

**IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND  
NON-TRADITIONAL THREATS  
TO STATE SECURITY:  
THE CASE OF KARACHI**

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## **Introduction**

While migration across national boundaries comes to be viewed increasingly as part of the mostly beneficial and unavoidable process of economic globalization, there are voices of concern and even alarm at the prospect of security threats emanating from irregular and illegal population flows. After the events of 11 September 2001 state security emerged as a primary political issue over much of the developed world, and perhaps vicariously, also among developing countries. With the world being forced to consider ever-new sources of security threat, there has been a tendency to regard irregular migration too as a non-traditional threat to state security. This report forms part of a broader study project on the subject of “irregular migration and non-traditional threats to state security” in the South Asia region.<sup>1</sup>

Migration and state security issues happen to have been matters of high political priority in the historical evolution of Pakistan. Mass migrations attended the birth of the state, and migration has been a conspicuous theme at every significant turning point in the political and economic development of the state. Pakistan has been and continues to be a destination as well as a point of origin and transit for international migration. State security too is a persistent matter of political priority in the country, so much so that state security considerations are thought to have determined the very course of political and economic development.

The present study examines the current situation in the country with reference to the position of irregular migrants in the largest metropolis and “destination of choice” – the city of Karachi. The study aims to provide a better understanding of irregular international migration into Pakistan through a detailed empirical analysis of migrant communities. Karachi, a city of some 14 million people, is thought to be home to as many as two million irregular international migrants. The city has experienced more than its fair share of civil conflict, violent crime, terrorism, and other problems commonly associated with non-traditional security threats. It is not surprising, therefore, that Karachi is the focal point of the policy response to perceived threats from irregular migration.

This study is significant because its subject matter affects the lives, welfare, and livelihoods of perhaps millions of people. Policy choices based upon commonly-held assumptions and perceptions can and do have a deep impact on people whose conditions, interests, and voices might never be considered through the policy-making process. Perceptions about international migrants as sources of non-traditional threat to state security have led to the adoption of restrictive, regulatory, and policing responses.

This securitization of migration has been done without much systematic investigation or analysis of the experiences of people deemed to be irregular migrants migrated. How did they come to be settled in Karachi? How have they sustained themselves economically? What is their contribution to the local economy? How are their social needs met, and what are their own sources of insecurity? In fact, there is no

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<sup>1</sup> The regional studies have been coordinate by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of the Dhaka University in Bangladesh.

agreement even about the precise quantitative extent of the “irregular migrant” population in the city.

This study hopes to address some of these questions through primary data collection in the city of Karachi. The empirical work whose results are reported here consisted of three distinct phases: (i) scoping exercise; (ii) census in three selected localities; (iii) detailed sample survey of 100 irregular migrant households in two selected localities. The scoping exercise was based on a number of interviews with officials, politicians, civil society organizations, other opinion-makers, and other key informants at the community level. Investigative field visits were made to various parts of the city in order to identify localities with a high concentration of irregular migrants.

### **City context**

Karachi the largest city of Pakistan is the country’s main harbour, as well as its commercial and industrial centre. It is the capital of the province of Sindh, and since 2001, has been consolidated in administrative terms under the City District Government of Karachi (CDGK). The City District is divided into 18 Towns and 178 Union Councils, the latter being the lowest rung of local government.

While migration has had a significant impact on the demographic composition of Pakistan in general, Karachi has been a particularly visible case. Independence from colonial rule and the emergence of Pakistan as a separate state marked an important watershed in the development of the city. The partition of British-ruled India into independent states of Pakistan and India accompanied large-scale movements of refugees and migrants across the borders of the two new states. Karachi became the destination for hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees and migrants who left India for Pakistan leading to almost trebling of the population between 1941 and 1951. There was mass emigration of non-Muslim residents to India.<sup>2</sup>

Karachi that had been a multi-religious but relatively ethnically homogenous space was rapidly transformed into an ethnically diverse Muslim city. On the eve of independence, 61 percent of the population spoke Sindhi and 6 percent spoke Urdu/Hindi. A little more than half the population of Karachi was Hindu. 10 years after the partition, 8 percent of Karachi’s residents spoke Sindhi, 50 percent spoke Urdu, and 98 percent were Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Karachi essentially became a city of international refugees and migrants.

This initial wave of Muslim refugees from northern, central and western India set the scene for further Muslim migration from those regions over the decades, as people sought to join their families settled in Pakistan. The second major wave was internal migration from northern regions – mainly from Punjabi and Pushto-speaking communities. This migration started in the late 1950s and accelerated through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, before flattening out in the 1990s.

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<sup>2</sup> In the 1941 population census urban Karachi had 387,000 residents. By the time of the 1951 census, however, Karachi’s population had increased to over 1 million (Table 2.5, Population Census, Census Report of Pakistan 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Hasan, A., 1999, Understanding Karachi

**Table 0.1: Migrant population in Karachi by gender and place of previous residence**

	Both sexes	Male	Female
Other district within province	247,475	138,992	108,483
Other province	1,081,908	674,965	406,943
Other country	607,291	321,998	285,293
Not reported	273,338	158,706	114,632
Total migrants	2,210,012	1,294,661	915,351
Total population	9,856,318	5,306,106	4,550,212
Migrants as per cent of total population	22.4	24.4	20.1
International migrants as per cent of migrants	31.4	28.3	35.6

Source: 1998 Population Census

In 1998, when the last census was taken, over six hundred thousand people out of a population of 9.8 million had previously resided outside the country. All migrants as a proportion of the total population amounted to 22 per cent, and of these 31 per cent had arrived from outside the country (Table 0.1).

**Table 0.2: Ethnic composition of Karachi, Sindh, and Pakistan (per cent)**

	Karachi	Sindh	Pakistan
Urdu	49	21	8
Punjabi	14	7	44
Pushto	11	4	15
Sindhi	7	60	14
Balochi	4	2	4
Saraiki	2	1	11
Others	12	5	5

Source: 1998 Population Census

Population census data on migration while valuable in setting the context, are not sufficient for describing the qualitative significance of international migration in Karachi. In fact, census data of a different type – namely on ethnicity – provides a quite different insight into the magnitude of international migration in Karachi’s growth and development.

According the Population Census, nearly half of the people resident in Karachi reported Urdu as their mother tongue<sup>4</sup>. The two next most spoken languages were Punjabi and Pushto (Table 0.2). These three languages taken together accounted for nearly three-quarters of the city’s population, a striking fact given that all three languages are not native to the region. The speakers of the two main native languages of the region – Sindhi and Balochi – were just over one tenth of the population.

Around four-fifths of the population of Karachi, therefore, consists of people who either migrated themselves, or are direct second or third generation descendants of migrants who arrived in the city after 1947. Migrants from what was previously

<sup>4</sup> The census considers the main six languages of Pakistan while the category “others” includes a number of languages for which disaggregated data were not published.

British India and their descendents amount to around half of the city's population. If migration is viewed in terms of culture and ethnicity, then Karachi is essentially a city of migrants in general, and, in certain ways of international migrants in particular.

While historical flows of international and internal migration became important due to the ethnic politics associated with them, these historical flows do not represent current or recent migrant flows. Recent international migrants – or people who had arrived in Karachi from abroad within five years preceding the census – were only 12 per cent of all international migrants, and constituted only 0.8 per cent of the city's population.

However, the census is likely to underestimate the flow of international migrants. It is thought that the census under-enumerates recent international migrants who might be suspected of being illegal entrants. Although the Population Census is supposed to enumerate all residents – regardless of their legal status – in actual practice there was confusion on the part of the census staff about whether or not to enumerate people suspected of being irregular foreign nationals.

There are two main flows of international irregular migration that are considered to be important in numerical terms: (a) people from neighbouring countries in South and Southeast Asia, including India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, (b) refugees and migrants from Afghanistan. The National Aliens' Registration Authority (NARA) was set up in 2000 by the federal Ministry of Interior as the agency charged with collecting data on international migrants. NARA estimates that there might be as many as 1.1 million irregular migrants from Bangladesh, and another four to five hundred thousand refugees or migrants from Afghanistan currently residing in Karachi. If NARA figures are to be believed, around one-tenth of the population of Karachi consists of irregular migrants<sup>5</sup>.

Given that reliable quantitative data on recent flows of international migrants are not available, it is useful to summarize the received wisdom concerning the main flows of international migration into Karachi by source of origin. The older more established international migrants into Karachi originated from India, while the more recent waves of international migration have been from other Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

**India:** As discussed above, the independence of division of British India was associated with a massive flow of Muslim refugees and migrants from various regions of India. Migrants to Karachi mainly originated in the Urdu-speaking regions of north and central India, as well as Gujarati-speaking regions towards the west of India. The main flows occurred in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Further migrant flows of families and individuals continued into the 1960s and beyond, but these might be regarded as a consequence of the earlier wave. The Muslim migrants from India came from diverse backgrounds – in terms of their regions, social standing, education, and economic conditions. Taken as a group, however, these migrants came to

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<sup>5</sup> The NARA data are based on a survey conducted by the Interior Ministry and based on secondary reporting by various police stations in the city. The survey was based on informed guesswork and extrapolation. There are grounds for suspecting that the results of this survey, particularly those pertaining to migrants from Bangladesh, might be biased upwards. Moreover, there are no other known surveys of people of Bangladeshi origin that might verify NARA estimates.

dominate the political and economic life of the city, and regarded themselves essentially as the core population of Karachi.

**Bangladesh:** Bangladesh and Pakistan were two provinces of one federal entity (respectively East and West Pakistan), and there was free flow of migrants between these units. In 1971 after the independence of Bangladesh, both Bangladesh and Pakistan were confronted with the problem of “stranded” populations. Several hundred thousand Muslim non-Bengalis resident in former East Pakistan chose to remain Pakistani citizens, and a large proportion of them migrated to Karachi. The main flow of “stranded” Pakistanis (also known as Biharis) is thought to have occurred in the early 1970s. On the other side, many thousands Bengali citizens of Pakistan who had migrated from East to West Pakistan chose to remain in Pakistan even after the independence of Bangladesh.<sup>6</sup> Large numbers of ethnic Bengalis from Bangladesh also began to migrate towards Pakistan in search of livelihoods, and most of them arrived in Karachi through irregular channels.

**Myanmar:** Migration from Myanmar thought to have started the late 1960s, when Muslim Burmese claimed to have been persecuted following a period of political turmoil associated with a military coup. These flows were largely into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). It is reported that the military government in Pakistan encouraged the Muslim Burmese refugees to move to West Pakistan. Many of these refugees were allotted agricultural lands in southern Sindh, and some settled in Karachi. These flows continued – or indeed accelerated -- through the 1980s when it was believed that political and religious persecution in Myanmar forced many Muslims to seek refuge abroad. The military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq is thought to have facilitated new migration flows of Muslim Burmese to Karachi.

**Afghanistan:** Although migration between Pakistan and Afghanistan has long historical tradition, the 1980s saw the arrival of large flows of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan as a consequence of civil war and foreign military occupation. The main destination points for Afghan refugees and migrants in this period were refugee camps established by the government and UN agencies in the border provinces of Balochistan and NWFP. There was also a steady flow of Afghans, however, into the cities of Pakistan, and particularly into Karachi. Every wave of political strife and military conflict in Afghanistan led to new waves of migration. Afghan migrants are settled not only in irregular settlements but also in established middle class neighbourhoods. Many of the migrants from Afghanistan belong to ethnic groups that have a native presence in Pakistan – predominantly Pashtun, as well as Baloch, Brahvi, and Hazara. The migrants into Karachi also include other groups, such as Persian-speaking communities such as Tajiks.

The story of Karachi is also a story of violence, of institutional breakdown and of a laissez-faire economy. Karachi has been the site of violent political, social and ethnic

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<sup>6</sup> Very few estimates exist of the number of Bengali citizens of Pakistan who stayed behind in Pakistan after the creation of Bangladesh. The NARA suggests that only 20 to 40 thousand Bengalis remained in Pakistan after the creation of Bangladesh (see Appendix). They maintain that the majority of Bengalis currently residing in Pakistan are migrants who arrived in Pakistan, by illegal means, in the 1980s. This said, it is one of the objectives of this paper to shed some light, based on primary fieldwork, on this issue

conflict in the recent years. Some of the worst moments of the civil strife occurred between 1992 and 1996 when armed groups belonging to rival political factions battled with each other and with state agencies for control of the city. Although relative stability and civic peace have prevailed for a number of years, the city retains a reputation for ethnic tension and lawlessness.

Migration has been a key factor in the political and ethnic violence that overtook the city, as the main protagonists sought legitimacy for themselves as protectors of particular ethnic communities. Groups chose to portray their perceived rivals (migrants and non-migrants respectively) as transgressors against whom organized protection was required. In some ways, therefore, Karachi in the mid 1990s represented, *prima facie*, a failure of migration policy.

It has been argued that the main feature of migration policy was its relative passivity. At the national level, the state was open to transnational migration from a number of neighbouring countries. There were clearly ideological, political and geo-strategic factors at play in the shaping of the national migration policy. The initial encouragement of Muslim migration from neighbouring countries was rooted in the ideological claims about Pakistan being a homeland for the Muslims of undivided India. Many critics of the migration policy claim, however, that various regimes had a political agenda in altering the ethnic demographic balances in parts of the country. Refugee movements from Afghanistan were closely linked to Pakistan's geo-strategic involvement in that country.

At the level of the city, the policy might be characterized as *laissez-faire*: city authorities absolved themselves of the responsibility for the pro-active supply of public goods and services, and allowed communities to rely heavily upon private entrepreneurs and self-provision. This characterization of national and city-level policies, obviously, requires critical appraisal and elaboration.

### **Current policy context**

International migrants who have not fulfilled all the migration requirements established by the receiving state, have at various points in time, been referred to as undocumented migrants, illegal migrants or irregular migrants. The use of the term 'illegal migrant' is now being phased out as various studies have highlighted that a person's entry may be illegal but a person cannot be termed illegal.<sup>7</sup> The IOM has recently introduced the term irregular migrants for undocumented migrants.<sup>8</sup> What distinguishes this group of migrants from regular migrants is that they do not possess any legal status with regard to their stay and employment in the host country.

The issue of irregular migration in the South-Asian context is further complicated by the politics of nationality and citizenship. Batistella and Asis (2003)<sup>9</sup> suggest that, in South Asia, the delineation of national borders and the subsequent emergence of migration and nationality policies defined the parameters of inclusion and exclusion for migrant populations; as a corollary, they also defined the parameters of irregularity.

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<sup>7</sup> Siddiqui, T. (2001), *Transcending Boundaries*, UPL-Dhaka

<sup>8</sup> International Organisation for Migration, (1999), cited in Siddiqui (2001)

<sup>9</sup> Batistella, G, and M.B Asis, (2003) "Citizenship and Migration in Asia," paper presented at the Human Movements and Immigration (HMI) World Congress, Barcelona

The ideas presented above suggest that irregular migration to a country needs to be defined in two ways - firstly, from the legal point of view, which is articulated by the state and secondly from the perspective of the politics of nationality and citizenship. Both these perspectives, in the Pakistani context, are taken up below.

In Pakistan, as in other countries, national laws define the status of the various types of resident individuals: citizens, visitors, foreigners legally resident in the country, foreigners whose status is uncertain, and foreigners illegally resident. The Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951, last amended in 2000, is the main legal source of policy in this regard. The official body responsible for implementing the law is the Ministry of Interior of the federal government.

In 2001, a new agency called the National Aliens' Registration Authority (NARA) was created under the Ministry of Interior. NARA was a sister organization to the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) which was charged with registering citizens of Pakistan and issuing them with new Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs). NARA's mandate was to register those residents of the country who were neither citizens of Pakistan, nor legally resident foreigners. In other words, the very mandate of NARA required an operational definition of "illegal alien".

The aim of NARA is to register illegal aliens and to regularize their status by issuing them with a special renewable identity card for foreigners against an annual fee of Rs 250. In addition, people registered with NARA can receive three-year work permits for a fee of Rs. 2500. These cards then entitle the registered foreigner to enjoy legal protection, reside legally, and to work legally for a limited period of time. With the lapse of that period the foreign resident can re-apply to extend his or her period of legal stay. NARA officials are empowered to adjudicate applications for registration, and also to prosecute people deemed to be illegal aliens who fail to present themselves for registration.

NARA, perforce, needs operational criteria for classifying illegal aliens, simply to carry out its functions. The definition of "irregular migration" and "irregular migrant" used in this study is based on the NARA classification. It is remarkable then that NARA's operational classification "illegal alien" relies almost exclusively upon an individual's ethnicity and their country of origin.<sup>10</sup>

Migrants and their descendants – including children born in Pakistan – are treated as illegal aliens if their country of origin was Bangladesh (or former East Pakistan) or Burma/Myanmar.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, migrants originating in Bangladesh who can sustain a claim of being "Bihari" are regarded by NARA as naturalized Pakistanis. In effect,

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<sup>10</sup> The NARA refers to migrants who have crossed over into Pakistan illegally as aliens. The NARA suggests that such migrants have come into Pakistan from 35 countries, and uses the term alien for all of them. For all practical purposes, however, the NARA focuses on ethnic Bengalis and Burmese as irregular migrants.

<sup>11</sup> NARA's initial mandate had included people of Afghan origin who had arrived in Pakistan during the many years of warfare and civil strife in that country. After the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001, and a new tripartite agreement between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the UN, people of Afghan origin were reclassified as "refugees" eligible for voluntary repatriation.



therefore, the authority's operational definition of illegal aliens focuses on ethnic characteristics. NARA officials in Karachi see their role as regulating the presence of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese.

People of Afghan origin constitute the other major group of non-citizen residents, but they are legally classified as "refugees" rather than "illegal aliens", and their status is currently governed by a Tripartite Agreement between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The present study, therefore, will only make passing reference to the people of Afghan origin, and will focus primarily on ethnic Bengali and Burmese residents of Karachi.<sup>12</sup>

The ethnicity-based definition of irregular migrants in Karachi has three immediate consequences:

First, those people who might have migrated from the former East Pakistan to West Pakistan legally before 1971 are automatically classified as being illegal aliens, regardless of the fact that they might never have acquired Bangladeshi citizenship. Many of the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese in Karachi claim to be descendents of people who had arrived as legal citizens or residents in West Pakistan before 1971.

Second, the set of people identified as "illegal aliens" includes many who have never migrated at all – as it includes the children of irregular migrants born and raised in Pakistan.

Third, the NARA classification refuses to acknowledge the authenticity of any citizenship or residential rights by people of Bengali or Burmese ethnicity. It is worth noting that Pakistani courts have not always sided with the NARA view. Courts have acquitted individuals prosecuted by NARA who were able to prove the authenticity of their claims to citizenship.

NARA emerged out of a process of political and administrative reckoning of the issue of irregular migration and its effects on the social and political situation in Pakistan, particularly Karachi. Its antecedents lie in periods of ethnic strife and violence in the city, and the perception that a relatively lenient (some argue supportive) policy towards Muslim migration into Karachi through the 1980s had created threats to the internal stability of the state. This securitization of irregular international migration in Pakistan corresponded closely with wider perceptions of non-traditional threats to state security.

### **Outline of report**

The remainder of this report is divided into nine substantive sections and a conclusion.

The next section (Section 1) provides the conceptual underpinnings of this study by examining the concept of "non-traditional security" in the specific context of irregular migration (and migrant communities) in Karachi. There are a number of different

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<sup>12</sup> For a recent study of people of Afghan origin in Karachi see Collective Team (2005), available at [www.areu.org.af](http://www.areu.org.af)

ways in which irregular migrants have been (or might be) perceived as non-traditional threats to state security. The section relies on stakeholder interviews in order to articulate a coherent view of these perceptions. A counter perspective is then developed, which places irregular migrants not as sources of threat to state security, but as victims of human insecurity. It is argued that most of the perceived threats from irregular migrants correspond closely with vulnerabilities that the migrants are exposed to by the virtue of their irregular status.

Section 2 provides a brief account of the survey methodology and a description of the fieldwork undertaken for this study. Sections 3 to 8 report, respectively, the main findings of the survey under the various themes identified *a priori* in Section 1 as being relevant to the linkage between irregular migration and insecurity. These sections report survey findings on migration and migrant status (Section 3), political status and vulnerability (Section 4), physical infrastructure and living conditions (Section 5), livelihoods (Section 6), social services and social protection (Section 7), and social networks (Section 8). Finally, the main findings are summarized in the Conclusions section.

# **1. Non-Traditional Threats to State Security and Human Security**

## **1.1 Traditional Versus Non-Traditional Threats to State Security**

The traditional understanding of security threats to a state as emanating primarily from other states has been increasingly challenged by developments in international relations since the end of the Cold War. The spectre of non-state international terrorism, particularly after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, has pushed non-state and non-traditional sources of threat to the centre-stage of the discussion of state security. The fact that non-state political and military actors might autonomously threaten a state's strategic interests has highlighted the limitations of the traditional approach to security based on legal, diplomatic, political and military relations between states.

Incidents of terrorism have been instrumental in raising alarm among rich nations about non-state sources of security threat. For many developing states and societies, however, many of the so-called non-traditional threats to state security have been persistent features of the political and security situation. Internal conflict and terrorism, civil strife based on political, economic and identity-based contestation, and unregulated economic activities including the drugs and arms trades, informal financial flows and organized crime, have all posed serious challenges to the project of stable statecraft in many developing countries.

The inability of a sovereign entity to effectively control its borders and to regulate population flows across its territory is viewed as not only as a symptom of state weakness, but also as a contributory factor in internal conflict, and thus a source of state weakness. Irregular international migration, therefore, is widely seen as one of the most important non-traditional sources of threat to state security. At the policy level this idea has been used as a potent antidote to the growing evidence of the economic benefits of international migration to sending and recipient communities alike.

## **1.2 Irregular Migration as a Source of Non-Traditional Security Threat**

There are multiple dimensions to the perceived linkage between migration in general and non-traditional threats to state security. These might be classified under four distinct though inter-connected categories: a) law and order; b) cultural intrusion; c) economic pressure; d) political conflict. These four scenarios which are, in varying degrees, pertinent to irregular migrants as well, are discussed in detail below,<sup>13</sup>

### **Law and order**

At a very simplistic level it can be argued that migrant populations in general and irregular migrants in particular might provide a cover for the activities of international

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<sup>13</sup> For example, law and order could, perhaps, be more relevant to irregular migrants, and economic pressure more relevant to regular migrants. Migrants from India, who have been discussed at some length earlier in the paper, constitute the largest group of regular international migrants. While these migrants have not been considered a threat by the state apparatus, they are, indeed, perceived to be a cultural threat by some local ethnic communities of the country. This issue is explained in detail later on in the body of the paper.

terrorist organizations. The presence of large migrant populations and ethnic minorities in a country might facilitate the movement and operational ability of terrorist groups across international boundaries, making it harder for security agencies to detect and prevent violent acts. Such populations might also, unwittingly, support an infrastructure through the prevalence of informal (and unregulated) channels of communication, social support and financial transfers. In Pakistan, there has been a strong presumption at the policy level that the presence of a large irregular population of Afghan origin has provided precisely such cover and support. The policy response has been focused on the repatriation of this population back to its country of origin.

While the threat of international terrorism is conspicuous in the policy debate, there are other ways in which irregular migration is presumed to threaten law and order. It is believed that there is a close association between irregular migration and organized crime. In Pakistan, for instance, cross border smuggling of illicit drugs has often been attributed to the Afghan refugees. People of Afghan origin are also presumed to be involved in gun-running, and violent criminal activities. Migrants from Bangladesh, on the other hand are associated, in popular perception, with human trafficking, the “flesh trade” and other “immoral” activities. To the extent that these violations of the law are deleterious for social peace and writ of the state, they might be considered threats to state security.

### **Cultural intrusion**

Most nation-states define themselves with reference to a dominant cultural pattern or identity. Irregular migration might pose a danger to the state if it threatens to create new cultural facts on the ground. In extreme cases communities might feel demographically challenged by outsiders representing different cultural patterns. Indeed, the cultural “threat” posed by large-scale international migration is a recurrent feature of xenophobic political mobilization in most countries.

This question is a complex one in the context of international migration into Pakistan. The official ideology of the state emphasizes its “Islamic” character, and therefore signals a willingness to accept Muslim migrants from other countries. Indeed, such migration does not threaten the overall self-perception of the nation-state. At the same time, however, migrants are not merely fellow-Muslims but people with distinct ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities. While they might be accepted by the state (and sections of society) as Muslims, they nevertheless pose challenges to existing ethnic communities. This issue is particularly conspicuous in those regions of the country where ethnic demographic balances are already matters of political contestation.

### **Economic pressure**

A frequently-cited objection to international migration is couched in terms of rivalry for scarce economic resources – both publicly-provided and market mediated. It is commonly argued that migrants “take away jobs” from locals, or that they place a strain on public services. This view might be interpreted in “threat” terms if it can be extended to argue that migrants and migrations might lead to economic pressures and therefore political destabilization. The “economic pressure” view is prevalent in the public debate on migration in wealthy countries with highly-paid workers and well-

financed public services. In developing countries such as Pakistan such arguments are present though less salient. They are most visible with respect to particular sectors and regions, rather than as more generalized perceptions of threat.

### **Political conflict**

Most of the arguments linking irregular migration with threats to state security are ultimately couched in terms of political conflict. Irregular migration and migrants are presumed to threaten state security because they might lead to political destabilization. Such destabilization might occur in a direct way through law and order challenges. It might emerge from cultural and economic insecurity on the part of the “host” society, or indeed, direct clashes between migrants and the original inhabitants. In fact, the threat of political conflict is often a trigger for policy action, even if the original threat might have been located in “law and order”, “cultural intrusion” or “economic pressure”. In the case of Pakistan irregular migration is presumed to threaten political stability not so much through provoking conflicts between migrants and the original inhabitants, but between political groupings among the original inhabitants.

### **1.3 The “Threat Scenario” in the Karachi Context**

In order for it to be subjected to analytical scrutiny, the general proposition linking irregular migration with non-traditional threats to state security needs to be contextualized with reference to a specific group of migrants, and a specific setting within the “host country”. For the purposes of the present study that setting is Karachi, and the reference group of migrants is the one identified by NARA as “illegal aliens” – namely people of Bengali and Burmese ethnicity.<sup>14</sup> The “threat” scenario is spelled out here in terms of its various dimensions identified in Section 1.2 above.

While policy choices have been driven strongly by “threat” perceptions, it is hard to find a coherent account of the “threat scenario” in any one official or political document. The nearest equivalent is a report commissioned by the Ministry of Interior in 1996 and completed one year later on the estimation of the number of supposed illegal aliens resident in Karachi. This report came to be known as the Shigri Report after its author Mr Afzal Shigri who was a former Inspector General of Police in Sindh.<sup>15</sup>

The proximate rationale for the Shigri Report was an examination of the “law and order” challenges posed by the large-scale presence of illegal aliens in the country, particularly in the city of Karachi. The main sources of information for the report were police officials and police stations of Karachi. The Shigri Report was, therefore, clearly based on a “threat scenario” particularly in the “law and order” dimension, and became an antecedent for the establishment of NARA. While the Shigri Report

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<sup>14</sup> As explained in the Introduction above, NARA’s operational definition of an “illegal alien” explicitly targets residents of particular ethnic backgrounds, regardless of their individual histories of migration and/or naturalization.

<sup>15</sup> The FIA is the apex police force of the federal government. The regular police services belong to the provincial level of government.

implicitly attests to the significance of the “threat scenario” in policy choices, it does not itself constitute a clear statement of the nature of “threat”.

Background work and key informant interviews conducted during the course of this study help to provide a coherent articulation of the “threat scenario” with respect to “illegal aliens” in Karachi.<sup>16</sup> The purpose at this stage is to simply outline a “threat scenario” on the basis of the opinions of some important stakeholders (or, indeed, their opinions about wider public perceptions), and not to comment upon the empirical veracity of the views expressed. It needs to be emphasized that these are perceptions, presumptions and even prejudices that have played an important role in shaping policy and political responses. The findings are summarized within the framework of the four dimensions of threat identified above – viz. “law and order”, “cultural intrusion”, “economic pressure”, and “political conflict”. The discussion here is focused on perceptions about irregular migration and migrants in general, and the specific targets of NARA (ethnic Bengalis and Burmese) in particular.

### **Law and Order**

The main threat perception vis-a-vis terrorism, violent crime, and arms smuggling and trade is associated primarily with people of Afghan origin. This is partly a legacy of the successive periods of war, conflict and lawlessness in Afghanistan, and partly a historical view of those communities as having been involved in arms and opium production in their areas of origin. Other irregular migrants or “illegal aliens” such as ethnic Bengalis and the Burmese are not perceived as significant sources of threat in these regards.

There are widely-held perceptions, however, that many Bengali men were involved in petty drugs dealing and petty crimes. Informants also suggested that some petty criminals from these communities had graduated into more serious crimes such as break-ins and burglary, but these were cited more as exceptions than the rule.

There is one area of illegal activity, however, with which the Bengali community has been connected in popular perceptions as well as the mass media. Human trafficking across international borders, particularly from Bangladesh and through India into Pakistan, is strongly associated with migrants from Bangladesh. More insidious forms of human trafficking, such as the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, are also widely believed to be a near-exclusive domain of migrants from Bangladesh. Paradoxically, while organizations, activists and media-persons claiming to be sympathetic to the plight of Bangladeshi migrants tend to emphasize this issue, many among the ethnic Bengali community feel that sensational media accounts of trafficking are unhelpful as they stigmatize the entire community.

There are, undoubtedly, many sides to the story. Cases of extreme sexual exploitation are undeniable, as various reports based on personal testimonies have shown. At the same time, however, there is substance to the complaint that NGOs and media-

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<sup>16</sup> The key informants included the following: Mr Arif Hasan, noted urban planner and expert on Karachi; Mr. Mir Nasir Abbas, head of the Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority; Mr Mohammad Ali Shah, president of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum; NARA officials including the Deputy Director-General Mr. Ameer Ali Shah. In addition informal interviews were conducted with individuals representing various political parties and civil society organizations.

persons might sometimes offer overly sensationalist accounts in a bid for public attention. It is clear, however, that one of the main “threat perceptions” concerning Bengali migrants emanates directly from their very “irregularity”.

### **Cultural Intrusion**

Threat perceptions with respect to cultural intrusion are important in Pakistan. The country has a long history of migration from neighbouring states. The political genesis of the state has greatly influenced attitudes towards migration and migrants. The original claim for Pakistan was premised on the view that the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent constituted a separate nation, and therefore, required a homeland. Muslim migration from India, and non-Muslim emigration from Pakistan were central facts in the formative years of the state. Muslim migrants from India were not only welcomed, but acquired the status of a privileged community in the early years of Pakistan. There were similarly liberal attitudes on the part of the state towards Muslim migration from East Pakistan to West Pakistan.

The liberal attitude towards Muslim migration, however, emphasized one particular aspect of the state’s cultural identity – namely its Islamic character – over other possible contenders such as language, ethnicity and shared histories. For those demanding recognition of these other aspects of cultural identity, the presence of increasing numbers of Muslim outsiders was a source of existential threat. The demographic changes were dramatic indeed. Karachi, the capital of Sindh province, transformed rapidly from being a majority Sindhi city, to a city where the Sindhis constituted less than a tenth of the population.

While the various ethnic contenders gradually came to terms with the dramatic changes brought about by the creation of the state, further waves of migration from the 1980s onwards began to be regarded with renewed suspicion. The migration of Afghan refugees into Balochistan was seen by the ethnic Baloch as an attempt to convert them into a minority in a province that “belonged” to them. Likewise, ethnic Sindhis who had already lost their majority status in the main cities of the province, were alarmed at the accelerated flows of migrants from Bangladesh and Burma/Myanmar into Karachi. Many Sindhi ethnic-nationalists saw the hand of a military-led central government in facilitating international migration to Karachi as a deliberate attempt at further reducing the influence of the ethnic Sindhis in the political life of the country. Some even felt that further migration was part of a campaign aimed at the cultural annihilation of the Sindhis.

The “cultural intrusion” threat perception in Pakistan, therefore, is somewhat different from the situation in other recipient countries where migrants are thought to undermine the cultural pattern of the nation-state.<sup>17</sup> In fact, it might be argued that Muslim migrants were actually encouraged precisely to strengthen the Islamic character of the state. At the level of the city too, the “cultural intrusion” threat is not significant. Karachi is, essentially, a city of migrants, and no single migrant group can pose a credible threat to the prevailing cultural patterns of the city. In fact, migrants and their children are likely to adopt the Urdu language, which is spoken by

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<sup>17</sup> Anti-migrant voices in France argue, for example, that a large Arab-North African Muslim presence in that country will undermine key pillars of French culture and society that have evolved over centuries.

the largest plurality in the city. It is with respect to intra-provincial ethnic demography, however, that migration and migrants are seen as posing a threat.

### **Economic Pressure or Competition for Scarce Resources**

How might the “threat scenario” be articulated in the Karachi context with reference to economic pressures or the competition for scarce resources? The resources in question are public resources as well as resources accessed through the market. Given the low financing and poor quality of public services in health, education and other social sectors, migrants are not seen as posing a conspicuous threat of crowding out the locals. Migrants and locals alike end up relying on the private sector, or on informal channels of service provision. In wealthy nations with well-financed public services and social protection, of course, the situation can be quite different. There are some public resources, however, whose utilization raises important concerns.

The use of public land for unregulated settlements (*Katchi Abadi*), and the associated unsanctioned utilization public utilities such as water and electricity, is presumed to place an unsustainable environmental burden on the city. The abuse of such public resources is largely attributed to migrants in general and to irregular international migrants in particular. Most of the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese and many of the people of Afghan origin reside in *Katchi Abadis* and rely on unsanctioned service provision.

It is estimated, however, that as many as half of the population of the city of Karachi resides in *Katchi Abadis*. This implies that the presence of irregular settlements and the use of unsanctioned public is an accepted norm in the city. Actually, international migrants are only a small fraction of the total population of *Katchi Abadis*. The reasons behind the expansion of irregular settlements and unsanctioned use of public utilities can be traced back to the inadequate level of public provisioning and a *laissez-faire* and reactive attitude of city authorities. Even if irregular settlements are a threat to state security (as they might be, if they are based on the mafia-like activities of land-grabbers), the role of irregular international migrants is unlikely to be very significant.

Irregular international migrants might be a source of threat if they undermine the local economy and livelihoods of original residents. Threat perceptions in this regard tend to be focused on particular activities (e.g. factory labour, fisheries, domestic work) in which migrants from various communities are thought to specialize.

It is widely believed, for example, that ethnic Bengali men and women, and ethnic Burmese men are active in small scale manufacturing units, particularly those producing garments. Ethnic Burmese women are thought not to take up employment outside their homes. There are frequent allegations on the part of non-migrant workers and their representatives that ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers are willing to work for lower wages, and have, therefore, priced their Pakistani counterparts out of their jobs. It is also often alleged that ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers refuse to participate in collective action for better pay and conditions, and are used by employers to reduce the bargaining power of other workers.



The ethnic Bengalis and Burmese have a disproportionate representation in Karachi's fisheries sector. Men are often engaged on seafaring fishing boats and in coastal marine fishing, and men as well as women and children work in the fish and shrimp processing industry. In some activities in the fisheries it is thought that ethnic Bengalis and Burmese have a virtual monopoly in the supply of labour. Representatives of fisheries workers argue that migrant workers adversely affect the livelihoods of the original inhabitants, and that they have introduced environmentally unsustainable methods of fishing.<sup>18</sup>

Domestic work is another niche sector for ethnic Bengali men and women. This is not an area, however, where economic competition with non-migrants is conspicuous. Domestic service is regarded as a relatively low-status activity for male workers since with its connotations of personal service. Women from economically and socially upwardly mobile families, moreover, would eschew domestic work because it involves them entering the private domain of other families. It is also believed that women domestic workers might be vulnerable to sexual harassment on the part of male employers.

Many ethnic Bengali and Burmese women and children are involved in various types of home-based piece-rate activities. These include labourious, unpleasant, and low-wage jobs such as shrimp-cleaning, making incense sticks. As in the case of domestic service this niche area of activity also does not readily fit into a "threat scenario" since any economic competition is not with a well-defined pre-existing set of non-migrant workers.

Finally, for the sake of completeness it needs to be noted that workers of Afghan origin are involved in some niche activities such as heavy lifting (loading, unloading freight, construction material, rubble), and rag picking. These are also low-paid, physically demanding and unattractive employment opportunities.

### **Political Conflict**

Although Karachi has seen more than its fair share of political and ethnic violence, relatively little of this violence has directly involved irregular migrants. There were armed clashes in the late 1980s between supporters of the emerging Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) and Afghan refugees.<sup>19</sup> These clashes soon took on the appearance of a wider ethnic conflict between descendents of Urdu-speaking migrants from India (who by now regarded themselves as the mainstream population of Karachi) and Pashtun migrants. Afghans specifically did not figure as important protagonists after that. Later, in the 1990s during military operations against the MQM many ethnic Bengalis were assassinated by armed militants on suspicion of being informers for the security agencies.

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<sup>18</sup> It is widely-held, for example, that the ethnic Bengali and Burmese fishermen use smaller gauge nets in order to maximize the catch. This has the effect of depleting the stock of fish, as younger fish that are not marketable in any case, are caught and then wasted. It is alleged that this practice was introduced by ethnic Bengali and Burmese fishermen, who, in contrast with established fishing communities, had little reason to care about the long-term sustainability of the sector.

<sup>19</sup> The MQM shed its ethnic label and was renamed Muttahida Quami Movement, or the United National Movement in 1997.

While migrants may not have been protagonists, irregular migration and migrants have figured as prominent factors in other political conflicts. The main point of concern has been around the ethnic demographic balance in particular provinces and regions, particularly in the province of Sindh. A closely associated issue, as argued with reference to “cultural intrusion” above, is the conflict within the Pakistani mainstream over the preferred cultural pattern of the state. The presence of Muslim migrants from neighbouring countries is seen as an attempt to highlight the “Islamic” character of the state at various junctures, at the expense of a cultural pattern that might reflect pre-existing ethnic and linguistic traditions.

While migrants themselves do not necessarily pose a threat of political conflict, their presence is seen as exacerbating an existing dispute over fundamental matters of state, ideology, and policy. To the extent this ongoing dispute is seen as being explosive, the threat to state security might be palpable.

### Summing up

The table below provides a brief summary of the “threat scenario” associated with irregular migration and migrants in Karachi, based on background work and key informant interviews. The summary identifies types of threats as well as the specific group among irregular international migrants that are associated with that threat perception.

**Summary of the “Threat Scenario” in Karachi**

	<b>Type of threat</b>	<b>Perceptions about international migrants</b>
<b>Law and Order</b>	Terrorism, violent crime Arms trade Drugs trade Petty crime Human trafficking Illegal sex work	Afghan Afghan Mainly Afghan, Bengalis only at petty level Bengalis Bengalis Bengalis
<b>Cultural Intrusion</b>	Ethnic demography	Afghans in Balochistan Bengalis and Burmese in Sindh context Minor issue in Karachi context
<b>Economic Pressures</b>	Land grabbing Public services Jobs rivalry Factory work Fisheries Domestic work Home-based work Heavy lifting work	All migrants – internal and international High overall reliance on private sector Marginalized activities only Bengali men and women, Burmese men Bengali and Burmese men and women Bengali men and women Bengali and Burmese women Afghan men
<b>Political Conflict</b>	Conflict with “natives” Conflict among “natives”	No significant role Sindh – Bengalis and Burmese Balochistan - Afghans

### 1.4 Migrants: Sources or Victims of Insecurity?

## **From state security to human security**

The “threat scenario” outlined above provides a coherent account of the possible ways in which irregular migration might constitute a non-traditional source of insecurity for the state. It is striking, however, that virtually every “threat perception” is linked to some aspect of human insecurity for the irregular migrants. Even if migration might pose threats to state security, migrants themselves are among the principal victims of the human insecurity. This sub-section proposes an alternative and more nuanced version of the state security perspective on migration. It is argued here that in all the four main dimensions of the “threat scenario”, human insecurity is an integral feature of the irregular migrants experience.

## **Law and Order**

Closer examination of the “threat scenario” with respect to “law and order” reveals that migration becomes a source of security threat primarily at the expense of the rights and well-being of the irregular migrants themselves. The alleged involvement of ethnic Bengalis in petty crimes, low-level drugs trade, and house burglaries, is premised upon their subordinate position within Pakistani society. It was argued, for example, that ethnic Bengali domestic staff who came to rely upon local organized criminals for protection, were then obliged to provide details of their employers’ properties and valuables -- information that was utilized to plan burglaries. Similarly, ethnic Bengali youths were used by drug traders to sell narcotics in their communities – again a relationship of subservience and one in which the primary victims were ethnic Bengalis themselves.

The case of “human trafficking and illegal sex work” is even more insidious. While some of the organizers and beneficiaries of these activities are ethnic Bengali men, the victims, invariably, are other ethnic Bengali men, women and children. Ethnic Bengali migrants pose a threat to state security, if such threat indeed exists, only at terrible cost to other ethnic Bengalis.

## **Cultural Intrusion**

The issue of “cultural intrusion” as a source of insecurity is perhaps the most conspicuous one in the Pakistan context. The idea is that a large migrant presence will change the dominant cultural patterns by introducing a demographically significant other population. But migration and life as irregular migrants have severe cultural consequences of the migrants themselves. As argued above, in the case of Pakistan the ethnic Bengali and Burmese residents have been caught between rival visions of the dominant cultural pattern of Pakistani society itself. One vision emphasizes Islam and the Muslim identity, to which the irregular migrants gravitate.

On the other hand an identity based upon language, ethnicity and locally-rooted tradition is challenged by the presence of migrants. Ethnic Bengalis and Burmese themselves, moreover, are under constant pressure to abandon their own ethnic cultural identity in favour of a more amorphous Muslim identity. The might also be under pressure to accede to those specific sectarian interpretations of Islam that happen to be political powerful in Pakistan. Their loss of cultural rights and heritage,

therefore, is likely to be even more severe than the apprehensions of loss faced by the local population.

### **Economic pressure**

Turning now to economic pressures and the competition for scarce resources, it is apparent again that the very characteristics of the migrant population that mark it out as a potential source of threat also signal its dependent and subservient position. Competition for public resources (in badly financed social sectors) is mainly restricted to issues in access to publicly owned land and other public utilities. While it can be feasibly argued that the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese tend to occupy spaces that are environmentally fragile, the main reason for this is that they are unable to access other less vulnerable spaces. The irregular migrants tend to be concentrated in marginalized settlements that also happen to have serious environmental problems. But this is likely to be the result of them having to accept the most marginalized of living spaces that are available in the city.

Competition for jobs, it was argued above, was restricted to some niche sectors and activities. Nearly all of the employment opportunities taken up by migrants are in marginalized low-wage sectors and activities. In the fisheries sector, for example, it is known that ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers tend to be exploited through extortionate labour arrangements, including bonded labour. Even the perception concerning the introduction of unsustainable fishing methods on the part of the migrants is related to the latter's insecurity. Due to their irregular and uncertain status, the migrant fisherfolk have short time horizons, and are therefore, more willing to adopt unsustainable methods. In other cases the niche activities of migrant workers include low status work (e.g. domestic service), unpleasant and low-paid work (e.g. home-based work, and fish and shrimp cleaning).

### **Political conflict**

Finally, the “threat scenario” must ultimately provide an account of how other forms of “threat” translate into political conflict. It was argued above that the nature of political conflict is not a direct confrontation between migrants and the original inhabitants. Rather, migrants and migration become factors in an ongoing conflict about ethnic insecurities, cultural patterns, and political power between rival local forces. In the case of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese living in Karachi, for example, one major political objection comes from the side of the Sindhi nationalists who believe that these migrants have been used to turn the original inhabitants of the province into a minority.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting to note that even those who are hostile to the presence of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese in Karachi on the grounds of ethnic demography do not directly blame the migrants themselves for this situation. Rather, they argue that there are other forces in Pakistan – e.g. the military government of General Zia-ul-Haq, or rival ethnic political parties – that have created conditions in which the migrants could be used. This implies that the conflicting sides of the political divide can at least

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<sup>20</sup> For a recent articulation (among many) of this view, see the statement on the part a nationalist leader Qadir Magsi, Dawn Karachi 6 June 2005.

agree, in principle, on the point that the existing ethnic Bengali and Burmese residents of the city might be hapless and unwitting victims themselves. This point reiterates the alternative hypotheses of irregular migrants as victims of human insecurity, even if irregular migration was a source of state insecurity (through the exacerbation of political conflict).

### Summing up

The table below provides a brief summary of the alternative perspective on irregular migration and migrant and security.

**Summary of migrants as sources or victims of insecurity**

	<b>Migration perceived as source of threat</b>	<b>Migrants as victims of insecurity</b>
<b>Law and Order</b>	Drugs trade Petty crime Human trafficking Illegal sex work	Migrant sellers in migrant areas Primary victims migrants Migrants vulnerable to exploitation Migrant women/children vulnerable to exploitation
<b>Cultural Intrusion</b>	Ethnic demography	Assimilation, loss of cultural identity, rights
<b>Economic Pressures</b>	Land grabbing Jobs rivalry Factory work Fisheries Domestic work Home-based work	Marginalized living conditions Marginalized activities only Low wages for migrants Low wages, debt bondage Low status work Low wage activities
<b>Political Conflict</b>	Conflict among “natives”	Migrants as unwitting instruments, exploited by various sides

The remainder of this paper will report and analyze the evidence based on a primary survey of irregular migrant households and communities in Karachi. The survey methodology is reported in the next section (Section 2). The following sections (Sections 3 to 8) report the findings of the survey with respect to specific themes. The survey findings will help to evaluate the empirical importance, both quantitative and qualitative, of the hypotheses concerning irregular migrants as sources or victims of insecurity. Finally an overall statement on these hypotheses is offered in the concluding section of the report.

## **2. Survey Methodology and Description of Fieldwork**

This section provides a description of the empirical work carried out for this study. The empirical work consisted of three distinct phases: (i) scoping exercise; (ii) census in three selected localities; (iii) detailed sample survey of 100 irregular migrant households in two selected localities.

### **2.1 Scoping Exercise**

The aims of the scoping exercise were two-fold: first to identify, *a priori*, the “threat scenario” associated with irregular migrants; and second, to locate the irregular migrant residents in the city to carry out more in-depth investigations.

The first objective was met through interviews with officials, politicians, civil society organizations, other opinion-makers, and other key informants at the community level. The main findings of these interviews have been reported in Section 1 above.

The second objective was addressed through preliminary fieldwork in a number of localities in the city about on the basis of prior information on the presence of ethnic Bengali and Burmese residents. There are few published sources of information that could be used for this purpose.

The Population Census (the last round of which was conducted in 1998) does not allow the identification of localities with a high concentration of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese. While the census does collect information on language, published data report their results only with reference to the main languages of Pakistan (Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi and Seraiki). Languages spoken by the irregular migrant communities clustered were under “Others”.

NARA documents cite the Shigri Report (which was based on returns filed by the Karachi police stations) on estimates of the ethnic Bengali and Burmese populations in various localities. A number of localities are identified by NARA as having a high concentration of these groups. These localities include: Machhar Colony, Orangi, Korangi, Ibrahim Hyderi, Moosa Colony etc<sup>21</sup>.

#### **Site selection**

Based on the NARA list, key informant interviews, and prior local knowledge of the field teams, investigative visits were made to a large number of sites in the city. At these sites the field teams conducted spot interviews with informed local respondents including shop-keepers, local elected representatives, and religious and community leaders to get rough estimates of the total population, and the representation of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese within the population.

The preliminary fieldwork suggested that the target population was present in a wide cross-section of poor, irregular settlements (*Katchi Abadis*) across the city. This spread notwithstanding it was possible to identify three important geographic clusters

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<sup>21</sup> NARA information brochure, attached in the appendix.

located, respectively, in the southwest, the north, and the southeast of the city. These three clusters represented useful contrasts.

The southwest cluster, centred around Machhar Colony, is on land reclaimed from marshes and mangroves close to the city centre. It lies between the city's historic working class district of Lyari to its north, and the fisheries harbour to its south. In some ways Machhar Colony could be seen as an off-shoot of Old Lyari. The colony has grown in size in the previous two decades and is large enough to be recognized as a Union Council.

The second cluster is broadly represented by Orangi, a large working-class districted in the north of city with *Katchi Abadis* interspersed among regular formal residential colonies. A number of *Katchi Abadis* in Orangi have a high concentration of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese. Orangi is located some 25 km from the city centre, and lies close to a large industrial estate.

The third cluster, located along the Korangi creek towards the southeast of the city is also close to the coast, and like Orangi at a distance of some 25 km from the city centre. Korangi has emerged as a major industrial estate of Karachi. Narrow strips of land along the Korangi creek, however, are occupied by old Sindhi fishing villages, and are, in fact, officially recognized as "rural" areas. Clusters of ethnic Bengali and Burmese populations inhabit *Katchi Abadis* (or more correctly, "urban villages") along the Korangi creek.

There were interesting contrasts, according to information collected in the scoping exercise, in the three clusters. While in Machhar Colony the target population was thought to be almost exclusively Bengali, in Orangi and Korangi ethnic Burmese were also present. In general it was found that ethnic Bengalis and Burmese tend to reside in common areas. In fact, as far as other residents of the city are concerned, there appears to be little distinction between the two groups, with the ethnic Burmese being routinely lumped together with the ethnic Bengalis for most intents and purposes.

In Machhar Colony and Korangi the target population has strong links with the fisheries. In the former this takes the form of seafaring as well as seafood processing. There are links, in Machhar Colony, with Baloch boat-owners and seafarers, who also happen to be neighbours, while in Korangi there are similar connections with "fish-lords"<sup>22</sup>. In Orangi the main economic activities are around factories, domestic service and home-based work

It was decided to select one relatively self-contained locality within each of the three clusters for further in-depth investigation. The choice of locality was guided only by the consideration that the selected site should be identifiable locally as a distinct neighbourhood, and that it should have no more than 200 households. There was no prior condition on the number of households from the target population, and in any case, such information could only be ascertained after a census of the locality. The condition about the locality or site being a self-contained neighbourhood was

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<sup>22</sup> These are usually Sindhi speaking influential people who also control the fishing activities in their areas.

somewhat arbitrary, and was imposed only to obtain a relatively well-defined geographical boundary within which to conduct a complete population census.

The neighbourhoods selected in each of the three clusters are not identified in this report by their real names. The survey sites will be identified here only by the name of the larger cluster in which they are located; references to the “Orangi site”, for example, ought to be read as identifying the specific neighbourhood in that cluster that has been selected for detailed study, and not to Orangi as a whole. The preservation of their anonymity is important for adherence to normal ethical research standards. In the case of the present study there is an added dimension of vulnerability of respondents due to their uncertain legal status.

## **2.2 Census in Selected Localities**

### **Census methodology**

A complete population census was conducted in each of the three selected sites. The geographical demarcation was a necessary condition for the census. The aim of the census was to generate statistical information on a number of important issues for the first time.

A full listing of households was conducted with the help of local resource persons. This was based on a visual inspection of doorways leading onto public streets. A household was defined as a self-contained unit sharing a kitchen and kitchen expenses. In most cases this would be a nuclear family with additional members such as parents or siblings. During the listing process it was realized that there was a high incidence of multiple household inhabiting the same compound and sharing the street entrance. The listing process accommodated these variations.

The census questionnaire included conventional questions concerning household composition, the age, sex, and educational and employment status of household members. It also included basic information on household variables such as the type of construction, tenorial status, and access to various public utilities such as water, gas, and electricity.

In addition, the census included questions about ethnicity, place of origin and migrant status of the household members. “Migrant status” was meant to elicit information about the actual experience of individuals rather than their legal status. A child born in an ethnic Burmese household in Karachi, who might be legally defined as an “illegal alien”, was considered in the census as a non-migrant.

Finally, the census questionnaire included questions about the legal status of household members, including their possession of various types of documents of residence or citizenship.

### **Conditions of fieldwork**

Field teams consisted of equal numbers of men and women. There were Bengali-speaking fieldworkers among men as well as women. It was possible to recruit and



train a number of male and female fieldworkers from the target communities themselves.

It was anticipated that the target population might not cooperate with the study due to its own security concerns. In the event, however, the survey teams received excellent cooperation from the selected communities. The role of trusted local resource persons was particularly critical in this regard. These resource persons were able to explain the purpose of the study to their neighbours and persuade them to cooperate with the field teams. In general the fieldwork proceeded smoothly and without any serious obstacles from the target population.

One important exception was the Korangi site where the field team encountered resistance on the part of some local youths linked to a political party. While these youths did not themselves belong to the selected site, and came from a neighbouring locality, their presence meant that local residents got distracted. In one case a fieldworker was physically assaulted, and threatened with police action. In the event the crisis was resolved, and the census was completed satisfactorily. It was decided, however, to drop the Korangi site from the household sample survey in order to avoid further confrontation. It was also felt that the requisite variation in the sample could be obtained from Machhar Colony and Orangi, where good rapport had been established with the local communities.

### **Data quality**

It is useful to anticipate concerns about the quality of data in this study. The target population lives under conditions of legal uncertainty and in an atmosphere of persecution. A number of crucial questions of interest relate directly to the legal status of the target population. Questions about the migration history of individuals, for example, would quickly establish whether or not that individual might be an “illegal alien”. Even the mere confirmation of ethnic origin might be sufficient to make a person vulnerable to NARA officials.

We are confident, however, about the soundness of the quality of the data collected. This confidence is premised upon a number of factors. The field teams have a history of conducting surveys in the selected localities stretching back to several years. There are strong connections with local resource persons, and it was possible to recruit local persons from the target population as field enumerators. A considerable amount of time was spent with local enumerators and resource persons both within the localities and in other settings in the city to reassure them that the study posed no threat to individuals or communities. It is also interesting to note that NARA officials do not generally have easy entry into these communities. They can face considerable resistance. This means members of the target population feel relatively secure within their localities, and are more open to questions about their legal status.

The prior confidence in the quality of data collection was subsequently confirmed through the pattern of responses received. Barring a few cases there were no attempts by the respondents to conceal their ethnic identities. Moreover, people were frank and open about their histories of migration, and were keen to share details about their individual and family experiences. Contrary to expectation, there was no stock answer about the date of migration. Even though a person might feel more secure in

reporting that she or he had arrived in Karachi prior to 1971, there was considerable variation in the responses we received.

### **2.3 Sample Survey of Migrant Households**

The final stage of data collection was the fielding of a detailed household survey to be administered to a randomly drawn sample of 100 irregular migrant households – 50 each in Machhar Colony and Orangi respectively.<sup>23</sup> The list of irregular migrant households in these two sites was drawn up using census data. The sampling universe consisted of all irregular migrant households – defined as all households reporting Bengali or Burmese as their first language. Thus, the NARA operational definition of “illegal alien” was used to identify the target group in each site.<sup>24</sup>

A detailed household questionnaire was used to collect information on a number of different dimensions of human security. The themes covered by the questionnaire include: legal status in Pakistan; the migration story; living conditions and tenure; livelihoods; access to social and public services; vulnerability to crime; and social networks and political participation. Under each of themes special attention was paid to issues faced by respondent households specifically due to their “irregular migrant” status.

While some questions elicit information of a quantitative nature, it was clear from the outset that a sample of 100 households was too small to make serious statistical inferences. In any case, the results of the census were available (for a much larger number of households) for hazarding statistical inferences. Many of the questions in the household survey, therefore, were intended to bring out particular experiences in detail, in order to help understand processes. The process of acquiring property rights in land, for example, and the problems faced in this regard were documented in numerous individual cases. Similarly, the survey was used in order to collect qualitatively diverse stories about livelihoods, vulnerability to state action, extortion by state agencies, vulnerability to crime, and social networks.

#### **Community profile**

In addition to the census and the household survey, the fieldwork included interviews with local key informants as well as direct observations, leading to information about various social, political, and economic issues in the community. Visits were made to local schools and health facilities to better understand the target population’s access to these services.

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<sup>23</sup> In the end the Machhar Colony sample had 52 households.

<sup>24</sup> While the sites were selected on prior information on a high concentration of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese, in actual fact there were several non-target households in each site. These households were excluded from the sample survey.

### **3. Illegal Aliens or Irregular Migrants**

The ethnic Bengali and Burmese population in Karachi is concentrated in certain parts of the city. While not physically isolated from other ethnic communities there is a sense of community in particular clusters where there are high concentrations of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese. The settlement histories of these clusters and their ethnic demographic profiles often have important implications for the Bengali and Burmese communities' livelihoods, modes of integration and assimilation with other communities, social and political networks, access to the state, and sense of national, cultural and even religious identity.

Some of these themes will be taken up in detail over the subsequent sections. The aim of this section is to set the context for what follows, by providing a brief demographic description of the survey sites and the target populations. The section is divided into three further sub-sections. The first (3.1) covers the history of settlement in the three field sites, and the evolution of the ethnic balance in those sites. The second (3.2) examines census and survey data generated by this study to examine the migration history of the target population. This sub-section aims to compare the official classification of "illegal alien" with the actual life and migration experiences of the target population. Finally, the third sub-section (3.3) attempts to capture the processes of migration and how these might have influenced the conditions of the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese and their interactions with other communities.

#### **3.1 Settlement History and Demographic and Ethnic Profile**

Machhar Colony was the youngest settlement among the field survey sites, having been established around two decades ago. The colony is an unregulated and illegal settlement. The land belongs partly to the Karachi Port Trust and partly to the Department of Railways. According to the respondents, the empty land on which Macchar Colony now stands was first occupied by ethnic Pashtun land-grabbers, who then "sold" possession of individual residential plots to others (including ethnic Bengalis). A primary motivation for the ethnic Bengalis to settle here was the proximity of Machhar Colony to Karachi's main fish harbour, where many ethnic Bengalis worked. Another factor was that the newer migrants faced difficulties in getting into older more established colonies. Machhar Colony, having been reclaimed from mangroves in an environmentally fragile area, was considered a less desirable location compared with some of the other more established irregular settlements.

The second site, Orangi is also an irregular settlement, though relatively older compared to Machhar colony. It lies adjacent to an old local village. The respondents claim that the local leaders occupied government land and allowed Bengalis and Burmese to settle there on payment.

The third field site, Korangi, is among the city's oldest ethnic Bengali and Burmese settlements. Korangi is an expansive industrial-residential area developed along the banks of the Malir river towards the southeast of the city of Karachi. There are old fishing villages on the fringes of Korangi adjacent to the river bank. The Bengali-Burmese clusters are located on the lands of the old fishing villages. The officially provided residential quarters are mostly inhabited by early refugees and migrants

from India. The Bengali-Burmese clusters are located in close proximity to these officially provided quarters.

Table 3.1 provides some basic information on the three census sites.<sup>25</sup> The census cluster in Machhar Colony was the largest with a population of 1,369 individuals. The Orangi and Korangi clusters had over 800 people each, and the population of the three census sites taken together was over three thousand. The Machhar Colony and Korangi clusters had very high concentrations of the target population (ethnic Bengalis and Burmese). In the former the target population comprised over 90 per cent of the population, while in the latter some 95 per cent of the population consisted of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese. The Orangi cluster was ethnically more heterogeneous, with over a third of the population consisting of non-target communities (Urdu-speaking and Baloch).

**Table 3.1: Distribution of census site population by language (per cent)**

Language	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi	All Sites
Urdu	4.7	20.0	5.5	9.1
Balochi	0.0	15.4	0.0	4.2
Pashto	3.3	0.0	0.0	1.5
Bengali	88.7	54.8	74.5	75.4
Burmese	1.8	8.3	19.3	8.5
Others	1.5	1.5	0.7	1.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	1,369	846	872	3,087

Source: NTS Census

Taking the three census sites together, three-quarters of the population was ethnic Bengali, and 8.5 per cent consisted of ethnic Burmese. The choice of the three clusters in Machhar Colony, Orangi and Korangi, was therefore, appropriate for the purposes of the present study. The current legal definition as interpreted by NARA classifies all ethnic Bengalis and Burmese as “illegal aliens”. Our selected sites with their high concentrations of this target population provide a sound basis for investigation and analysis.

### **3.2 “Illegal Aliens” and Migration**

The term “illegal alien” implies a history of irregular migration on the part of an individual or family. The census allows some examination of the profile of the target population in selected localities. It is important to ascertain the proportion of people in the target population who are actually migrants – i.e. those moved to Pakistan from a foreign country.

Table 3.2 reports the proportion of the target population in the census sites that was actually born in Pakistan. Nearly four-fifths of the target population in the census

<sup>25</sup> It needs to be reiterated that for the purposes of this paper, the terms “Machhar Colony”, “Orangi” and “Korangi” refer to the small clusters within these larger areas that were surveyed for this study.

sites (79.2 per cent) consisted of people who were born in Pakistan. In Machhar Colony the proportion was somewhat lower (74 per cent), while in both Orangi and Korangi the proportions were above 80 per cent.

**Table 3.2: People born in Pakistan as proportion of ethnic Bengali and Burmese population in the census sites (per cent)**

Census Site	Per cent of ethnic Bengali/Burmese population born in Pakistan
Machhar Colony	74.0
Orangi	86.3
Korangi	82.4
All Sites	79.2

Source: NTS Census

These figures are not based on official birth records, but on respondent's self-reported information. If these are accurate, this implies that a vast majority of the target population may be termed aliens, but are certainly not irregular migrants. This has two implications for the state and these communities. Firstly the police cannot technically charge and arrest these ethnic Bengalis and Burmese for border crossing. Even if many ethnic Bengalis and Burmese arrived in Pakistan illegally, a vast majority of them residing in the country consists of people who were born here. These individuals did not themselves breach any laws, and simply happen to find themselves in a legal no-man's land. Secondly, all individuals born in the country have recourse to the Pakistan Citizenship Act.

It can be argued that self-reporting might lead to biased results, since respondents may seek to conceal their immigrant origins from enumerators. It is possible to check how many, if any, of the target population had documentary claims of residence or citizenship in Pakistan. The Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) issued by the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) is regarded as an authentic and current document for identifying adult Pakistani citizens. The card is awarded to individuals after examination of their family records and birth certificates. Other forms of proof of citizenship and/or residence include the old non-computerized National Identity Cards (NIC), passports and birth certificates. Table 3.3 shows that nearly two-thirds of all adult (aged 18 and above) ethnic Bengalis and Burmese possessed some claim of legal residence or citizenship. In Orangi the ratio was 85 per cent, while in Machhar Colony it was 47 per cent.

That said, there certainly have been anomalies in the provision of these documents. Some respondents' CNICs state the population census number<sup>26</sup> as the household address. Since illegal settlements do not have legal addresses, these numbers are passed off as the legal address. Notwithstanding this, the fact that NADRA has accepted these addresses does give them a de facto legal standing.

<sup>26</sup> The population census entails marking each house in a locality with a particular number with a prefix "MS". This number is allotted only for survey purposes and does not substitute for a legal address.

**Table 3.3: Proportion of Ethnic Bengali and Burmese Population Aged 18 Possessing Any Documentary Claim of Pakistani Citizenship (per cent)**

Census Site	Any Claim	No Claim
Machhar Colony	47.9	52.1
Orangi	85.5	14.5
Korangi	74.4	25.6
All Sites	66.2	33.8

Source: NTS Census

Given that only around a fifth of the target population reported having ever migrated, it is important to ascertain the year when these migrants arrived in Pakistan (Table 3.4). Around 15 per cent of the migrants in the target population claimed to have arrived in Pakistan in or before 1971. This date is significant for migrants from Bangladesh because people who arrived up to 1971 would have come from East Pakistan to West Pakistan. They would have been internal rather than international migrants. The same would be true of most early migrants from Burma/Myanmar, who came to West Pakistan having first migrated from Burma to East Pakistan in the 1960s.

**Table 3.4: Distribution of Migrants by Ethnic Group and by Year of Arrival in Pakistan (per cent)**

	Bengali	Burmese	All Migrants
Up to 1971	14.3	20.0	14.7
1972-77	18.2	27.5	18.9
1978-88	38.5	37.5	38.4
1989-98	28.2	15.0	27.2
1999-2005	0.8	-	0.8

Source: NTS Census

The other periods in Table 3.4 correspond, broadly, with the various political regimes in Pakistan. It is widely held that the military government of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88) pursued a relatively liberal policy towards Muslim migration towards Pakistan in general, and into Sindh and Karachi in particular. Subsequent elected governments are thought to have resorted to more restrictive migration policies. The findings reported in Table 3.4 support this particular reading of the history of migration policy. The 1978-88 period accounted for a relatively high incidence of migration. Very few migrants reported to have arrived in Pakistan in the most recent period (1999 onwards). The contrast between ethnic Bengali and Burmese migrants is also interesting. It appears that a greater proportion of the Burmese migrants arrived in Pakistan relatively early compared to their Bengali counterparts.

Site-wise variation in the date of arrival is instructive. Table 3.5 provides the distribution of migrants by period of migration and census site. Migrants in Orangi display a steady flow over the time. In Korangi and Machhar Colony migration peaked in the 1978-88 period. Korangi, however, has migrants from earlier periods compared with Machhar Colony -- over half came before 1977 in Korangi compared

with just 22 per cent in Machhar Colony. The different in the length of stay of migrants might have implications for their respective levels of security in Karachi.

**Table 3.5: Distribution of Migrants by Settlement and Year of Arrival in Pakistan (per cent)**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi	All Sites
Up to 1971	10.0	24.7	20.0	14.7
1972-77	11.0	24.7	33.6	18.9
1978-88	40.6	23.3	41.4	38.4
1989-99	37.1	27.3	5.0	27.2
1998-2005	1.3	-	-	0.8

Source: NTS Census

### **3.3 The Migration Experience**

Having said that, the context in which many migrants moved to Pakistan, and their experience during this movement is crucial in understanding their vulnerability to abuse. While these experiences are diverse, the following sub-sections attempt to map out some of these.

#### **Economic Migration: The General Experience**

Most of the respondents mentioned that they or their parents had migrated to escape poverty and the increasing population pressure on limited land resources. The majority of respondents from the household survey contended that they had come from a predominantly agricultural background. As pressure on the land grew, job opportunities did not grow at the same rate. They had at the time, perceived that these would be more forthcoming in Pakistan. These perceptions were also strengthened by ‘agents’ who offered to take them to Pakistan for a small fee.

There are also perceptions in some circles that the Bengalis actually moved into a vacuum created by Pakistani workers migrating towards the Middle East in the 1980s. While this hypothesis cannot be rejected outright, there is some evidence to cast doubt on it. It is true for example that the modal value for migrants is in the years when the Middle East boom was occurring. One would however, have expected this mobility of labour to have dried up in the 1990s when Pakistan witnessed a large scale return of Middle east migrants. Table 3.5 shows that this apparently did not happen, and migrants continued moving in, although at a slower rate.

Secondly, this argument would be more pertinent if Pakistan had faced a labour scarcity in the years during the Middle East boom. Pakistan did in fact face a shortage of skilled labour such as electricians, plumbers and masons. The migrants coming in however did not possess those skills and cannot be found in large numbers in these sectors. The sectors that migrants did join, fishing, daily wage labour and factory work are sectors in which Pakistan has not necessarily faced a shortage, particularly given that there are no restrictions on mobility within the country.

Nevertheless the arguments presented above do not reject the reality of economic factors as a motivation. It is very plausible that potential migrants influenced by the growth rates of the economy in the 1960s and the 1980s perceived a greater probability of securing jobs.

### **Muslim identity and facilitation by the state**

That Burmese were allowed entry into Pakistan on the basis of their Muslim identity is a fact explicitly mentioned in the official NARA stance on the Burmese. The NARA document goes on to argue however that the right to enter Pakistan does not automatically confer citizenship rights and that they should be considered refugees.<sup>27</sup>

The experience of an old Burmese man who had himself migrated first to Bangladesh and then to Pakistan sheds some light on the issue. He claimed that he had been a farmer in Burma when the persecution of Muslims started in the 1960s. His district was right across the East Pakistan-Burma border, so he migrated there. According to his narrative the military ruler of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, addressed a gathering in East Pakistan where he promised to facilitate the Burmese if they moved to West Pakistan. Accordingly, he migrated to Karachi and was allotted state land in the Badin district of lower Sindh. His sons still cultivate this land.

Similar instances of state facilitation have also been narrated by Bangladeshi migrants. One migrant for example reported that in the 1980s, he and many other Bangladeshis had gone to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and stayed back. Many had got caught and General Zia-ul-Haq had offered the Saudi government to receive these people in Pakistan.

The accounts of these migrants do not suggest that citizenship was formally offered to them at any stage, as is claimed by NARA. Nevertheless, given the level of facilitation given to them, and by extrapolation to at least some other migrants these migrants never anticipated such a radical change in state policy at the time of migration.

### **Trafficking**

It merits mention at the outset that trafficking occurs only as part of a general migration stream. Furthermore, perhaps due to the sensitive nature of the issue, direct questions regarding did not elicit very many positive responses. However, the topic did come during the field investigations, and given the migrants' accounts some preliminary comments can be made.

Firstly some respondents noted that agents accompanying migrants from Bangladesh try to separate family members during physical migration. Once girls are separated from their families they are sold for marriage in different cities across the country. One respondent even claimed to have gone to Punjab to pay for his daughter, who would have otherwise been sold into marriage. That said, incidences of being sold into prostitution were not witnessed.

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix 1.



Secondly, it was noted during the household survey, that some women had migrated alone, without any relatives and had married Pakistani men on their arrival. In most instances they claimed their husbands had died prior to migration, and the loss of an earning member had pushed them to migrate. While the motivation could generally be held true, this does not rule out being sold into marriage by agents.

## 4. Legal Status and Vulnerabilities

The preceding chapter presented some initial comments on the legal status of the Bengali and Burmese community. This chapter will look at how the legal standing of these communities has evolved and the space that their fuzzy legal status has created for agencies of the state to persecute them.

### 4.1 Legal Status

Qualitative survey data suggests that ethnic Bengalis and Burmese face threats from two main agents of the state: first, the local police, and second, the “Bangla Cell” of the National Aliens Registration Authority. Respondents claim that police harassment is not an issue of particular concern. Whereas they do feel the incidence of harassment is high among Bengalis than it is among non-Bengalis, they can always get away by paying a small bribe. Getting caught by the Bangla Cell however is a serious mishap since even if they are let off for a bribe, the amount can go up to Rs. 25,000. The Bangla Cell therefore deserves a detailed discussion.

The stance of the Ministry of Interior and consequently the NARA on the legal status of the Bengalis and the Burmese amounts to considering all ethnic Bengalis as aliens, and all Burmese as refugees. Furthermore, any claims to citizenship are false, and all identity documents should be considered fake.<sup>28</sup> These assertions were made by the Government after promulgating the Foreigners (Amendment) Ordinance 2000 to make way for the creation of NARA. As part of the initiative to weed the country of foreign aliens and irregular migrants, it was also decided to replace the old National Identity cards (NIC) with new, computerized identity cards (CNIC) to the entire population aged 18 and above. The older identity cards were supposed to be phased out and considered null and void after a certain date.

**Table 4.1: Possession of Pakistani identity document by ethnic Bengalis and Burmese aged 18 and above**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi	All Sites
No documents	47.9	14.5	25.6	33.8
Only old NIC	26.7	23.0	19.3	23.5
CNIC	20.1	53.5	45.3	35.2
Valid passport	0.4	1.0	0.6	0.6
NARA card	0.9	0.0	0.3	0.5
Birth Certificate	1.1	4.0	5.1	3.0
Other	2.9	4.0	3.8	3.4

Source: NTS Census

The possession of the new CNIC would therefore verify citizenship or rather, “non-alien” status. It was initially thought that the applications for the CNIC would be made so difficult that alleged aliens would not be able to get a CNIC. The NTS census results as presented in Table 4.1 show that this policy has indeed had the desired effect on the residents of all three settlements. Around a third of the target population across the three sites did not possess any legal documents. Nearly a quarter of the

<sup>28</sup> NARA Information Brochure, See Appendix 1

adults (23.5 per cent) possessed old NICs but not the new CNICs – in other words these individuals had been “weeded out” of citizenship status.

At the same time, it is striking that 35 per cent of the target population across the three sites, and around half of the target population in Orangi and Korangi actually did possess the CNICs. The dynamics behind the acquisition of the CNIC are quite complex. At one level, respondents claim that they are able to bribe their way through. This, however, does not explain the overall low levels of CNIC acquisition: if the CNIC could be had through a monetary payment, it would be in the benefit of all to acquire it. The fact that only few are able to do so implies that non-monetary factors, say access to political and social networks might be instrumental in facilitating access to the CNIC.

This hypothesis is somewhat supported by the very small number of people with CNICs in Machhar colony compared to a somewhat larger number in other settlements. It is widely perceived that the Bengalis and Burmese of Orangi have support from a Karachi-based political party,<sup>29</sup> and those of Korangi are supported by the fish lords. It is possible that these networks have facilitated CNIC acquisition. Furthermore, it is widely perceived that Bengalis in Macchar colony have migrated much later than their counterparts in other settlements. It would be difficult for these migrants therefore to assert their citizenship and succeed in getting a CNIC.

The acquisition of the CNIC per se does not necessarily improve the situation of the Bengalis and Burmese. According to the NARA definition of illegal aliens and irregular migrants, ethnicity is proof enough, and NIC as well as CNICs are considered invalid. As shown in Table 4.2 further below, as far as harassment and arrests are concerned, those with CNICs actually fared worse than those without them. A well placed official at the NARA however claimed that Bengalis who were arrested under the offence of unregistered alien/irregular migrants have moved the local courts and have been granted relief. According to NARA, there is therefore a lack of consistency between two different arms of the ministry of interior.

At a closer look however, there seem to be evidence of inconsistency within the NARA itself. NARA literature mentions that all children born in Pakistan are aliens unless awarded citizenship through the Citizenship Act. Put another way, these children can take recourse through the Citizenship Act. The physical manifestation of the Citizenship Act is the CNIC. Nevertheless, the CNIC is not considered to be valid by NARA. It merits mention here that around three-quarters of the census population claims to have been born in Pakistan, reducing NARA’s jurisdiction to the remaining quarter.

It is interesting to note that although the NARA does not accept CNICs to be valid documents, other government departments are accepting them. For example, communities may access donor funds for development purposes by creating Community Based Organizations (CBO). The legitimacy of these CBOs is enhanced if they are registered for example as Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies with the Social Welfare Department. While non-nationals can register their CBOs as well, the founders of a CBO in Machhar Colony have presented themselves as Pakistani

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<sup>29</sup> The party in question is the Muttahida Quami Movement or the MQM.

nationals, and their NICs have been accepted by the concerned department. Similarly, the Karachi Electricity Supply Corporation accepts CNICs while issuing electricity meters in these localities.

#### 4.2 Persecution from State Institutions

There is wide agreement among respondents in the target population that the “Bangla Cell” of NARA was the main source of threat for them. The Bangla Cell is empowered with arresting any person it considers to be an illegal alien. As explained earlier, this definition is primarily based on ethnicity. The Bangla Cell has devised novel methods of identifying Bengalis in particular. Respondents even recounted instances of having been caught by the Bangla Cell after responding to the shout “Hakoo” (which means brother in Bengali) – the call, obviously having been made by a Bangla Cell official in order to trap ethnic Bengalis.

That said the Bangla Cell is bound to register all those persons found to be aliens. It can also charge and jail people for border crossing. Technically, these charges are to be imposed on migrants who have crossed the border after 2000, but practically speaking it is difficult for the accused to prove otherwise. And the onus of proof is certainly on the accused rather than the accuser.

NARA claims that its jurisdiction is limited to those who are not registered, and any person who registers and therefore possess the NARA card is not harassed. While the estimated number of Bengali and Burmese aliens is 1,164,793 and 20,644 respectively, the NARA claims to have registered only 72,100 Bengalis.<sup>30</sup> This is also corroborated by the findings of the census as only 5 people of the 3087 people surveyed are registered with NARA. Having established this, it is not possible to verify whether NARA registration does indeed save one from persecution.

**Table 4.2: Adult ethnic Bengalis and Burmese men reporting harassment and arrest by police/NARA, by possession of current legal document (per cent)**

Nature of Threat	Legal Status	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi	All Sites
Having current legal document	Harassed	15.4	2.7	16.5	11.6
	Arrested	5.9	2.7	9.3	5.8
No Legal Documents	Harassed	6.5	1.6	5.7	5.0
	Arrested	3.6	1.6	3.1	3.0
All	Harassed	8.1	1.9	8.0	6.4
	Arrested	4.1	1.9	4.5	3.6

Source: NTS Census

Table 4.2 provides a cross-tabulation of reported instances of police/NARA harassment or arrest by possession of a current legal document (CNIC and NARA registration). The sample is restricted to adult males, since this is the population segment more likely to venture out of home and the locality for work. One-tenth of the adult males in the target population had been either harassed or arrested by the police or NARA. It was striking that the vulnerability of harassment and arrest was actually higher among those with legal documents (11.6 and 5.8 per cent) than for

<sup>30</sup> The figure for registered Burmese was not available at the time the report was being written.

those without (5 and 3 per cent). There was also a market contrast between the three census sites. Residents of Machhar Colony and Korangi were much more likely to have been harassed or arrested than those of Orangi.

Possession of a current legal document, therefore, was no guarantee against police/NARA persecution – quite the reverse. It is possible that the higher than average rate of persecution among holders of legal documents was due to the fact that those who were more vulnerable to begin with had also taken the precaution (in vain) of obtaining legal documents.

### **4.3 ‘Razakar’ Group and Non-Traditional Security Forces**

Given the threats emanating from the state and other actors, the target population has cultivated a variety of linkages to protect themselves. These linkages primarily involve networking with local interest groups and political and religious parties. These are covered in explicit detail in Chapter 8. One such protective strategy – namely the “Razakar” (volunteer) Force – is worth mentioning here.

The Razakar Force is a voluntary group of law enforcers recruited by the city police. They are used to complement the ordinary forces during festivals and large processions. The volunteers are given an identity card, a uniform and badges. Of late, the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese have developed an interest in being recruited in the Razakar Force since the identity card and other paraphernalia allow them a certain level of security. They are interviewed by the Deputy Superintendent of the police and have to “prove” their loyalty to the country. On proof of loyalty, they have to pay a fee of Rs 50 to get their identity card. Respondents noted that this identity card could be used as a proof of loyalty when encountered by the Police and sometimes even the NARA. According to a local police official, to date, more than 500 ethnic Bengalis and Burmese from Machhar Colony alone have “volunteered” for the Razakar Force.

## **5. Physical Infrastructure and Living Conditions**

### **5.1 Physical Infrastructure**

#### **Land development history and land-grabbing**

The survey site in Machhar Colony was settled on reclaimed marshes and mangroves less than fifteen years before the survey. Being a coastal area close to the harbour, the land in the area legally belonged to the Karachi Port Trust (KPT). Land settlers (land-grabbers, also known locally as the “land mafia”) had taken illegal possession of the area and changed its topography by draining the marshes and filling low-lying ditches with earth and debris. The initial land settlers belonged to the Pashtun community who had migrated to Karachi from NWFP in the 1960s and 1970s. They were able to mobilize support through family and tribal networks, and used their reputation for violence to assert their effective possession of publicly-owned land. Once settled, individual plots were sold to other migrant families including the ethnic Bengalis who were settled there now. These transactions were current and enforced, though illegal in a strictly technical sense.

Orangi consists of regular government-developed settlements interspersed with informal irregular settlements. Prior to this development, the area was mostly barren shrub, with scattered Sindhi and Baloch villages. The area was developed by the government in the 1960s to accommodate working class families who had migrated to Karachi from India at the time of independence. These mostly Urdu-speaking families had previously resided in squatter settlements closer to the city centre and along the banks of the Lyari river. Large numbers of people were forcibly evicted from their original places of residence and resettled in Orangi.

New irregular settlements began to be established on empty public land, or on land previously owned by Sindhi and Baloch villagers. Much of the activity around irregular settlement involved illegal possession of land and its disposal to newly arriving migrants from within and outside the country. The survey site in Orangi was one such irregular settlement. This settlement was not included in a leasing plan prepared in the late 1970s when a number of irregular settlements (including those adjacent to our survey site) were designated for regularization. Eventually, in 1998, the survey site settlement was also included in a leasing plan.

Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (SKAA) is the government body responsible for regularization of irregular settlements. The SKAA is empowered to initiate leasing arrangements for settlements that have been in existence at least since 23 March 1985. The Orangi survey site that had not been included in the original list of settlements for regularization, was eventually recognized, retrospectively, as having existed prior to the 1985 cut-off date.

The Korangi survey site had developed near an established fishing village in 1978. A regular settlement called “100 Quarters” was developed by government in the area to house “Bihari” or “stranded Pakistani” families that had migrated from the former East Pakistan to Karachi after the establishment of Bangladesh. After the regular settlement was developed a parallel illegal settlement began to grow alongside it. The inhabitants of the irregular settlement were mostly people of Bengali or Burmese

origin. The ethnic Bengalis and Burmese arrived here from other parts of the city where they felt insecure. Many also arrived from rural areas of lower Sindh where significant numbers of East Pakistani Bengalis had been settled by the government in order to cultivate rice crops. Subsequently, migrants also arrived here directly from Bangladesh and Burma/Myanmar.

In the Korangi site local “fish-lords”, were the original owners of the lands in and around the old fishing villages. They sold plots of land to ethnic Bengali and Burmese seafarers working on their boats, by changing the official revenue status of land from agricultural use into residential plots. The transactions were not legally registered, however, and were conducted on simple written statements on Stamp Paper. Many of the residents fear that their property rights might not be legally enforceable, and that the actual land title might still rest with the “fish-lords” who have simply sold them an informal “right to possession”.

### **Roads, lanes and access**

Although the three survey sites are irregular settlements, there is some variation between them in terms of their level of public physical infrastructure. For the most part, public physical infrastructure is minimal or non-existent. The Machhar Colony site, for example has no paved roads or lanes, and the nearest point of access to public transport is over one km away. Both the Orangi and Korangi sites, by contrast, have better provision of paved roads and lanes, and more convenient access to public transport. The Machhar Colony site, however, has a lower population density in comparison with the other two sites, which are extremely congested.

### **Sanitation, waste disposal and environmental issues**

In all three sites there is some public provision of a sanitation system, but with varying degrees of effectiveness.<sup>31</sup> In the Orangi site all lanes have underground drains, and all houses are connected to these. These street and lane level sewerage lines are not connected, however, to any integrated sewerage system. Raw sewage is discharged into a nearby river-bed. In Korangi also, all houses are connected to underground drains at the street level. These street-level drains lead out into the creek. Part of the Machhar Colony site is serviced by underground drains, while others allow sewage and waste water to flow into nearby ditches. In all three sites informants were of the view that elected local government officials played a key role in obtaining the minimal sanitation services that do exist.<sup>32</sup>

Solid waste disposal is relatively well-organized in Orangi where there are designated collection points from where local authorities remove the garbage. There is a similar system in Korangi. In Machhar Colony, however, there is very little active government involvement in solid waste disposal. Most of the solid waste remains uncollected, or is thrown into ditches to be used as landfill. Machhar Colony generates large volumes of solid waste from shrimp and fish processing. There are several compounds in the area where contractors bring fish or shrimps for cleaning

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<sup>31</sup> The household sample survey indicated that all of the sample households in the Orangi site had indoor toilets, while 87 per cent of the households in the Machhar colony site had this facility.

<sup>32</sup> It is likely, however, that the actual works were actually carried out by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board under pressure from elected officials.

and manual processing. There is no proper system for the disposal of this waste either.

The Machhar Colony site is also vulnerable to sea-water intrusion during high tides in the summer monsoon season. There is little protection from the tides, and built structures are prone to extensive damage.

## 5.2 Housing Conditions and Access to Utilities

### Home ownership

Around three-quarters of the households in the survey sites owned their homes (Table 5.1). There was some variation across the sites, with Machhar Colony having a somewhat lower proportion, and Orangi and Korangi having higher levels of owner-occupation. A significant proportion (between 17 to 22 per cent) was made up of tenants, and a small proportion in each survey sites consisted of rent-free occupants. The latter were mostly extended family members. The “owner-occupier” status reported here needs to be qualified, of course, with the observations above about insecure property rights. This issue is also discussed in greater detail in Section 5.3 below.

**Table 5.1: Distribution of households by home ownership (per cent)**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi	All Sites
Owned	70.00	79.00	78.70	74.80
Rented	22.50	18.50	17.20	20.00
Rent-free	7.50	2.50	4.10	5.20
Total number of households	200	119	122	441

Source: NTS Census

### Type of structure

One index of the quality of housing is whether, and to what extent, the housing structure was made from durable materials. The standard classification used in Pakistan is to grade housing structures as being Pucca (or durable), Semi-pucca (or partly durable), and Katcha (non-durable). Pucca structures in Karachi are constructed using materials such as concrete and steel. Katcha structures might be built from wood, reeds, mud, patchwork, matting and other material vulnerable to the vagaries of the seasons. A semi-pucca structure, typically, consists of some pucca and some katcha components. Investment in pucca structures signals not only better living conditions, but also some level of confidence in property rights to the homestead.

Table 5.2 provides a summary of the distribution of households by type of house structure in the three survey sites. Overall, around two-fifths of the households had fully pucca structures, nearly half were semi-pucca, and a tenth were katcha. Cross-site variation was significant in this regard. The percentage of fully pucca structures was almost twice as high in the Orangi site compared with the survey site in Machhar Colony. Katcha structures were negligible in Orangi but constitute a fifth of all



households in Machhar Colony. The Korangi survey site lay between Orangi and Machhar Colony in terms of the quality of housing.

**Table 5.2: Distribution of households by type of house structure (per cent)**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi	All Sites
Pucca	29.50	54.60	43.40	40.10
Semi-pucca	50.50	44.50	50.00	48.80
Katcha	20.00	0.80	6.60	11.10
Total number of households	200	119	122	441

Source: NTS Census

There were several possible explanations for the cross-site differences. First, these differences might be reflective of cross-site contrasts in the overall wealth rankings of the households. Machhar Colony, therefore, is the poorest site, followed by Korangi, and Orangi represents the relatively better off among the target population. Second, these contrasts might reflect the differential levels of security of tenure across sites.

### Accommodation

Living conditions tend to be relatively cramped in all survey sites. In the case of Machhar Colony and Orangi survey data were collected on the number of rooms and plot sizes. On average, there were around 0.42 rooms per person, and the average area per person was 11.75 square yards (Table 5.3). In terms of the availability of space, Machhar Colony was somewhat better than Orangi.

**Table 5.3: Accommodation in sample households**

	Number of rooms per person	Average area per person (sq yards)	Number of households
Machhar Colony	0.43	12.36	52
Orangi	0.41	11.08	50
All sample households	0.42	11.75	102

Source: NTS Household Survey

Many of the houses were shared by more than one home – in other words, there were more than one unit with separate kitchen accounts sharing a compound. Often, this simply meant that a two-room house was being shared between the landlord and a tenant.

### Water supply

Living conditions for households are, obviously, linked to the level of service provision in the neighbourhood as a whole. It was reported above, that all three survey sites were “irregular settlements” to varying degrees. The presence of public physical infrastructure such as sanitation and waste disposal varied across sites, and this variation could be related to the level of security enjoyed by the community as a whole.

Table 5.4 provides the distribution of households by their normal source of water supply in the three survey sites. Overall, less than a quarter of the households had water delivered to their homes through a tap inside the house. Another 7 per cent of the households relied on a public tap. About a third, therefore, has access to publicly provided water supply of some type. The overwhelming majority, however, relied on private water suppliers – tanker-trucks (30 per cent) and local water sellers (39 per cent). Water sold by private sellers might also have originated in the public water supply system further up the chain of transactions, but delivery to end-users was in the hands of private sector agents.

**Table 5.4: Distribution of households by source of water supply (per cent)**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi	All Sites
Tap inside home	1.5	68.1	18.1	24.0
Public Tap	0.0	20.2	5.7	7.0
Tanker	37.5	2.5	45.0	30.2
Buy From Neighbour	61.0	9.2	31.2	38.8
Total number of households	200	119	122	441

There was huge inter-site variation in this regard, with over two-thirds of the Orangi households enjoying this service as compared to just 1.5 per cent of the households in the Machhar Colony site. It can be argued that the provision of a water supply inside the home is contingent on the extension of the public delivery system. While this might be a possible explanation for the virtual absence of the service from Machhar Colony, it does not explain intra-site variation in Orangi and Korangi, where some but not all households had water taps. In fact, the variation within as well as across sites in the method of water supply indicates the absence of a fully functioning water delivery system.

The water supply conditions were the least developed in Machhar Colony. Some residents had invested in excavating water tanks in their houses and installed pumping machines. They would purchase water from tanker-trucks for their own use, and for selling onwards to other households who did not have their own water tanks. A tanker-truck of water could cost anywhere between 350 to 700 rupees. In Machhar Colony households spent an average of 418 rupees per month on water – the corresponding cost in Orangi was 61 rupees.<sup>33</sup> Water sellers would then sell onwards to their neighbours at between 1.25 and 1.50 rupees per 10 litres.<sup>34</sup> A similar situation existed in the Korangi site. A local community-based organization, however, had developed a water supply scheme that benefited a number of households who then became onward sellers for others.

## Electricity and gas

<sup>33</sup> Household sample survey.

<sup>34</sup> This practice was so prevalent that a number of people in Machhar Colony reported water-selling as their primary source of income.

The overwhelming majority of the households in the three survey sites had access to electricity supply (Table 5.5). In Machhar Colony nearly two-thirds of the households had an electricity connection, while in the other two survey sites around nine-tenths of the households were connected. In these two sites (Orangi and Korangi) very high proportions of households also had gas connections, while gas supply was virtually non-existent in the Machhar Colony site. In the provision of electricity and gas too, therefore, the Machhar Colony site appears to have the worst living conditions of the three sites. Common sources of cooking fuel here are *bhoosi* (straw), wood, and dried bushes collected from neighbouring mangrove marshes.

**Table 5.5: Per cent households with utility**

	Electricity (per cent)	Gas (per cent)	Total number of households
Machhar Colony	63.5	2.0	200
Orangi	87.4	79.8	119
Korangi	94.3	87.7	122
All Sites	78.5	46.7	441

Source: NTS Census

The provision of electricity connections in the survey sites is a good illustration of the graduated nature of regularity and irregularity in the status of *Katchi Abadis*. At one level it seems puzzling that irregular settlements should have any formal sector provision at all. Electricity, after all, is supplied by a parastatal organization that might require the legal existence of an address or locality before extending its service there. The fact that electricity connections are provided to a majority of the households in these localities implies some level of official recognition even in Machhar Colony, which, otherwise, appears to enjoy the least secure tenurial status.

There are many ways in which people have negotiated around official regulations to ensure access to services. In the Machhar Colony site, for example, a number of electricity connections are, formally, assigned to names and addresses located in other localities with a more secure tenurial status. Electricity officials accept bribes to allow such discrepancy to persist. Another widely reported system in Machhar Colony and Korangi is the illegal supply of electricity to households through theft from power lines (a system known in Karachi as the *kunda* or “hook”). In this case too, electricity officials take bribes from residents for allowing them to use stolen power.

It is worth noting, moreover, that the power supply is highly erratic and of low quality in Machhar Colony and Korangi, and particularly in the former. In Machhar Colony, for example, it is quite common for there to be no power supply during the night. The use of lamps, lanterns, and candles, therefore, is widespread in both these localities, and the existence of an electricity connection is quite often only in name.

### **5.3 Insecurity of Tenure and Property Rights**

#### **Informal property transactions**

In the Machhar Colony and Korangi survey sites the “home-owners” do not possess legal title to the land. In the former, land legally belongs to the Karachi Port Trust,

while in the latter the legal title-holders continue to be the local “fish-lords” who wield considerable political and economic influence. The Orangi survey site has been regularized by the Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority, though a relatively few of the “owners” have applied for individual plot lease titles. For the most part, all transactions in property in the three survey sites are conducted on the basis of verbal agreement backed up by a written unregistered contract prepared on a simple Stamped Paper.<sup>35</sup>

Since land is not legally owned by most occupants, the transactions are nominally conducted on *Malba*, or the building/debris, possessed by the vendor. The transactions are generally witnessed by respectable local persons who chosen through the mutual consent of the contracting parties. These witnesses might be called upon, at some later stage, to verify the contract and to adjudicate over any conflict. In Machhar Colony the initial settlers of the land were Pashtun “land-grabbers” who then sold *Malba* to various other people including the ethnic Bengali migrants. In Orangi too, Pashtun “land-grabbers” initiated the process of settlement and *Malba* transactions, while in Korangi, the main powerbrokers are the Sindhi “fish-lords”.

In Machhar Colony and Orangi, the Pashtun “land-grabbers” continued to wield some influence for a number of years, mediated with the authorities, and claimed to provide protection to the residents against the payment of protection money. The “land-grabbers” gradually gave up their involvement in these areas to be replaced by other local political power-brokers, some of whom were from the migrant communities. The Korangi survey site had somewhat different dynamics, and here the relationship between the migrant residents and the “fish-lords” remained relatively more durable. The ethnic Bengali and Burmese residents were dependent on the “fish-lords” not only for the protection of their property rights, but also for their livelihoods in the fisheries sector.

The target population has been fairly mobile even after its arrival in Pakistan. Families and individuals have moved from other cities (and even rural areas) into Karachi, and have also moved frequently within Karachi. This internal “migration” has been partly motivated by the search for better economic opportunities, and partly by the desire to live in more secure surroundings in closer proximity to fellow ethnic Bengalis and Burmese. One implication for such mobility is activity in the property market in the localities where the target population resides.

### ***Bhatta* system**

Various types of *Bhatta* or “protection” rackets are in evidence in all the survey sites. These are the most conspicuous in the Machhar Colony site where the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) claims to be the landowner. It is a matter of routine for KPT officials and local policemen to patrol the streets during the daytime, and to demand bribes from anyone suspected of carrying out construction activities. The activities that attract the attention of these officials might include ordinary house-repairs, extensions to existing structures, and the construction of new buildings. There are fixed rates for each type of building activity and it is believed that the money thus extorted is shared

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<sup>35</sup> The household survey showed that 20 per cent of the sample in the Orangi site had lease documents. All other households had informal written agreements as proof of property ownership.

with other KPT staff. The bribe for adding a new room to a house can range between 1,000 to 2,000 rupees.

The failure to pay a bribe can attract a charge of illegal occupation, and arrest, detention and physical torture at a police station. The KPT and police officials operate quite openly in the area and enter homes without let or hindrance in order to check up on any new construction or repair work. In the sample household survey conducted in Machhar Colony and Orangi, 34 households in the former (65 per cent) and only 7 (14 per cent) in the latter reported problems related to property ownership and transactions.

## 6. Livelihoods

### 6.1 Access to Livelihood Opportunities

#### Occupational Choices

Ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers are thought to be concentrated in a limited number of sectors such as the fisheries, domestic work, and low-end factory wage labour. Table 6.1 gives a summary of reported occupations of ethnic Bengali and Burmese respondents in the NTS census sites. The results confirm some of the commonly-held views about the livelihood strategies of the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese, but qualify other views. The fisheries sector did, indeed, dominate the economic life of the target population in Machhar Colony. Nearly three out of four people reported working in the fisheries sector – as fishermen, seafarers, or in processing the catch – as their source of livelihood. Fisheries were also important in Korangi, though on a much smaller scale, and were almost absent as a source of employment in Orangi.

Another occupation commonly associated with the ethnic Bengali community is domestic service. Our survey found this to be a marginal activity employing between 0.4 to 1.1 per cent of the respondents across the three sites (Table 6.1). It is possible that the NTS sample is biased against the inclusion of domestic servants, if these workers mostly reside with their employers and are, therefore, invisible in a household survey of ethnic Bengali communities.

**Table 6.1: Occupations Reported by Ethnic Bengali and Burmese Respondents by Census Site**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi	Korangi
Fisheries	73.0	1.2	23.9
Incense stick making	-	42.1	24.5
Home based work	-	-	24.4
Low salaried private jobs	6.4	10.1	4.0
Daily wage labour	13.9	33.5 <sup>36</sup>	14.4
Shopkeeping	5.9	10.1	6.9
Government jobs	0.6	2.0	0.8
Domestic work	0.4	0.9	1.1
N	675	346	376

Source: NTS Census

Making incense-sticks turned out to be an important source of employment in both Korangi (23.9 per cent) and Orangi (42.1 per cent). This is extremely low-paid work, usually carried out by women and children on a piece-rate basis. It seems to be the equivalent in Orangi and Korangi of fish and shrimp processing in Machhar Colony. Other home-based work was important in Korangi where nearly a quarter (24.4 per cent) of the workers were engaged in carpet-weaving and other activities. Daily wage labour was significant across the three sites, but particularly in Orangi where it

<sup>36</sup> This figure is dominated by workers in garment factories.

accounted for over a third of all workers. Daily wage labour in Orangi was mostly based in small garment factories where workers were employed on a piece-rate basis, with virtually no contractual security.

There were very few among the ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities who were in salaried employment of any type. In Orangi one-tenth of the workers reported being employed in low-paid private sector salaried jobs, while in Machhar Colony and Korangi the respective ratios were even smaller. Government jobs appeared to be virtually out-of-reach, as only between 0.6 and 2 per cent of the workers reported having such jobs. Orangi appeared to be somewhat better off in terms of salaried jobs compared with the other two sites. Table 6.1 a strong locational effect in the profile of employment. While Machhar Colony was dominated by the fisheries sector (including fish and shrimp processing by men, women and children), other sites had prevalence of similarly low-paid piece-rate work in other sectors such as incense-stick making.

The clustering of ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers around a few sectors and activities might be explained with reference to two (non-exclusive) hypotheses. First, it has been widely perceived that ethnic Bengalis and Burmese who arrived in Karachi were mostly fisherfolk in their home countries, and they continued with that occupation in Pakistan. This is a labour supply story and focuses on the supposed preferences and prior skills of the workers themselves. A second hypothesis concentrates on whether there are entry barriers in other sectors that constrain ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers to be concentrated in particular low-wage activities.

With respect to the labour supply hypothesis, it is important to look at the occupations of migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar in their respective countries of origin. The results reported in Table 6.2 show that a majority of the migrants did not pursue fishing in their countries of origin, but were actually farmers. The switch to the fisheries sector, particularly in Machhar Colony, appears to have taken place after migration. Other occupations – such as incense-stick making, carpet weaving, work in garment factories -- that are currently important in the ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities are virtually absent from the occupational profile of the migrants in their countries of origin.

**Table 6.2: Migants' Occupations in Country of Origin (per cent)**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi
Fishing	6	3
Farming	56	60
Daily wage labour	18	-
Shop keeping	10	12
Others/missing information	10	25

Source: NTS Household Survey

A single coherent theory regarding the choice of occupations does not seem to be emerging from the qualitative fieldwork. Rather a diverse set of variables effect occupation choice. For a majority of the migrants the move to Karachi could be seen as rural-urban migration as well as migration across state borders. The earliest migrants in our sample are those in Orangi. Orangi is surrounded by host communities, and is by all standards deeply entrenched in the general economy of the

city. It also merits mention that Orangi is very near an industrial area, which is the production hub of the city. The residents of the surrounding areas had therefore been involved in activities such as incense making and garment factory work from before the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese arrived. It was natural for these people therefore to seek work in the same industries. Moreover, since they were demanding lower wages than workers of the host community, the employers also had an incentive in giving them work. It is also to be noted here that in Orangi, incense making is essentially a home based work been performed by women. Many of the garment workers are also women.

For the residents in Machhar Colony, the story is very different. On the one hand, the location of the settlement makes it conducive for work related to fishing. The settlement is close to the fish harbour and it is not surprising that a majority of the residents derive their livelihoods from the fisheries. It is not immediately obvious if the ethnic Bengalis of Machhar Colony (there were hardly any ethnic Burmese here) had chosen this colony because they wanted to work in the fisheries sector, or if they ended up working in that sector due to its proximity to their places of residence. It was found in the study (and reported in Section 8 below) that social networks based on kinship and place of origin played an important part in where people settled in Karachi. This implies that even if the choice (or constraint) of occupation guided early migrants to settled near the fisheries, subsequent migrants and their descendents became “lock-in” to the fisheries sector by virtue of residential location. Moreover, mobility out of Machhar Colony to more settled settlements such as Orangi would be expensive and involved being cut-off from one’s immediate social networks.

Choice of occupation, to the extent that it is imposed by area of residence would therefore at best be a constrained optimum. It is important therefore to note that although choice of occupation seems to be imposed, a vast majority of the respondents noted that they were happy with their jobs and would not consider switching unless government jobs were being offered.

### **Restriction on Mobility: The role of NARA**

*“ The Bangla cell starts patrolling at 7 am. So I leave my house at 5 am and wait until work starts at 8 [...] I return by taking sides roads and streets. I feel like a thief!”*

NARA has had a significant impact on the ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities’ physical and economic security. There are two issues in particular that can be highlighted. First, by virtue of being ethnically Bengali or Burmese, they can be charged for “border crossing” and arrested. There is a special police unit under NARA that has been delegated the duty of finding and arresting illegal “border-crossers”. This unit is often referred to as the “Bangla Cell”. The staff of the Bangla Cell have developed novel methods for identifying their target individuals. Firstly they could just shout something in Bangla or Burmese. Whoever turns to look around can then be arrested as a suspected a border crosser. Secondly, if an individual “looks” like he is ethnic Bengali or Burmese he might be arrested and made to count from 1 to 10. Their accent gives them away.

Table 6.3 provides a summary of the reported incidence of arrest and harassment at the hands of the police and/or the Bangla Cell. In Machhar Colony and Korangi 8 per



cent of the adult males have been harassed, and 4 per cent have been actually detained. The incidence of harassment and detention is much higher among males than females, indicating the greater vulnerability of workers who go out of the locality for work. While these ratios are not very high (with one out of twenty five men reporting detention) they are considered high enough by the community to act as deterrents for people venturing too far afield for economic opportunities. It needs to be pointed out that detention does not necessarily imply legal action. The experience of our respondents suggests that Bangla Cell officials are generally content to release a detainee on payment of a hefty bribe of around 25,000 rupees. This simply raises the transaction cost of venturing too far out in search of work.

**Table 6.3: Percentage of adult population (aged 18 and above) reporting harassment and arrest by police/NARA, by census site (per cent)**

	Harassed		Arrested	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Machhar Colony	8.1	1.4	4.1	0.3
Orangi	1.9	0.2	1.9	1.4
Korangi	8.0	0.9	4.5	0.0

Source: NTS census

Note that the incidence of arrest and/or harassment is highly correlated with settlement. A number of hypotheses can be presented to explain this phenomenon. First, Orangi is a regularized settlement and their residents were offered plots by the government in the 1970s. The other two settlements are encroachments, the act of which has increased the vulnerability of the residents, although more so for the Bengalis and Burmese. The second hypothesis is that the residents of Orangi have, although in a complex way, access to the MQM (a Karachi-based political party), and that could possibly be protecting them. Third, the ethnic Bengali and Burmese residents of Orangi represented earlier waves of migration, a higher proportion of people who migrated before the 1971 watershed, and greater access to legal documents.

Apart from the restrictions on mobility, the inception of NARA has had another more direct effect on Bengali's access to livelihoods. The NARA has instructed all government agencies not to provide work to any one without a CNIC, unless one has been registered with the NARA and possesses an alien registration card. One implication is that access to fishing (in the fish harbour) which is regulated by the provincial government's Department of Fisheries, has also been made conditional on the possession of valid legal documents. The residents of Machhar Colony, many of whom are fisherman, have therefore been affected since they do not possess the CNIC. Efforts at getting the CNIC has also been thwarted and the concerned officials, suspecting them of being ethnic Bengalis or Burmese refuse them this card. This has not meant a complete inaccessibility of fishing, but rather a high bribe to get past the various check posts. Other activities such as work in private factories and peeling shrimp however continues unabated.

## **6.2 Child Labour, Nature and Conditions of work and Exploitation**

Exploitation of Bengali and Burmese labour however goes much beyond the access to opportunities. The preceding discussion shows firstly that implicit restrictions are

usually limited to those in irregular settlements and usually those in the fishing sector. This sub-section therefore goes on to explore issue of exploitation under the two themes of child labour, and the nature and conditions of work.

### Child Labour

Although Pakistan is signatory to the ILO convention on hazardous child labour, it has not acceded to the convention on the minimum age of employment. The convention stipulates that irrespective of any socio-economic considerations no child would be allowed to work before the age of 13. In normal circumstances, the convention suggests the minimum age of 15, which corresponds to the completion of “compulsory” education.

**Table 6.4: Percentage of working children aged 5-15 years**

Census Site	Male		Female	
	Age 5-10	Age 10-15	Age 5-10	Age 10-15
Machhar Colony	22.9	51.4	25.4	62.0
Orangi	5.5	29.8	3.8	40.0
Korangi	4.9	47.9	6.1	52.4
All Sites	14.1	44.4	14.6	52.6

Source: NTS Survey

Table 6.4 presents the percentage of working children in the given age brackets by settlement. A couple of observations are in order. Firstly, the percentage of female working children is generally higher than male working children. Secondly it is important to note that the percentage of working children aged 5-10 is particularly high for Machhar Colony. Almost all of these children peel prawns, which is a particularly intensive and unhealthy exercise (see Box 1).

Similarly, the children of Korangi are also involved in an activity that is known to be hazardous for health: carpet weaving. The activity is widely perceived to be conducive to child and female work because they are considered dexterous. There has nevertheless been concern in policy and public debate that it is not dexterity but rather the susceptibility to be ‘pressurized’ into working long hours in unhealthy conditions that correlates carpet weaving with women and children. Indeed the incidence of tuberculosis has been found to be high in adults who wove carpets in their childhoods, and lighting and sitting conditions are also usually not good.

Furthermore, the export of carpets has declined over the last decade, partly because of concerns of child labour in the west. Qualitative household information has suggested that the terms of work have further deteriorated for these children, as demand for carpets has fallen. In some instances people have substituted incense-stick making for carpet weaving. And while the latter is perhaps not as hazardous for health, it is certainly not as financial rewarding.

### Nature of Work

Exploitation can theoretically occur at two stages. Firstly at the level of wage discrimination, and secondly through contractual arrangements. Although there is

anecdotal evidence to suggest otherwise, survey respondents were clear that they received the same wages as the host community workers.

### **Box-1: A Semi Barter Economy**

A large number of women and children in Machhar Colony are involved in prawn cleaning. This is predominantly home-based work. A sub-contractor buys prawns at the harbour and brings the catch to the colony usually in the early hours of the morning. The prawns are deposited at selected sites built specially for the purpose called '*waras*'. Following an announcement on local mosque's sound system, people queue up for work. Prawns are allocated on "first come first serve" basis and are taken back to the living quarters. Women and children, but sometimes men as well, peel these prawns through the night and the children then take back the peeled prawns as well as the scales back to the wara the next morning.

There are other opportunities of work at the wara as well. Some women can be found breaking ice, weighing peeled prawns, and sorting peeled material according to size and quality.

Remuneration for work at the wara can be either through cash or kind. Everybody is given plastic tokens worth Rs. 10 each. These tokens can be either cashed at the wara in fifteen days time, or used at local shops for purchasing goods. In case any body wants to cash these tokens earlier than the fifteen days, the shopkeeper pays Rs 8 per token.

Respondents do however perceive that middlemen involved in all house-based work and fishing pay low wages and appropriate a large share of value-added. In fishing for example, the captain<sup>37</sup> of the ship is the middle man responsible for not only guiding the ship but also for passing on the catch to fish traders with whom he is supposed to cultivate his contacts. He would also bear the cost if some of the catch rots or is rejected for some reason. He naturally charges a premium which is implicit in the way the catch is shared among the boat staff. This premium was considered to be high. It is not however immediately clear whether this premium reflects a skill and/or risk premium or an exploitative contract.

Middlemen also mediate the contract between home-based workers and employers. In Orangi middlemen are active in incense stick making and in Machhar colony, they are active in the prawn peeling business. The middlemen's role is limited to transporting the raw material to the workers' house and transporting it back to the respective factory. However, since the prices at which the middlemen transfer the produce to the factory owners is not available, it is not clear whether this role is exploitative.

Summing up, while a clear statement cannot be made regarding exploitative contractual arrangements, it is nevertheless obvious that discrimination in these contracts is not based explicitly on ethnicity. Where ethnicity becomes a factor is that people from ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities are restricted to particular low-wage sectors to the extent that some low-wage activities have become their exclusive domains.

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<sup>37</sup> The captain may be a Bengali or a local man

### **6.3 Threats to local populations from “irregular migrants”**

Since ethnic Bengalis and Burmese are concentrated in the fishing industry as well as daily wage based factory work, it is indigenous workers from these two sectors that feel economically threatened. Furthermore, to the extent that ethnic Bengalis and Burmese might be involved in illegal activities, the community at large might feel a security threat. The following sub-section explores these notions of threats.

#### **Economic Threats and Substitution from Host to “Migrant” Labour**

Since the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese are concentrated predominantly in fishing and daily wage based or piece rate based factory work, it is workers in these two sectors that feel the direct economic threat.

Local labour activists in Orangi for example complained that the influx of ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers had had two effects. Firstly these workers are always pull down wages by accepting lower wages than other workers. Local working women also complained that ethnic Bengali and Burmese women were willing to work for longer periods on the same wages, and even do over time work during the night.

Activists representing the local fishing community cite similar issues but more fundamental issues of “ownership”. They argue that the coastal areas and its common resources are the natural collective property of traditional local seafaring and fishing communities. This set is not necessarily ethnically exclusive, since it is taken to include all ethnic communities and caste groups that have been fishing for a very long time in the region. These include coastal castes and communities among the Sindhis, the Kachhis, and the Baloch. It merits mention that exclusivity at a theoretical level is not limited to irregular international migrants but to everyone outside these traditional fishing communities.

Ethnic, caste or traditional collective “ownership” of coastal resources sometimes has a legal base – for instance in the legal ownership of village land in the coastal belt. But the notion of collective ethnic or caste ownership of common resources goes beyond individual or group property rights. It is widely perceived to be a “right” that is asserted and protected through political means.

Besides notions of ownership, these communities also invoke environmental degradation. They contend that non-local fishermen who have a short-term interest in fishing, and no emotional or sociological attachment to the resource tend to misuse it. It is argued that the idea of collective and long-term resource ownership instills sustainable resource use practices and technologies. Ethnic Bengali and Burmese fisherfolk, for example, are accused of using small gauge nets that maximized the catch at the expense of killing of the spawn. Locals then fear that this will have an adverse impact on the quantity of fish in the coming years. It is acknowledged, nevertheless, that even if the “migrant” fisherfolk initially introduced such unsustainable technologies, the local fishing communities also adopted these practices over time.

#### **Patronage and Illegal Activities**

Perceptions of threats as discussed in the section above have at times resulted in some collective action by the threatened communities. In one particular fishing community<sup>38</sup> for example, where ethnic Bengalis had settled in rented houses, the local community decided to excommunicate them. These people were evicted from their houses and had to move to other sites where other ethnic Bengalis were located.

Some of those who were unable to find residence, were given land and protection by a noted smuggler and gangster of the area. It is well established that these people are used in illegal activities such as smuggling and crime. What is not perceived widely, however, is that it is possibly this community's vulnerability that lends them susceptible to partaking such activities. There have also been other incidences with a similar essence. The Bengalis living in Korangi, for example are under the protection of another local leader. They reside on his land and have little choice but to assist him in his illegal activities.

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<sup>38</sup> This community is not included in the survey and this account is based on a stakeholder interview with the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum.

## 7. Social Services

It has been widely claimed in the political and policy debate that irregular migrants can be an excessive burden on the public service provision system. This often forms an important argument against the presence of migrants. This chapter looks at the general status of the ethnic Bengali and Burmese populations viz. education and health services and explores individual and social behavior that yields these outcomes.

### Utilization of Educational Services

Formal educational attainment levels are unusually low among ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities. The percentage of people with no formal education is very high, particularly when compared to similar statistics for the host population. Table 7.1 presents data from the NTS census for the target populations as well as the official Population Census data for Karachi. The gap between the target population and the city as a whole is extremely wide. While for the city taken as a whole less than a quarter of the reference age group had no schooling, for the target population the ratios were between 57 and 88 per cent, depending on location and gender.

It is also to be noted that the level of schooling is apparently correlated with the settlement. It has been explained earlier that Orangi is a legal settlement, consisting of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese who have assimilated relatively well than their counterparts in other location. The people here are generally better off and well protected. The lowest in the rung is Machhar Colony. The same ranking can be seen in the levels of schooling.

The table also makes it clear that even if Bengalis have had formal education, dropout rates are very high, and a majority of students do not make it past primary education. Again, this is in particular contrast to the attainment levels of the host community, and while it may reflect the preferences of the migrant community, the possibility of segmented access to higher levels of formal education cannot be ruled out.

**Table 7.1: Educational Attainment Levels For Children Aged 5-15**

NTS Census Site	Gender	No Schooling	Primary	Middle and above	Total number
Machhar Colony	Male	78.3	21.7	-	295
	Female	88.0	10.1	1.9	258
Orangi	Male	61.1	32.5	6.4	157
	Female	57.5	34.4	8.2	160
Korangi	Male	72.9	22.6	4.5	155
	Female	72.7	23.5	3.8	183
KARACHI City, Population Census 1998	Male	23.1	37.7	17.8	496,937
	Female	23.2	38.5	20.0	459,766

Source: NTS Census (2005) and Population Census 1998

These attainment levels also need to be qualified with some comments on gender disparity in education. Census information for children aged 5 to 15 years presented in Table 7.1 and qualitative information from the household survey suggests that while there was a gender gap in terms of educational attainment in the earlier generation, particularly those educated in Bangladesh, this has been narrowed significantly, with the notable exception of Machhar colony. Interestingly, the gender gap is also not discernible at the post primary education levels either, where it usually kicks in for the host population. The generally low gender disparity does not in any way imply that enrollment rates have showed an increasing trend, but that the low levels of educational attainment are manifest in both male and female children. Note that even in Machhar colony where the number of girls with primary education is half the number of primary educated boys, the latter have not been able to make it past primary.

Given the rate of participation in the education system, low attainment for girls is consistent with qualitative evidence suggesting that respondents were generally averse to female schooling after a certain age, and were more comfortable with traditional gender roles. However, what is not clear is why male children also do not go beyond a certain level.

Prima facie, the first obvious reason is the issue of cost. This is particularly relevant for the community of Machhar colony, which is perhaps the most economically marginalized of the sampled communities. But qualitative information does not seem to pin down cost considerations as the dominant cause of low enrollment or drop out. What is claimed to be an important issue is the opportunity cost of going to school: child labour. Table 7.2 presents census information on the extent of child labour. It needs to be noted that since child work can be seasonal, the figures are susceptible to some fluctuations, probably on the higher side, since the field work did not coincide with the high labour demand season.

While these figures are much higher than that would be expected of the host population, at any age, the dramatic increase in child labour after age 9 is particularly discernible. This is consistent with the patterns presented in Table 7.1 since this is the age when children would be dropping out of primary school.

The fact remains however, that many children are neither in the labour force, nor in school. Table 7.2 for example shows that at the most, 51 percent of the boys aged 10-15 are in the labour force. This should imply that the other half should be in school. Since this is not forthcoming, the drivers of low attainment must be explored in other reasons besides child labour.

### **Aspirations, Culture and Education**

It can be hypothesized that a possible reason for low attainment is the value of traditional but informal Islamic education over and above formal education. The Bengali community in general is perceived to be fairly religious and they could be expected to prefer informal Islamic education over formal education. It is also possible however that given the aspirations and expectations of the ethnic Bengali community, they are substituting Quranic education for formal education. Both these

preferences come out markedly through qualitative household information and are also borne out of census level data as presented in Table 7.2.

Note that a very high proportion of children has had no formal education but has received Quranic education. Secondly, the proportion of children with Quranic education decreases with higher attainment of formal education. Thirdly, the more marginalized the community, the more emphasis on Quranic education. Note that this is highest in Machhar Colony and lowest in Orangi.

**Table 7.2: Prevalence of Quranic and formal education among ethnic Bengali and Burmese (per cent)**

		No Formal Education	Primary	Middle	Matric
Machhar Colony	No Quranic Education	53.0	9.4	0.37	-
	Quranic Education	29.8	6.9	0.54	-
Orangi	No Quranic Education	37.5	24.9	5.6	1.6
	Quranic Education	21.8	8.5	-	-
Korangi	No Quranic Education	40.8	18.0	3.3	0.3
	Quranic Education	32.0	5.0	0.6	0.3

Source: NTS Census

These findings suggest that while one is tempted to draw a mechanical link between religiosity and the prevalence of Quranic education, perhaps a more nuanced story needs to be told.

Earlier sections have emphasized that the ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities feel an acute need to prove that their identity is consistent with that envisaged through the notion of the Pakistani state. Since a dominant common factor among the various groups of Pakistanis is religion, these communities are particularly concerned about maintaining an active link with religious education.

It can however also be hypothesized that given the cost considerations of the formal education system, the free education imparted through religious seminaries would be a boon. Furthermore, some respondents, although very few, reported that formal schools required official documentation such as birth certificates, ID cards of the parents etc. which some migrants do not possess. Since seminaries usually do not require extensive documentation, they would present an attractive option.

Finally, it is very important to note that parents the target population usually do not have very high aspirations.

*I don't think about the future. Maybe my son will become an Imam of a mosque, maybe he will become a drug addict. His destiny will be revealed when the time comes.*

Zainul, Machhar Colony

These aspirations are a clear reflection of the migrant communities' social and economic vulnerability. Also at the heart of this outlook is the recognition that there are just so many sectors in which Bengalis can find work. Heavily concentrated in manual work associated with the fishing and textile industry, these perceived job



opportunities are too limited to warrant extensive investment in human capital. For some, even manual work may be beyond reach. For these people, an opportunity to serve as a low paid Imam of a mosque would be the height of their ambitions.

This despair is perhaps also conditioned by their desperate but often unsuccessful struggle to assimilate. So complete is this desire that when asked about their own language Bangla/Burmese, many respondents retorted that they were Pakistanis, and did not need to teach their children Bangla. It is nevertheless important to stress here that these attitudes do vary from community to community.

The migrants in Machhar Colony, who are generally newer migrants are socially more excluded from the general population are not so fully integrated in the host community. While they too, did not consider education in Bangla important, their response was conditioned by their own experiences: they felt that Urdu is more useful for economic interactions, and felt that Bangla was important to remind them of their roots and origin.

## **7.2 Health Issues and Utilization of Health Services**

The incidence of diseases in the various settlements is highly associated with their location and physical infrastructure. Machhar Colony and Korangi, which are irregular settlements and therefore devoid of a decent sewage system have a high incidence of water borne diseases. While any extraordinary incidence of other diseases was not found in any site, people often experienced episodes of minor illnesses and regularly visited doctors.

Respondents in Korangi and Machhar Colony explained that they normally relied on private clinics rather than government hospitals. The reasons for not using public hospitals was not related to exclusion by the hospital on the basis of citizenship. Rather, the respondents preferred to go to private clinics due to a higher perceived quality of treatment in private clinics.

Residents of Orangi were on some counts, an exception to this behavior. While they also perceived the quality of private treatment to be better than public treatment, they often visited the local government hospital, a tertiary care center constructed by the Qatar government and maintained by the provincial government.

Finally, the residents of Macchar Colony and Korangi had high regard for alternative treatment, and visiting holy saints and shrines to pray for health was very common. Some were even interested in black magic. As a result a few clinics practicing “Bengali Magic” had opened up in these areas. Again, residents of Orangi were an exception and usually preferred scientific treatment to spiritual treatment. To some extent these preferences emanate from the religious beliefs of these communities. As is explained later in Chapter 8, Bengalis have adopted the beliefs of their neighboring host communities. Residents of Machhar Colony and Korangi believe in intervention from saints while those in Orangi practice a different version of Islam that regards such interventions as heretical.

## **8. Social Organization and Networks**

There is a diverse set of social networks that have enabled the Bengali and Burmese migrants to sustain themselves. The following section maps out access to these networks, the influence they have on the Bengali communities' access to services, protection from various threats and the question of their identity. The evidence regarding the existence of, and access to these networks is based on the answers of respondents, as well as observations of the field researchers.

For reasons of conceptual presentation, these networks can be approached from two angles. Firstly from the viewpoint of networks that exist within the ethnic Bengali and Burmese community, and secondly by looking at the link between Bengalis and networks of host communities.

This distinction is warranted because unlike other international communities (such as those from India and Afghanistan), ethnic Bengalis and Burmese have, generally speaking, failed to become an organic part of host community networks. A main reason behind this failure is the construction of, and access to networks on the basis of ethnicity. Since ethnic Bengalis and Burmese do not have ethnic common bond with any of host communities unlike migrant communities such as the Afghan Pashtuns and the East Pakistan/Bangladesh Biharis, links with host community networks are fairly fragile.

Over time however, the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese have indeed cultivated some characteristics that have helped them identify themselves with the local community and access their networks. This has predominantly been on the basis of a shared religion. Within the realm of religion, two distinct groups have evolved, depending on the migrant communities' immediate geographic context and the beliefs of their neighbors; the Tablighi Jammaat, constituting of people following the Deoband school of thought, and the Anjuman-e-Naujawan-e-Islam whose members belong to the Barelvi line of thought.

### **8.1 Bengali Social Networks**

#### **Ethnicity and Kinship: The *Shamas***

For ethnic Bengalis, notions of "community" are quite distinct from those held by the host population where kinship, *biraderi*, caste and tribe are significant and active markers of community identity. In the ethnic Bengali population the only conspicuous markers of group identity appear to revolve around the region of origin and, derivatively, the dialect of Bangla spoken. For example, the community from Chittagong has close ties to each other within field sites and were well connected with Bengalis of Chittagong origin across the country. Similarly for Bengalis hailing from Dhaka and other places.

It is not clear if this notion of community is a reflection of the way social networks in Bangladesh work. Neither can the current residents of Chittagong be expected to network necessarily in ways similar to their counterparts in Karachi. It is possible that this particular expression of identity might be a result of the Bengali community's

struggle for survival in a “foreign” land, their effort to form a community, and their need to forge new ties for possible collective action.

Local community organizations known in the Karachi ethnic Bengali community as *Shamas*, are important focal points of collective action.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the *Shamas* is often organized around a central personality which is well respected by all community members. In Machhar colony for example, people from Chittagong are organized in a *Shamas* around their *Shamas* leader, an elderly man noted for his piety, fair dealing and unbiased conflict resolution.

At the core of the *Shamas*' functions are the arrangements for marriage, funeral and other religious ceremonies. These functions are paid for by regular monthly contributions from all *Shamas* members. Additionally, *Shamas* leaders are also actively involved in resolution of domestic and neighbourhood conflicts within the *Shamas* members.

In the context of Karachi, the *Shamas* also seems to have been instrumental in developing geographical concentrations of Bengalis in selected geographical areas. The genesis of most Bengali settlements can be found in Teen Hatti and Moosa Colony where ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities had initially settled illegally. Over time however, many moved out of these original settlements and established other ones, usually based on their shared ethnic identity and as a corollary their *Shamas*. Residents of Machhar colony for example originate mainly from Chittagong and Dhaka. Furthermore, within Machhar Colony, those from Dhaka are concentrated in one hamlet around their own *Shamas*, while those from Chittagong are concentrated in another hamlet around another *Shamas*. Overtime therefore, the *Shamas* has become the natural route of access to residence for migrants coming directly from Bangladesh or from other parts of the country.

The existence of the *Shamas* has however, not led to extremely large concentrations of certain ethnic Bengalis in one geographical locality. People originating from Dhaka for example are residing in Machhar Colony as well as Orangi and Korangi. The different *Shamas* in different localities then act as conduits of association between ethnically similar communities residing in different areas.

The extent of cooperation of cross regional *Shamas* is not limited to Karachi and in fact, cover the entire country. One respondent in Machhar Colony for example narrated the story of his brother who had just arrived from Bangladesh a few years ago. He tried to cross the border at Sialkot, but was caught. Since there is a small population of Bengalis in Sialkot also, and a functioning *Shamas* of the same community, he was able to approach this *Shamas*. The *Shamas* in turn was instrumental in having his brother released.

The clustering of ethnic Bengalis around a *Shamas* does not seem to be hampering assimilation with Bengalis of a different ethnicity or with the host community in any significant way. And while Bengalis of one *Shamas* may consider those from another *Shamas* at a lower order in a social hierarchy, this differentiating does not manifest

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<sup>39</sup> The term *Shamas* might be a derivation of “*Samaj*”, a word commonly used to describe collectivity in Bangladesh. We use the term *Shamas* here in order to reflect the vocabulary of Karachi's Bengali community.

itself in violent confrontations. Similarly, Bengalis have been willing to adopt their host communities' cultures irrespective of their association with a Shamas. In Orangi many Bengalis dress and talk like Biharis. In Machhar Colony, many Bengalis speak Balochi as fluently as the Balochis themselves, and even dress like the Baloch.

## **8.2 Connections with Networks of Host Population**

The main issues felt by migrants in Karachi, irrespective of their ethnicity are access to residential land followed by access to public utilities such as electricity and gas. As discussed earlier, the story of migration in Karachi is essentially a story about *Katchi Abadi* and a story of a *laissez-faire* attitude towards provision of certain utilities and public goods.

The link between consumers and suppliers of these utilities is then often mediated by certain networks that usually function on the basis of ethnicity. In the case of Machhar Colony for example, which is an irregular settlement unrecognized by the city government, most respondents report purchasing land from networks of ethnic Pashtuns.

### **Land and the Pashtun Element**

Analyzing the source of power and strength of the Pashtun network is beyond the scope of this exercise. That said, a few preliminary comments based on the qualitative household information are in order. It is widely perceived that the Pashtuns, themselves migrants into Karachi, have been traditionally involved in trafficking drugs and arms, particularly after the Afghan influx. The residents of both Machhar Colony and Orangi were united in the consensus that the Pashtun community in conjunction with law enforcement agencies are involved in the drugs trade. This lethal combination has allowed Pashtuns to the agency of contract enforcement in any trade they chose. This agency is very useful in the trade of land grabbing.

A vast majority of the respondents report "buying land" from Pashtuns. Some other studies have also confirmed this for other sites in the city as well. Pashtuns take over government land, dump rubble on the land, and sell the rubble<sup>40</sup>. While it is not clear whether law enforcement agencies take a direct cut, all those who have constructed houses on these plots report bribing policemen.

### **Cultural Assimilation, Livelihoods and Trans-national Baluch Networks**

As described in detail earlier, the Bengalis of Machhar colony are surrounded by a large community of Baloch people, the original residents of the old Karachi. Themselves marginalized by the post independence flux of migrants into Karachi, and more or less of the same income level, this community never posed any threat to the physical existence of Bengalis amongst them, or to their identity.

In fact, as the need for Bengalis to assimilate into the host population grew, they have were welcomed into Baloch culture. The speed of assimilation has been hastened by

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<sup>40</sup> They sell the rubble because they cannot, technically speaking, sell government land. The purchase of the rubble however gives the buyer de facto control of the plot

intermarriages, and many Baluch men marry Bengali women. While the Baluch pay the required bride prices, these intermarriages have been encouraged by the Bengalis' willingness to adopt the Baluch way of dressing and speaking. It merits mention that despite this, Baluch women are not allowed to marry Bengali men.

This integration has allowed the Bengalis access to a wide network of Baluch spread over Balochistan and southern Iran. At a local level, some Bengalis have migrated to the coastal city of Gawadar in Baluchistan. Although they are not well accepted by the fishing community in Gawadar, they have created a niche for themselves in cooking and domestic work. Furthermore, they have also entered the trading business between Karachi and certain areas of Balochistan. At a regional level, Bengalis have also been able to access the transnational Baluch network in Iran and Pakistan.

### **Politics and the MQM**

Where it has been possible, the Bengali and the Burmese communities have also cultivated access to local political parties, predominantly the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM). Affiliations with the MQM are more common in Orangi, where Bengalis and Burmese are living in close quarters with the ethnic Bihari population, who are usually active supporters, if not members of the MQM. What follows therefore pertains only to the residents of Orangi.

Many respondents, Bengali or Burmese report that the MQM is responsible for the maintenance of peace in the area. One can potentially deduce from this that affiliation to the MQM is simply on the basis of 'votes for protection'.

However, there does seem to be some evidence that the story is much more nuanced. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, the demographic weight of the Bengalis and Burmese combined is not sufficient to warrant extensive support from the MQM. It must be kept in mind that to support the Bengalis, the MQM would have to take on both the provincial politics which feels a demographic threat at the provincial level, as well as the federal government which considers Bengalis and Burmese to be "burdening the country's already strained infrastructure and adding to the crime rate"<sup>41</sup>. The MQM does indeed go out of its way to support the Biharis who have, from the view of provincial sub-nationalists, fundamentally similar problems to those of the Bengalis. But the demographic weight of the Biharis is sufficient to warrant this support.

Secondly, while the MQM has always openly supported the idea of Biharis being Pakistani citizens and talked about importing "stranded Pakistanis" in Bangladesh, there has not been any proactive support on the same front for the Bengalis or the Burmese. This makes intuitive sense, particularly in the case of Bengalis since the two have been known to be at loggerheads on the issue of "stranded Pakistanis" in Bangladesh. In fact there have been some clashes between the two in the late 1980s.

The interest of the MQM in adopting the Bengalis and Burmese therefore needs to be explored in other domains. A possible explanation that has come out during stakeholder interviews relies on the nexus between the perception of MQM involvement in anti-state activities and the particularly vulnerable position of the

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan: [www.pakistan.gov.pk](http://www.pakistan.gov.pk)

Bengali and Burmese communities. It is hypothesized that the compromised position of the Bengalis and Burmese lends itself to being used in these anti-state activities such as collection of *bhatta* and petty crime. Needless to say, the first targets of these activities are the Bengali and Burmese communities themselves.

That said, it is obvious that Bengalis and Burmese of Orangi have certainly aligned themselves with the MQM. In return, the active members are provided with an ‘MQM identity card’ that can be used to evade persecution from a number of state actors, including protection from the NARA’s Bangla Cell. Interestingly however, since these cards are not issue to all Bengalis and Burmese of Orangi, this direct protection is very exclusive. Protection for others is mainly through these appointed ‘representatives’ of the MQM. Given the level of vulnerability faced by this community, even this vestige of protection is welcome.

### **Forging an ethnicity free religious identity**

Ethnic Bengalis and Burmese have tried to enter the mainstream religious parties and networks in their respective areas. Before the evolution of Bengali beliefs is discussed however, it is necessary to point out that initially, most Bengali migrants in Pakistan had Barelvi<sup>42</sup> tendencies. Their current affiliations are however a result of their adaptations to the beliefs of their surrounding host populations.

The areas around Orangi have a Mohajir/Bihari majority and are under the strong influence of *Deobandi*<sup>43</sup> scholars. The Bengalis and Burmese settled in Orangi have been living here since the 1970s and that has been enough time for the Bengalis to convert into Deobandis. Some of them have even joined the Tablighi Jamaat<sup>44</sup>. In Machhar Colony on the other hand, the surrounding population of Baloch has been relatively relaxed about religion. The Bengalis and Burmese therefore have had no problems in maintaining their Barelvi beliefs.

That said, a more nuanced explanation of religious affiliations is also in order. While identifying with mainstream religious parties/groups is clearly essential for Bengalis to assert their identity, two very practical interest were also at the heart of the issue. Firstly, particularly for the residents of Machhar Colony, while their networks with the local communities gave them cultural acceptability and access to livelihood sources, these networks were too marginalized to offer protection from state persecution. This is perhaps somewhat less relevant in Orangi where the MQM could potentially provide protection, and even did so, but selectively.

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<sup>42</sup> The Barelvi sect derives its intellectual base from the seminary at Bareilly in India. Its version of Islam is lays emphasis on devotion over doctrine. Although thought to be a majority among Sunni Muslims in Pakistan, the Barelvis have rarely organized as a cohesive political entity.

<sup>43</sup> The Deobandis are a doctrinaire sect within Sunni Islam deriving their theology from the seminary at Deoband in India. Deobandi organizations have been active in missionary work as well as in national politics.

<sup>44</sup> The Tablighi Jamaat is a voluntary network of ‘mobile preachers’. Deobandi by ideology, groups of people set out to different cities and regions, staying at mosques and preaching to the local populations. While the Jamaat claims to stay away from formal politics, members include men in high profile administrative positions as well as in trade and business who are thought to act as an organized network.

Given this constraint, Bengalis strove not only to identify themselves with certain parties but attempted to join the office bearing ranks of these parties<sup>45</sup>. Having thus penetrated religious organizations, they could then either access social and kinship networks of other members or attain clout just by virtue of being part of a religious party. The main purpose of the clout was not only to escape persecution by police but also to seek protection from it!

A respondent from Machhar Colony narrates a story to illustrate the point. A few years ago a Bengali resident of the colony was found guilty of molesting a young Bengali girl. The respondent who was simultaneously head of the local Shamas as well as an office bearer of the Anjuman Naujawan-e-Islam lodged a FIR (First Investigation Report) at the local police station and the convict was jailed for three years. It is well accepted in the community that such influence on the police could not have been asserted without the backing of ANI.

Finally, infusion into religious parties can have their own pecuniary benefits. It is common for religious parties to construct mosques in places where their members reside. The *Imam* and *Muazzin* are then appointed by the party itself. These are coveted posts since not only do they insure a source of income, but there is also an inherent element of economic and physical security. Mosques are usually impossible to take down once constructed, and Imams usually difficult to replace once instated because they organize a group of followers around them. Secondly, the police also tend to respect the Imam or Muazzin thus providing personal protection as well.

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<sup>45</sup> Claims of being an office bearer can be verified since ANI issues a membership card.

## **Conclusion**

This study has probed the question of irregular international migration as a non-traditional threat to state security by attempting to identify specific dimensions of the “threat scenario” – law and order, cultural intrusion, economic pressure, and political conflict. It was hypothesized that in the case of those deemed in the present policy framework as “illegal aliens” in Pakistan (namely ethnic Bengalis and Burmese), the possible threats to state security might actually emanate from precisely the conditions that leave the migrants vulnerable to human insecurity.

A census of selected target communities (414 households comprising 3,087 individuals), and then an in-depth sample survey of over 100 “irregular migrant” households was conducted in order to gain a detailed picture of the migrant experience in Pakistan’s largest metropolis. The empirical exercise conducted for this study marks a rare systematic attempt – albeit a limited one – to gather quantitative and qualitative data on “irregular migrants” in the city. The preceding sections have reported in some detail the study findings on a range of issues including migrant histories, legal status, living conditions, livelihoods, access to social services, and social networks.

It is possible now to return to the original themes raised in Section 1 (where the “threat scenario” was explicated) and to comment on the main counter-hypothesis offered there: irregular migrants are victims of human insecurity in precisely those areas where irregular migration might be seen as a non-traditional threat to the security of the state. Before turning to the four themes identified in Section 1, however, it is important to comment on two key survey findings concerning general perceptions about the “irregular migrant” population in Karachi.

### **Aliens and migrants**

First, the census and the sample household survey provide the beginnings of a basis for assessing the rival impressionistic claims about the migration history of the target population. The official position of agencies such as NARA holds that all people of Bengali or Burmese ethnicity resident in Pakistan are irregular migrants. Informants within these communities insist that most of their members arrived before 1971 in the former province of West Pakistan legally.

In the census and survey conducted for this study it appears that both maximalist positions are unsustainable. The census shows that 7.9 per cent of the migrants from Bangladesh/former East Pakistan and 7.5 per cent of those from Burma/Myanmar were already in the former province of West Pakistan before 1970. While these constitute a small minority within the target community, the official policy of regarding all ethnic Bengalis and Burmese as illegal aliens is clearly without justification. At the same time, it is also clear that most of the migrant ethnic Bengalis and Burmese had arrived in Pakistan after 1970. There were even instances in the census of people having arrived as recently as 2002.

Perhaps more importantly, however, around three-quarters of the population of ethnic Bengalis and Burmese surveyed for the present study were found to have never migrated at all. These were people who were born and brought up in Pakistan and



had few if any active links with the supposed country of origin. While NARA's claim about illegal migrant flows post-1971 might have empirical validity, the fact that the overwhelming majority of the target population was made up of non-migrants raises serious questions about the welfare implications of the current policy.

### **Heterogeneity**

The second important survey finding that invites comment is that while the "irregular migrant" population generally remains marginalized in political, economic and social terms there are also significant differences within this population. The contrast between the three survey sites is illustrative of this heterogeneity. The ethnic Bengali community in Machhar Colony was much worse off in almost every way compared to the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese in Korangi, who in turn were worse off than their counterparts in Orangi.

The residents of Machhar Colony were more insecure in terms of property rights, more vulnerable to abuse on the part of various official agencies, had lower levels of wealth and earnings, and saw more limited options for their future generations. Their relatively poor conditions could be attributed, on first appearances, to the specific conditions of the locality, and of the sectors in which they happened to work. But it was also likely that the "intra-migrant" differences were linked to the respective lengths of stay in Karachi of different clusters. Orangi and Korangi had a larger core of longer-term migrants compared to Machhar Colony. Other factors such as the choice of locality and sector were perhaps subsequent to the duration of stay in Karachi: the more recent migrants were constrained to stay in marginalized settlements and were marginalized also in other ways.

While in strictly operational terms as interpreted by NARA, there was little difference between these various sub-groups among "illegal aliens", the migrants of older vintage felt more protected for a number of reasons. They had better established social networks both among themselves and with other communities. The fact that more among them were able to prove their citizenship credential in courts implied that they might have felt less vulnerable to arbitrary actions on the part of state agencies.

The "intra-migrant" contrast can be a source of some insight into the dynamics of migration and settlement. Comments are offered below on the four dimensions of "threat" to state and human security.

### **Law and order**

This study has shown that ethnic Bengalis and Burmese are victims of arbitrary persecution at the hands of a variety of actors, both state and non-state. The most conspicuous issue for the target population, unsurprisingly, is operation of NARA, particularly its so-called "Bangla Cell". Respondents made a distinction between harassment at the hands of other state agencies (such as regular police) and vulnerability to NARA. A relatively high proportion of the respondents had been stopped, detained, and harassed by various state agents.

The high profile of policing in these areas, however, had no protective aspect for the migrants themselves. In some of the localities surveyed residents felt extremely

vulnerable to a range of crimes including theft, burglary, violence, protection rackets and sexual violence. The “irregular migrant” status of the population had bred a range of intermediaries who offered protection from arbitrary state action, while at the same time posing threats to human security in other ways. Activists of political parties, for example, were able to provide selective protection. These outsider political organizations, however, had perhaps unwittingly, ended up empowering the more violent and feared segments of the ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities. The exclusive victims of these empowered elements were the ethnic Bengali and Burmese residents themselves.

There was also a deep contradiction in the actions of state agencies. While on the one hand, some agencies were supposed to prosecute ethnic Bengalis and Burmese simply on the basis of their ethnicity, on the other hand different agencies were actively recruiting people from precisely these communities to organizations such as the Razakar (volunteer) service. Ironically, protection from arbitrary and extortionate arrest at the hands of NARA was offered as a major inducement for joining up with the Razakar service.

The survey also provided some limited though useful insights into the issue of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Contrary to prior expectation, this issue was not found to be of any great significance in the target community. In other words, the findings were mainly in the negative. It is possible, of course, that such issues are generally not visible in formal surveys. What did emerge, however, was that women appeared to have somewhat greater agency among the ethnic Bengali population than is the norm in the host population. A number of migration stories were about women who had autonomously taken the decision to come to Pakistan with their dependent family members. There were also a number of conspicuous cases of enterprising women in the community who had taken charge of their own lives. The study revealed that sensationalized media reporting of trafficking and sexual exploitation needs to be balanced with a better understanding of the more autonomous position of migrant women.

### **Cultural intrusion**

The target community was involved in multiple economic, social and cultural exchanges with the non-migrant community. One persistent feature of this interaction was the perhaps exaggerated emphasis on their common religious identity. There were also other, perhaps more subtle, cultural dimensions to the relationship between the ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities and other ethnic communities in Karachi.

It is worth recalling that the issue of “cultural intrusion” with respect to ethnic Bengali and Burmese migrants in Karachi is particularly conspicuous with regard to the demographic balance of the Sindh province. Muslim Bengali or Burmese ethnicity does not pose any threat to the overall Islamic identity of Pakistan, or indeed, to the cosmopolitan identity of the city of Karachi.

Issues of cultural identity, however, are extremely difficult to measure. Some findings from this survey are indicative of the limitations of a simplistic interpretation of “cultural intrusion” and “cultural preference”.

Islamic education was cited very widely as the preferred form of instruction in the “irregular migrant” community. This might be regarded as migrants making extra effort to emphasize those aspects of their identity that highlight their commonness with the original residents. The survey also found, however, that a large proportion of the children were not in school at all, while those in regular government schools far outnumbered those in religious schools. In Machhar Colony where a strong preference was expressed in the favour of Islamic schooling, this appeared to be linked to the relatively limited economic opportunities available to “irregular migrant” children in the formal sectors. For boys, a career as a cleric was regarded as a “high” aspiration.

The cultural patterns of the migrant community, moreover, had subtle though palpable influences from their immediate surroundings. In Machhar Colony, for example, there was close interaction with the local Baloch community, and some of this interaction was visible in the way that many of the ethnic Bengali youth dressed. The connection with the Baloch community was more tangible in some specific cases where individual Bengali men had migrated to far corners of Balochistan using their Karachi Baloch connections to seek economic opportunities. There were similar connections between the “irregular migrants” and the Sindhi “fish-lords” in Korangi. In Orangi the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese appeared to be closer to the dominant Urdu-speaking community.

One question included in the household sample survey conducted in Machhar Colony and Orangi provides further indication of the dominant cultural patterns in Karachi and the power of extra-national factors in the shaping of cultural preferences. The survey enquired about the television viewing preferences of the target population. It was found that the highest preference in both Machhar Colony and Orangi was stated for Indian television entertainment channels, followed by locally-operated Indian film channels. In Orangi around 19 per cent of the households expressed a preference for Pakistani TV channels, while in Machhar Colony this proportion was only 7 per cent. In the latter, where a Bangla language channel was available, some 14 per cent expressed a preference for that channel.

**Television preferences among “irregular migrant” households (percent)**

	Machhar Colony	Orangi	All sample households
Indian TV	35.70	67.30	50.90
Indian Movie	30.40	13.50	22.20
Pakistani TV	7.10	19.20	13.00
Bangla TV	14.30	0.0	7.40
Other	12.50	0.0	6.50
Total number	56	52	108

These results indicate that most “irregular migrants” actually aspire to a “cultural pattern” that is neither specifically Bengali or Burmese, or Pakistani. Instead, in common with other residents of Karachi (and Pakistan) they expressed a strong

preference for the globalizing influence of Hindi-Urdu language entertainment offered by the Mumbai film industry.

The contest for the “runners-up” position in terms of television viewing is also instructive. In Orangi, the Bangla language channel was simply not available and Pakistani channels occupied the “runner-up” slot. In Machhar Colony, however, where a Bangla language channel was available, this got the second highest number of preferences. The difference between the two localities might be reflective of the relative periods of migration, with Orangi have migrants of an older vintage compared with Machhar Colony. Machhar Colony was also relatively more “ghettoized” and this might explain even the availability of the Bangla language channel there.

The position of the ethnic Bengali population in Machhar Colony was no different, in effect, from other “local” ethnic communities and their preferences for the growing numbers of regional language channels now available in Pakistan. From the viewpoint of local ethnic-nationalists (e.g. Sindhi or Baloch groups who might feel threatened by a migrant influx), the retention of the Bengali language might be seen as a positive factor in the face of the homogenizing Urdu-Hindi influence.

### **Economic pressure**

This study has shown that the “irregular migrant” population does not appear to exert any significant pressure on publicly provided social services. Schooling participation rates are extremely low in the “irregular migrant” community. This is partly due to the need for child labour – particularly in the fisheries sector – and partly due to low expectations of finding work in the formal sector. In health services too, the “irregular migrant” communities appear to utilize private and charitable service providers and not government ones.

In terms of land-use, access to physical infrastructure and other public utilities, “irregular migrant” communities impose relatively low costs on the economy. While it is true that their settlements are in places of environmental stress – like the reclaimed mangroves of Machhar Colony – it was found that the “irregular migrants” were victims rather than the primary perpetrators of land-grabbing. Local entrepreneurs and land-grabbers were the main encroachers who then developed and sold land to the “irregular migrants”. In some cases (Machhar Colony and Korangi) the migrants continued to face insecure property rights, and were vulnerable to protection rackets. Quite often official agents of land-owning departments were deeply involved in bribe-taking and protection rackets.

“Irregular migrants” were constrained to living in these marginalized settlements precisely because of their “irregular” status. There was some correlation between the level of security enjoyed by the migrants as individuals, and the security of tenure they enjoyed in their property rights. This correlation was aptly illustrated by the differential conditions in Machhar Colony, Korangi and Orangi. The economic costs of “irregularity” were palpable. Households in the more secure Orangi paid, on average, one-seventh the amount paid by the less secure Machhar Colony residents to secure their water supply.

It was interesting to note that even in irregular settlements of “irregular migrants” a number of public services and utilities were, indeed, provided. For example, all survey sites had some form of electricity connection, and there was some provision of underground sewerage drains in all sites. While the former was negotiated through paying bribes to electricity officials, the latter was the result of efforts made via elected local officials.

Workers from “irregular migrant” communities tended to be clustered in specific sectors and professions. The fisheries sector was the most important source of employment across the population, particularly in Machhar Colony and Korangi. In Orangi, people relied on piece-rate factory work and other low-wage activities.

Segments of the target population that were particularly vulnerable to legal uncertainty (residents of Machhar Colony and Korangi, compared with the more secure residents of Orangi) were engaged niche sectors such as fisheries. The Korangi fishery workers were mostly involved in dependent economic relations with local “fish-lords”. The fisheries workers in Machhar Colony were dependent on contractors operating out of the main fisheries harbour. In both cases, however, these were relatively low-paid and high-risk jobs, with periods of unemployment and underemployment. Migrants’ displacement of local workers – if any – went hand in hand with their exploitation by local “fish-lords” and contractors.

Workers who enjoyed a greater level of security (e.g. in Orangi) were involved in diverse sectors and activities. This implied that they did not appear conspicuous in the “threat perception” of any particular group of workers from the “host” communities. It is paradoxical, therefore, that irregularity was associated with niche economic activities, and this led to the impression of economic displacement of locals. A less restrictive regime might allow the diffusion of ethnic Bengali and Burmese workers across sectors, and therefore dispel the perception of “economic threat”.

### **Political conflict**

The study revealed that “irregular migrant” communities relied on a range of formal and informal social networks for protection, livelihoods, security of property rights, access to public services and community life. There were active informal social organizations (e.g. the *Shamas*) in ethnic Bengali communities. These organizations played a role at the time of personal contingencies and life-cycle events, and also in protection and dispute resolution. More insidiously, however, the migrants were linked to an array of protagonists in the “host” community through ties of economic dependence, political affiliation, and even straightforward extortion. There were state agencies that made frequent use of the “irregular migrants” for security purposes from time to time.

The emerging pattern, therefore, is one of “irregular migrants” being used as dependent agents or pawns in the dynamics of interest groups in the “host” communities. For the most part, the “irregular migrants” appeared to have no independent political interest other than mere survival under conditions of legal and political vulnerability.

These conditions not only placed the “irregular migrant” communities under severe strain and disadvantage, they also encouraged the emergence of opportunist elements from among the ranks of these communities – elements that were willing to be used as police informers, volunteers, organized criminals and even armed activists of violent political organizations. The role played by the “irregular migrants” remained subservient and dependent, and their primary victims were members of their own communities.

Minor but significant exceptions were around electoral politics. The devolved local government introduced in Pakistan in 2001 – ironically at the same time as NARA – allowed a greater level of engagement in political representation at the local level. Local elections allowed a number of candidates from the “irregular migrant” communities to get elected. These individuals then became focal points of interest for the channeling of various demands such as those of protection, and the provision of services.

### **Closing discussion**

This study has shown that “non-traditional security” concerns need to be regarded within an overarching framework that accords priority to human security issues of migrants and non-migrants alike. Non-traditional security concerns do need to be articulated and analyzed in a coherent manner. It is useful to break these down into specific themes around which conceptual and empirical discussion might be managed. Irregular migrants are among the poorest and most socially marginalized groups in the population. The “threat scenario” posed by these migrants to state security, once broken down into its various possible components, also provides a useful point of departure for an investigation into migrants as victims of human insecurity.

Pakistan clearly needs to address the plight of “irregular migrants” in more sensitive ways than the current policy options allow. The country also needs to pay close attention to the precise nature of the security threat posed by “irregular migrants”. In the main body of the report, we have examined four possible threat scenarios and we conclude that at least two of them are inconsequential: We suggest that irregular Bengali and Burmese migrants do not pose a significant economic threat to the city’s economy. Neither do they play an instrumental role in acts of terrorism besieging Karachi- the city under consideration. Furthermore, while they have indeed become embroiled in political and communal conflict, their own role is predominantly that of victim rather than that of perpetrator. This suggests that the threat posed by irregular Bengali and Burmese migrants can be narrowed down, more or less, to two inter-related issues: first, the internal contest about the cultural patterns of the Pakistani state – viz. the relative importance of religion and ethnicity in the overall cultural identity of the state; second, the rights of ethnic communities in host areas (e.g. the Sindhis and the Baloch) to protect and secure their cultural, social and economic survival and development.

## **Appendix 1:** **Text of literature published by the National Aliens' Registration Authority (NARA), Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan**

The following is the English translation of the text of the information leaflet issued by the National Aliens' Registration Authority about its activities.

### **What is NARA?**

National Aliens' Registration Authority: The Government of Pakistan established it in 2000 by an amendment in Aliens Act 1946. The question then is why was NARA established?

### **Backgrounds**

Because of unavoidable circumstances in 1971 East Pakistan turned into Bangladesh and Bengali employees of Federal Government who were resident of West Pakistan migrated to Bangladesh. Actually very few Bengali residents adopted Pakistani citizenship. With the help of international organizations, the Government of Pakistan, brought to West Pakistan residents of the former East Pakistan who applied for Pakistani citizenship. Such people numbered approximately 600,000, and 97 percent of them were Urdu-speaking.

### **Bengali Settlements**

Currently, around 1.1 million Bengalis are settled in 102 Bastis (settlements) of Karachi. Most of them are living along with their dependants on the embankment of Layari River in Kachhi Abadis (irregular settlements). Other than that, Bengalis are living in: G/36 Landhi Burmi Colony, 100 Quarters Korangi, Noorani Basti, Korangi number 1, Bilal Colony Korangi, Ibrahim Hydri, Awami Colony Korangi, Zia-ul-Haq Colony Korangi, Ali Akbar Shah Colony Korangi, Abbass Nagar Korangi, New Abadi Gulshan-Iqbal, Zia-ul-Haq Colony Gulshan-Iqbal, Teen Hati, Muslim Colony aziz Abad, Yaseen Abad, Federal B-Area, Mossa Colony, Rehman Abad, Muhammadi Colony, Machhar Colony, Orangi Town Number 12, Orangi Town and Pak Burma Colony Ornagi Town. Majority of them have got Pakistani National Identity Cards, Domicile Certificates and have even got registered in the voters' list. They all identify themselves as Pakistani and some of them are employees of government and semi-government institutes. Other than that approximately 100,000 Bengalis are working in various factories of Karachi. Now the question is how did they enter Pakistan?

### **Government of Pakistan's Objective**

The Government of Pakistan maintains that all Bengalis are aliens according to the law as after the separation of Bangladesh in 1971 only few (20 to 40 thousand) remained in Pakistan and the rest went back to Bangladesh. However in the 1980s, due to the domestic conditions in Bangladesh and the better economic opportunities in Pakistan many Bengalis were trafficked into Pakistan through illegal means.

### **The Status of Burmese Migrants**

During the 80s, at the time of the Burmese Communist revolution, The Muslims of Burma experienced severe upheaval and havoc. The Government of Pakistan allowed Burmese Muslims to enter Pakistan on humanitarian and religious grounds. These people were never granted citizenship by the Government thus the status of these people is that of refugees.

### **Bengali and Burmese Children Born in Pakistan**

From the point of view of the Law, all these children are aliens until they become citizens of Pakistan according to Law of Citizenship.

### **The Afghans and their Children**

According to survey of Government of Pakistan about five lac Afghans are dwelling in Kachhi Abadis of Karachi and its suburbs. The Afghans comprise Persian and Pashto speakers. These Afghans came as refugees and were registered with the United Nations' Human Rights Organization (UNHCR) and had registration cards given to them. Most of them were sent back to Afghanistan but they returned again by crossing the border illegally. Those who have UNHCR cards and those who have Pakistani Visas on Afghani Passport may live in

Pakistan on legal terms. To provide residence and employment to the rest is a crime according to the law.

### **Other Nationals**

The residents of other nations who are living illegally in Karachi are as follows: Irani, Sri Lankan, nationals of African countries, nationals of Arab countries and Central Asians. However, these residents number in few thousand. Apart from these many Hindustanis came in by legal means but have not gone back. These number in a few thousand.

### **The Aims of NARA**

The aim of NARA is to register and issue cards for identification to all aliens who came into Pakistan before 10<sup>th</sup> June 2000 and have been residing without legal documentation. Apart from this, NARA aims to issue work permits of three years duration to those who own their own businesses or are employed in Pakistan.

### **The Disadvantages of not being registered with NARA**

1. Immigrants who are residing here illegally will be liable for ten years imprisonment with rigorous labor and fine. The registration with NARA will protect them from such punishment.
2. After getting registered with NARA any immigrant may live with out fear and risk as an honorable person.

### **Your Responsibility**

If any Bengali, Burmese or other immigrant male or female is working at your home, hotel, restaurant or factory, whether he/she has Pakistani Identity Card, register him/her with NARA and get the verification of his/her card with NARA's help or directly from NADRA. This is your National Responsibility and obligation by law. Perform your National and lawful responsibility and protect your country from political, social and other threats.

### **Registration Process**

NARA, in its head office at C-82 Clifton block 2 Shireen Jinnah Colony is registering all immigrants during office hours. Apart from this NARA has its camp offices at following mentioned places.

1. Ex- DC West and current cite office Habib Bank Chowriangi Site Karachi.
2. District Education Officer's office Karim Abad Chowrangi Karachi.
3. Shop # 3 Ibrahim Hydri Main Jamot Market PF Korangi Karachi.

The employees of NARA fill registration Performa to facilitate you. Pay 250 rupees and receive receipt. After one week present the receipt at NARA's office and get the your card. For your convenience NARA will deliver your card to your home if you request them to. Do not forget to bring two passport size copies of your photographs.

Phones Numbers of NARA

Please contact on these numbers for further information.

9251087-9251085

### **National Aliens Registration Authority**

Ministry of Interior Pakistan

C-82, Block-2, Clifton Karachi

Phone: 9251087-8