many situations that are not possibly taken into consideration. The moderator concluded the panel by asking the panelists and attenders to explore further the connection between GCM objective 7 and objective 2 that dealt with the drivers of migration. He alluded that the drivers of migration might be also the causes of some of the vulnerable situation migrants find themselves in.

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**M Abdul Fathah**, Research Student at Jamia Madeenathunnoor and Graduate Student at IGNOU.  
Twitter: [@M\\_Abdul\\_Fathah](https://twitter.com/M_Abdul_Fathah)

## Africa-France summit: the new generations defend a reorientation of the relation

*Africa has spoken. It delivered and rejected the control strategies of France, which have always characterized its relations with the old continent. But this time, it was neither representatives of public institutions nor heads of state who had the right to speak. The latter has been granted to new generations. Contrary to what the public authorities would have done, young people from various African countries question the French interventions considered public aid in Africa without any waffle.*

This summit organized by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs from 5 to 8 October 2021, in Montpellier focused on the themes: civic engagement, higher education and research, entrepreneurship and innovation, culture, and sport. It brought together entrepreneurs, intellectuals, researchers, creators, athletes, artists, and influencers and put French President Emmanuel Macron in front of the African youth.

Emmanuel Macron wanted this 28th summit between France and Africa to mark a break from the previous ones and provide an opportunity for an open dialogue between civil society actors. Since February 2021, he has entrusted historian and political scientist Achille Mbembé with preparing this event to listen to young Africans and the African diaspora members in France.

Professor Achille Mbembé was able to mobilize between March and July 2021 more than sixty-five (65) debates and meetings in a dozen countries of the African continent and cities in France. He collected the grievances of personalities living in Africa and members of the African diaspora in France.

At the end of these exchanges, a report was submitted to President Emmanuel Macron in which a set of recommendations were included, including the “rebuilding” of relations between Africa and France and the creation of a structure called “Maison of the African worlds and the diasporas ” to honor the memory of the Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé.

During this summit, which aims to facilitate the reorientation of Africa-France relations, eleven (11) young people from different African countries questioned the impact of French development aid and French interference in African policies. With unparalleled elegance combined with frankness, the young woman named Rayimwende Eldaa Koama described the common ills of African youth about France-Africa relations. The entrepreneur vehemently denounced the methods used in the articulation of aid in Africa. Without any filter, it puts President Macron in the face of France’s bitter failure on the African continent. She pointed out the French Development Agency, whose dilapidation is proven but the actions are still not followed up. She then invited the head of state to redefine the direction of this fund jointly with those who are supposed to be beneficiaries.

With directness, she compared Africa-France relations to a pot full of corruption, French attitudes that devalue Africa, and requested the president to take concrete actions to cleanse it. “If relations between Africa and France are a pot, know that it is filthy. And it must be scoured by concrete steps. Otherwise, Africa will no longer eat. You will be all alone at the table with a problematic appetite,” the Burkinabé woman engaged in digital and social entrepreneurship stated without batting an eyelid.

The question of keeping the reserve of the CFA Franc funds that became ECO after the agreement signed between France and the member states of the West African Monetary Union in 2020 also entered the discussions. Young Senegalese activist Sheik Fall lambasting Africa’s humiliating dependence on France asked Macron to refuse custody of this reserve in Paris. In addition, he denounced the political influence of France in African affairs. The young Senegalese questioned Macron on the need to stop all French collaboration with African autocrats.

In front of an audience of 3000 people, the eleven personalities representing the continent, all from civil

societies, demanded the reorientation of the reports developed by France in Africa. Suppose each of them had a speech containing their demands. In that case, they all have one thing in common: the end of the pseudo paternalistic cooperation that Paris has always had with Africa and the beginning of a relationship of equality.

From the outset, President Macron expressed his desire to review French interventions in African countries. He changed the term “Development Aid” that denotes French financial support in Africa to “Solidarity investment.”

By way of support for civil society in its initiatives to promote democracy on the African continent, France promised the payment of thirty million (30,000,000) euros. This fund, the deployment of which is planned over thirty (30) years, should be used to facilitate access to justice and fight against corruption and gender-based violence.

In addition, Emmanuel Macron announced the restitution of twenty-six (26) works of art to Benin by the end of October. This restitution will be continued

with the Ivory Coast and so on, according to the method proposed in the Savoy-Sarr report, Emmanuel Macron said.

This summit is unprecedented. If Africa has always spoken through the body of men from public authorities, it is new voices, especially young people who have lifted the veil of France’s failures on the continent, analysts say.

However, it should be noted that several African actors, especially intellectuals, criticize this approach, while some perceive it as the continuation of France’s colonial perspectives on the old continent. Others wonder about the follow-up to this summit in reaction to the so-called insignificant actions announced by France.

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## **Downwardly Global: Women, Work, and Citizenship in the Pakistani Diaspora**

Downwardly Global: Women, Work, and Citizenship in the Pakistani Diaspora by Lalaie Ameeriar. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017, 224 pp. \$24.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-8223-6316-3.

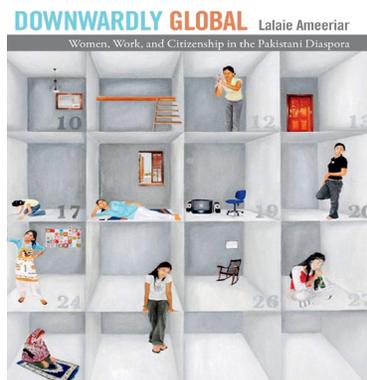
The multiculturalism of Canada has often been considered an exemplary political apparatus to govern culturally diverse societies and it has been even debated whether it could be ‘exported’ to other countries in order to ‘solve’ the ethnic conflicts and unify divided societies (e.g.

Kymlicka and Opalski, OUP, 2001). However, Lalaie Ameeriar in her book “Downwardly Global: Women, Work, and Citizenship in the Pakistani Diaspora’ has documented a rather different reality of Canadian multiculturalism in practice. In her ethnographic study, the author scrutinised the experiences of newly arrived highly skilled Pakistani female migrants in Toronto to better understand the causes of high rates of unemployment and found the institutionalised racism and economic marginalisation that presumably caused the downward mobility. The book successfully demonstrates how Canadian state renounces cultural imperialism and celebrates diversity through cultural festivals but simultaneously uses semi- governmental employment agencies to impose a certain type of acceptable Canadian mode of bodily comportment on new migrants reinforcing colonial notions of the uncivilised Other in need of domestication (pp.4-5).

During the eighteen months of the fieldwork, the author visited fifty settlement- services agencies for South Asians in Toronto, attended workshops and classes that ought to assist migrants with the employment and integration, conducted interviews with other workshop attendees and followed them as they navigated the

practices of multiculturalism in Toronto.

This included number of cultural festivals that turned out to be the contested category of ‘South Asians’ reinforcing feelings of exclusion and Otherness among the Pakistani migrants.



Ameeriar found that her study subjects migrated to Canada as high skilled professional workers (engineers, doctors, teachers and similar) but were unable to find work in their profession because of the bureaucratic obstacles to translate their foreign professional licenses, experiences and education into the Canadian context. The women were instead expected to take multiple exams or re-train which they could not

afford and often started taking various survival jobs instead and thus experiencing the downward mobility.

Most importantly, the book effectively highlights not only the failure of the state bureaucracy to integrate the migrants into the Canadian economy but the racialisation at the heart of the state- sponsored agencies that ought to assist them to integrate. During the workshops, the women were instructed to ‘don’t show up smelling like foods that are foreign’, to ‘don’t wear a shalwar cameeze’ or to ‘change the name if it’s too hard to pronounce’ (p. 1). The high rates of unemployment of high skilled Pakistani migrants therefore were not understood as failure of economic or immigration policy in Canada but as a failure of migrant workers themselves to assimilate and be more as a ‘Canadian’- global, professional and civilised.

After an engaging introduction, the book is organised into five chapters. The first three chapters offer detailed documentation of the class interactions between Pakistani female immigrants and the instructors who are the gatekeepers for them into Canadian society.

The migrants are met by various bodily instructions that they are expected to follow in order to fit it in as a professional global worker- a process that an author calls a 'sanitized sensorium' (p.1). Interestingly, the migrants were relatively successful in nursing jobs which suggests not only racialised experiences of these study subjects but also gendered. While for all other professions they were expected to be firm and self-confident, for nursing jobs they were instructed to be obedient and docile. Ameeriar successfully argued that, in this case, being a female, and presumably naturally caring and docile, was more important than being a Pakistani migrant therefore there could be seen higher success rates of employment in nursing compared to other professions.

The following chapters four and five, discussed the agency of the Pakistani migrants and their resistance to the government-imposed categories as well as the simultaneous celebration and exclusion of the same traits of Otherness by Canadian state in different contexts. Pakistani migrants attended East Asian festivals in Toronto organised by the state however they strongly contested identifying as South Asians as they felt they are being ideologically assimilated with Indians. This further highlights the practical failures of the proclaimed Canadian multiculturalism and equality of everyone's identity. Furthermore, in these festivals, the smells and looks of South Asians were celebrated while at the settlement- services agencies- rejected and therefore the Otherness was only acceptable as a commodity that was consumable. The book then concludes with the accounts of the participants and how their everyday lives were adversely affected by the financial burdens of not being able to work in their professional fields.

The success and importance of the book is the demonstration of the failure of economic and cultural integration of Pakistani migrants in Canada. It highlights the bureaucratic issues and the failure of the state to translate the licenses of highly skilled workers and instead of acknowledging these issues racialising migrants and portraying the unemployment as a personal failure to be a modern and civilised Canadian.

Nevertheless, the author's consideration of mobility is limited to occupation. The book only analyses and

compares the occupation of the study subjects in Pakistan and Toronto. There is little known about their lives beyond that, especially in the context of Pakistan. This becomes particularly problematic in the conclusion. The author asked the participants if they ever thought to return to Pakistan where they could perhaps work in their original professions and all answered that they would not because of other issues in Pakistan, such as political. Moreover, the participants said that they feel now more Canadian than Pakistani. To some extent this indicates that these women perceived their experiences in Canada more positive compared to living in Pakistan which in part is contradictory to the downward mobility argument of the book. Arguably, the study could be extended to include consideration of other indicators of mobility beyond occupation to better evaluate the social positions and experiences of the study subjects.

Overall, the book is very engaging, well documented and an excellent case study of Canadian multiculturalism in practice that would be useful to anyone interested in migration, citizenship, multiculturalism, integration, race or gender. Although the author does not specifically highlight this, I find it particularly striking the fact that the study subjects internalised the Canadian identity while being actively excluded and portrayed as Other. Importantly, this warns against any assumptions that internalisation of identity of the new country simultaneously signals the effective economic and cultural integration of migrants.

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Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski, eds., *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

**Indriga Valiukaite** is a graduate in MSc Global Migration, University College London. Her research interests lie in political philosophy and sociology with special focus on issues related to democracy, migration, citizenship, nationalism, transnationalism, multiculturalism, ethnic conflict, politics of recognition, identity. Email: [indriga.valiukaite.19@alumni.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:indriga.valiukaite.19@alumni.ucl.ac.uk)

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