

Immigration from Pakistan to Jordan: The Socio-Economic Life of Pakistanis

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Abstract

Approximately 15000 Pakistani agriculture immigrant workers and their families live in Jordan. They initially migrated to the Levant and Gulf regions to visit religious sites during the 1960s and 1970s. Over time, they settled in Jordan and took up work in agriculture. Now, their third generation is growing up there. Many other nationalities also work in Jordan, with Egyptians and Pakistanis leading the agricultural sector. The garment industry is primarily run by Indians, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Nepalese, and Pakistanis. Construction, restaurants, and private security jobs are mainly held by Egyptians and Sudanese. By the late 1990s, most domestic workers were women from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Pakistani immigrants face many issues related to both Jordanian and Pakistani authorities. Their situation has worsened over the past decade, with problems including lack of social security, high document-processing fees, unannounced bans on driving licenses, no scholarships for Pakistani students in Jordanian universities and costly healthcare. Additionally, they encounter difficulties related to Pakistani ID card issuance, no opportunity of Urdu education for their children, and the erosion of Pakistani cultural values.

Keywords: Immigration, Jordan, Pakistani diaspora, IOM, UNHCR, UNRWA

Objectives of the Study

This research study encompasses many objectives. The study provides first-hand information to the government of Pakistan about the Pakistani immigrants living in Jordan. As the vast majority of Pakistanis in Jordan live hand to mouth, the study could be beneficial for a future government welfare scheme for them. The Pakistani diaspora spreading all over the world sends remittances to Pakistan, and thereby plays a very vital role in the economy of Pakistan. So, the study will help compile data on Pakistani immigrants for remittance purposes. Moreover, the data will be a valuable source for both academia and researchers in the field of Pakistani immigrants in the future.

Research Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in this research. The most important feature of this research is the collection of first-hand data for this research. Pakistani unskilled workers are scattered across Jordan, mainly in remote villages living in agricultural lands. The researcher interviewed 50 agricultural labourers, among them (**listed with pseudonyms in the research**). The researcher selected participants from all levels of worker communities so that the data collected is 'representative of the problems of all the workers'.

Data Collection Technique

The researcher developed a questionnaire comprising 25 questions, including both 'open-ended' and 'closed-ended' questions. The researcher then interviewed the participants in various regions of Jordan, primarily Shouna Janubia, Dairalla, Karama, Karak, Irbid, Ramtha, Mafraq, Azraq, Lubban, and Madaba, among others, during 2024-25. To allow participants to decide whether to participate in the research, the researcher developed a participant information sheet and a consent form that permitted withdrawal from the study before 15th June 2025.

Introduction to Jordan

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a Muslim-majority country located in the Levant region of the Middle East. It is geographically bordered by Syria to the north, Palestine/Israel to the west, Saudi Arabia to the south, and Iraq to the east. With a rich archaeological and historical past, the country is home to many symbols of ancient civilizations, such as Petra, the Nabatean kingdom, and the Roman Empire citadel. Likewise, there are many Islamic sites in the country related to the holy prophets and their companions (Bahri et al. 2011).

Jordan covers approximately 89,300 square km area with a population of 11 million. About half of the population is concentrated in Amman, the capital city of Jordan. Other major cities include Irbid, Zarqa, Ajloun, Mafraq, Azraq, Madaba, Karak, Maan, and Aqaba. The populations of the larger cities consist largely of Palestinians who migrated from Israel-occupied areas during the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. Smaller cities and villages are populated by native Arab tribes. Tribes play a significant role in local politics and administration in Jordan. For example, the Obeidat tribe in Irbid, the Bani Hassan in Zarqa, the Al Fayez in Madaba, and the Al Adwan tribe in the Jordan Valley have a dominant role in their regions (Khawaldeh and Abu-Sabha 2022).

Jordan's economy is mainly dependent on tourism, fertilizer ingredients (potash and phosphates extracted from the Dead Sea), the garment industry, and foreign aid. It has signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the USA, the European Union, and some Arab countries in North Africa. The currency of Jordan is the Jordanian Dinar, which has been pegged to the USD at 1 Jordanian Dinar to 1.41 USD since 1995. After the Oslo Peace Agreement between Israel and the

Palestinian Authority in 1994, the government established 13 Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs) to boost exports to the USA. Later, Jordan signed an FTA with the USA in 2001. The government invited foreign investors to invest in the industrial production sector. Many investors, including those from Pakistan, also arrived in Jordan and invested in the garment sector to benefit from FTAs with the USA and the EU. In 2018, the government announced a Citizenship by Investment program modeled after those of Malta, Turkiye, and some Caribbean countries. Political stability, moderate weather, and exemplary peaceful security conditions are major plus factors for foreign investors to invest in Jordan (Jordan Strategy Forum 2017).

Categories of Immigrants in Jordan

There are the following three types of immigrants who arrived in the land of Jordan for a long:-

1. Immigrants Having Jordanian Citizenship Status

a. Caucasians

Historically, the oldest community living in Jordan is Caucasian. They belong to the intercontinental region of Caucasia, consisting of four countries: Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and parts of Russia. The community that belongs to the Russian semi-independent regions of Circassia, Chechnya, and Tatarstan. They migrated from such regions into Ottoman regions after the mid-19th century as a result of Russia's southward expansion. After that, they permanently settled in both the Levant and the Balkan regions. Their number is around fifty thousand in Jordan. They are well educated and play an important role in the Jordanian armed forces and trade (Shami 2009).

b. Palestinians

They migrated from the Palestinian West Bank to Jordan during the 1948 and 1967 wars. The immigrants who migrated in 1948 possess Jordanian nationality rights, but the majority of Palestinians who migrated in 1967 do not have such rights. A special UN agency, the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), looks after them at the international level (O. e. al. 2023).

2. Immigrants Having Refugee Status

a. Iraqis

The first wave of Iraqi immigrants arrived in Jordan during the 1991 Gulf War, while the second wave arrived in 2003 following the U.S. attack on Iraq. According to UNHCR (2021), there are 0.750 million registered Iraqi immigrants in Jordan. Many have returned to their country in recent years, while many educated and wealthy families have migrated further to the USA, Europe, and Turkiye.

b. Syrians

Since the onset of the war in Syria in 2011, Jordan has shouldered the impact of a massive influx of Syrian refugees. According to UNHCR (2024), there are more than 600,000 registered Syrian immigrants in Jordan.

3. Irregular Immigrants

A sizeable immigrants belong to multiple nationalities are also living in Jordan. Gazan Palestinians are without legal status in Jordan. The Gaza region of Palestine has geographical proximity as well as historical ties with Egypt. While the West Bank, along with Eastern Jerusalem of Palestine, has remained under Jordan's control throughout history but not Gaza. On this basis, the Jordanian government has always discouraged Gazans from migrating to Jordan. As a result, they live as irregular immigrants (Pérez and M.V 2023). A sizeable number of Sudanese and Yemenis also fall into this category.

History of Immigration of Pakistani Immigrant Workers to Jordan

The history of Pakistani immigrant workers to Jordan dates back to the 1960s. This migration is unique compared to all Pakistani diasporas worldwide. 90% of them came from the districts of Qamber Shehdadkot, Larkana, Jackobabad, Dadu, Jhal Magsi, Jafarabad, etc. The vast majority belong to the Burirro, Khosa, Murree, Jatoi, Joya, Lashari, and Shabrani tribes. These districts are situated on both sides of the Kerthar Mountains along the border between Sindh and Balochistan. 5% of Pakistani immigrants hail from Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Peshawar, Batkhela etc, while 5% belong to Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Sialkot. All immigrants from Sindh and Balochistan are engaged in agricultural labour in villages. Immigrants from KPK are engaged in small businesses in cities while immigrants from Punjab are engaged in technical jobs in industrial areas. Being a peaceful country in the troubled region, Jordan is a regional hub for many UN agencies and INGOs' regional offices. A small number of Pakistanis also work in both high and middle positions in these international organizations. They mostly hail from Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Peshawar.

In the 1960s, the ancestors of Pakistani immigrants from Sindh and Balochistan began traveling from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Syria for religious tourism. They started their journey by visiting the holy Islamic sites in Iraq with their families. Then, they traveled to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah. From Saudi Arabia, they traveled north to Syria through the Jordan Valley, situated along with the western border of Jordan. After spending a few weeks in Damascus, they decided to return to Pakistan after performing another Umrah in Saudi Arabia. For this purpose, they once again took the same north-to-south route through the Jordan Valley. During the journey in the Jordan Valley, they interacted with the local Jordanian population.

As Pakistan is an agrarian country, these Pakistani immigrants were well versed in agriculture, while the local Jordanian community was less experienced in agriculture farming. Hence, the local community sought guidance from the Pakistanis and requested them to stay for a few weeks to train them in agricultural techniques. The Pakistani immigrants accepted

their requests and decided to guide them in this profession. In addition to their kind hospitality and very cooperative behavior (which both still continue from Jordanian population side), the Pakistanis found the weather in Jordan very pleasant, as conditions in Pakistan were too hot. After a few weeks, the Pakistani families decided to offer this opportunity of visiting holy places to their other relatives and friends in Pakistan. So, numerous other families arrived from Pakistan to Jordan to visit Iraqi, Saudi Arabian and Syrian holy site, jointly.



With Pakistani Agriculture Farmers during Field Research in Madaba

With the passage of time, both Pakistani and Jordanian communities adjusted to one another. Now, Jordanian local landowners offered Pakistani community some agricultural land for harvesting for one or more years. During coming years, many more Pakistani families also kept arriving in Jordan to visit holy places. After that, the Pakistani community settled permanently in Jordan, and it remains there to this day. Their number continued to increase in Jordan due to a relaxed visa policy and a better security situation. Because it was difficult for poor Pakistani farmers to make more frequent visits to Pakistan, their family connections to Pakistan kept weakening, gradually. Over time, younger generations of Pakistanis became less familiar with their relatives, their native regions, and Pakistan. Therefore, they began learning Arabic language and Jordanian culture. Many Pakistani families also intermarried with Jordanian families. Currently, their third generation is in a growing stage. Now, only a few of those families visit Pakistan to see their relatives and look after their properties. A vast majority of them speak only their native Balochi or Sindhi languages, along with Arabic, while only a small number can speak Urdu fluently, the national language of Pakistan.

Regarding their educational status, it is very low. Most of their children either don't attend school or attend irregularly. Economically also, the majority of them remain hand-to-mouth. Only those families are in better economic conditions who have settled near cities, have provided their children with education, or have some property in Pakistan.

Data Collection and its Analysis

S.No.	Name	Residence in Jordan	Home Town	Arrival year Jordan	Accommodation Type	Job Nature	Monthly Income
1	Saif Ullah	Lubbon	Larkana	1970	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
2	Shahid	Ghor Safi	Qamber Shehdadkot	1967	Tent	Agriculture	350 JD
3	Anwar	Karama	Karkana	Born in Jordan	House	Agriculture	1000 JD
4	Akmal	Zizia	Qamber shehdadkot	1968	Tent	Agriculture	Don't know
5	Sharif	Shouna Janubia	Jhal Magsi	1973	Tent	Agriculture	Not confirmed
6	Abdul Majeed	Shouna Janubia	Larkana	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	300 JD
7	Naveed	Zarqa	Qamber shehdadkot	1976	House	Agriculture	650 JD
8	Tahir	Lubbon	Qamber shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
9	Akbar	Aqaba	Qamber shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	House	Car Machenic	500 JD
10	Hassan	Ghor Safi	Quetta	1970	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
11	Ramzan	Madaba	Dadu	1984	Tent	Agriculture	1100 JD
12	Tanveer	Karama	Dadu	1971	House	Agriculture	800 JD
13	Kaleem	Shouna Janubia	Noshero Feroz	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
14	Haleem	Dairalla	Tando Adam	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	500 JD
15	Ghulam Abbas	Dairalla	Larkana	1980	Tent	Agriculture	500 JD
16	Faheem	Lubban	Qamber shehdadkot	1977	Tent	Agriculture	800 JD
17	Umar	Madaba	Dadu	2001	Tent	Agriculture	900 JD
18	Farooq	Madaba	Dadu	1984	Tent	Agriculture	1000 JD
19	Nouman	Karama	Jafarabad	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	200 JD
20	Ehtisham	Salt	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD

21	Wali Muham mad	Qastal	Qamber shehdadkot	1978	Tent	Agriculture	200 JD
22	Sagheer	Ramtha	Larkana	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
23	Nawaz	Karama	Jafarabad	1975	Tent	Agriculture	250 JD
24	Asif	Shouna Janubia	Larkana	Born in Jordan	House	Agriculture	250 JD
25	Saif Ulrehma n	Zizia	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	900 JD
26	Ismail	Ghor Safi	Qamber Shehdadkot	1977	Tent	Agriculture	250 JD
27	Imran	Dairalla	Jafarabad	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	200 JD
28	Riaz	Qastal	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	250 JD
29	Sajid	Lubban	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	250 JD
30	Mohallib	Shouna Janubia	Larkana	2013	House	Chowkidar in Agriculture land	350 JD
31	Munir	Salt	Qamber Shehdadkot	1996	Tent	Agriculture	300 JD
32	Touqir	Karama	Larkana	1998	Tent	Agriculture	Donot know
33	Shahid	Salt	Larkana	1975	Tent	Agriculture	500 JD
34	Aqil	Sahab	Larkana	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
35	Abid	Qastal	Dadu	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
36	Hasnain	Irbid	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	250 JD
37	Arshad	Zezia	Dadu	Born in Jordan	House	Agriculture	825 JD
38	Tariq	Ghor Safi	Larkana	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
39	Naseer	Dairalla	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
40	Hisham	Shouna Janubia	Qamber Shehdadkot	1977	House	Civilian employee with Jordanian armed forces	425 JD
41	Naeem	Aqaba	Qamber shehdadkot	1977	Tent	Agriculture	200 JD
42	Waqar	Sahab	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
43	Qasim	Zizia	Qamber Shehdadkot	1971	Tent	Agriculture	250 JD

44	Rehmat	Dairalla	Ghotki	Born in Jordan	House	Agriculture	250 JD
45	Salah Uddin	Irbid	Larkana	1985	Tent	Agriculture	850 JD
46	Rafiq	Shouna Janubia	Larkana	1970	House	Agriculture	5000 JD
47	Sulman	Qastal	Jhal Magsi	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	350 JD
48	Rashid	Zezia	Qamber Shehdadkot	1973	Tent	Agriculture	375 JD
49	Hamid	Zezia	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD
50	Naseem	Shouna Janubia	Qamber Shehdadkot	Born in Jordan	Tent	Agriculture	425 JD

Challenges Faced by Pakistani Immigrants from Jordanian Side

1. No Social Security System

Around 90% of Pakistanis are engaged in agricultural labour. Unfortunately, they have no social security coverage against injury, disability, death during work, and old age benefits after retirement. Luckily, the Jordanian government had incorporated its social security plan in its bylaw no. 19 of 2021. The government made efforts to provide such services to agricultural immigrant workers, but local farmers resisted on the basis of the contribution rate, which is fixed at 21.75% (14.25% from the employer and 7.50% from the employee). 75% of the participants demanded to provide them with a social security facility.

Saif Ullah belongs to the district Qamber Shehdad Kot in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan with his parents in 1970 and currently, lives in Lubban. He said, "The life of the Pakistani community was very comfortable a decade ago, but now it is becoming more and more difficult day by day. If a member of his family falls ill, it can leave me heavily indebted to his relatives, friends, and the hospital".

Sharif hails from the district of Jhal Magsi in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan in 1973 with his family and lives in Zezia this time. While recalling his childhood memories, he said that many of his relatives visited Pakistan for medical treatment because the cost of health services in Jordan was too high. He further explained that if the disease is very dangerous, it can compel them to sell all their assets. In this grave situation, some INGOs and some rich families of Gulf have rescued and provided financial support to some patients as well.

2. High Fees for Work Permits and Residence Permits

Work permits are issued by the Ministry of Labour to persons above 18 years of age possessing an Aqama/residence permit. Only a Kafeel can forward the request for a work permit for agricultural labour to the ministry. The

number of work permits a Kafeel can recommend for a labourer depends on the volume of his business. For example, an agricultural landowner can recommend one work permit against the ownership of his 2.50 acres of water land or 5 acres of barren land or 6 agricultural farming tunnels. In Jordan, land is measured in Dunums and roughly, one Dunum is equal to 2 canals, a Pakistani land measurement standard. 95% of the participants expressed concerns about high processing fees for Jordanian documents.

Malik Hassan belongs to the district of Quetta in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan in 1970 and now lives in Ghor Safi. He said that in the last few years, fees for Jordanian documents have increased manifold. A work permit (Tasreeh Ulamal) is valid for one year. In 2002, the fee for a work permit was 50 JD/year. In 2017, it went upto 200 JD/year. Currently, the fee is 425 JD/year (down from 520 JD). Before work permit processing, the fee for the annual mandatory medical checkup is 85 JD. If a worker fails to process his work permit for 1 year, he will have to pay a 700 JD/year fine in addition to all actual fees. As most Pakistani immigrants live with meagre incomes, obtaining such documents is a big challenge for them.

Ghulam Abbas hails from Larkana district in Pakistan. He landed in Jordan in 1980 and is currently living in Dairalla. He said that after getting a work permit, one has to process their residence permit (Aqamas) for every family member. Every person aged 12 or older will have to pay 30 JD/year for a medical checkup required for a residence permit. If someone has failed to process his residence permit for more than 1 month, he will have to pay a 1.50 JD/day fine, which amounts to 550 JD/year. So, due to rising document-processing costs, he has saved nothing over the last three years. His income is spent on the annual renewal of documents of his family members.

3. Limited Seats for Pakistani Students in Jordanian Universities

Mr. Dr. Zaid Ahmad Al-Muhaisen is a tribal chief in Jordan. He studied at Karachi University in 1980. Currently, he is the president of the Pakistani Alumni Club in Amman, Jordan. According to him, a bilateral agreement/MoU was signed between the governments of Pakistan's M/O Education and Jordan's M/O Higher Education in 1962. The sole purpose of the MoU was to provide concessional education to each other's students in their respective countries. It is also on record that there are 31 seats for Jordanian students in Pakistani universities, but only 8 seats for Pakistani students in Jordanian universities (5 for bachelor's degrees, 2 for master's degrees, and 1 for a Ph.D).

In line with this MoU, the children of Pakistani immigrants seek admission in Jordanian universities through the Embassy of Pakistan in Jordan. After the Embassy prepares a merit list, the names of students are forwarded to the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education. The Ministry then sends these names to some government universities in all over Jordan. The students who

succeed to secure admission to Jordanian universities can pursue their education by paying fees equivalent to those of Jordanian students. But the students who cannot secure admission through these seats are compelled to seek admission on a self-financed basis in Jordan. Self-financed education is also very costly in Jordan, particularly, in the fields of medicine, IT, and engineering. It is also important to note that in the past till 2010, Pakistani students used to receive fully funded Pakistani scholarships against Masters and Ph.D. seats from the Pakistani Ministry of Education, but this has now been discontinued. In these circumstances, it has become impossible for a middle-class family to provide their children with a university education. 25% of the participants demanded an increase in the number of seats.

Ehtisham belongs to the district Qamber Shehdad Kot in Pakistan. He was born in Jordan and now lives in Salt. He tells that many seats are reserved for Jordanian students at various government universities in Pakistan, but very few are reserved for their children in Jordan. For Jordan's 11 million population, there are 31 seats in Pakistan, but for Pakistan's 250 million population, there are only 8 seats in Jordan. Hence, the government of Pakistan should increase the number of its seats at Jordanian universities.

Saif Ulrehman hails from District Qamber Shehdad Kot in Pakistan. He was born in Jordan and now lives in Zezia. He believes that admission to government universities on a self-financed basis through the international student program costs about 4000 JD/semester, which is too high. Therefore, we prefer to seek admission to private universities, where the fee structure for foreigners is around 1500 JD/semester, much lower than at government universities.

4. Ban on Issuance/Renewal of Driving License

Before 2016, Pakistani immigrant workers were issued driving licenses to drive their personal vehicles. But after that, an unannounced ban was imposed on the processing and renewal of driving licenses. In fact, a vast majority of Pakistani immigrant workers, along with their families, is settled in far-flung areas of Jordan. Many times, a family member falls ill in the mid-night hours. In this situation, because they do not possess valid driving licenses, they cannot transport their patients to a hospital a city. Likewise, they also cannot drive their vehicles to pick up and drop off their children at schools. They are also required to drive their vegetable-loading mini-truck to bring vegetables to major vegetable markets in Amman, Irbid, and Dairalla. 80% of the participants experience such difficulties due to expired driving license. Currently, M/O Transport is issuing driving licenses to the only following categories of foreigners:

- A company owner
- A student
- Husband of a Jordanian woman
- Children of a Jordanian woman

Mohallib belongs to district Larkana in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan in 2013 and currently, lives in Shouna Janubia. He expressed that it was his duty to transport agricultural produce to the vegetable markets in Amman. Since, he cannot get a driving license, he has to rely heavily on renting a mini-truck along with a driver for each trip to Amman. He cannot use his own vehicle for his own work. It badly impacts on his income generation. Abid is from Dadu District in Pakistan. He was born in Jordan and currently lives in Qastal. He said, "I have to purchase vegetables from the fields and then, sell them at the Vegetable Market in Amman. But many times, my vegetables get rotten due to non-availability of a mini-truck to transport vegetable".

5. No Individual and Family Medical Insurance

Jordan is among the countries where medical treatment is very expensive. To address this issue, the government of Jordan has provided individual and family medical insurance for all its citizens. However, there is no system through which Pakistani agriculture workers can access this facility. The government has granted family medical insurance through the M/O Health to the families of all government employees. They can receive treatment at government hospitals. Jordanian citizens without government jobs are also issued with insurance cards for medical treatment for themselves and their families at no charge. Likewise, private industry provides medical insurance coverage to both Jordanian and foreign workers, as well as their family members, through insurance companies. 80% of the participants opined that, since they cannot receive medical treatment in government hospitals, they don't feel any difference between government and private hospitals.

On the contrary, Pakistani citizens have neither individual nor family medical coverage. Medical treatment for a non-entitled person in government hospitals is, on average, twice as costly as in private hospitals. Moreover, the fee structure in government hospitals is fixed, whereas that in private hospitals is normally negotiable. So, the majority of Pakistanis prefer to private hospitals for their medical treatment. The medical checkup fee for an outpatient with a general practitioner is 10-15 JD, and with a specialist is 30-50 JD. If a patient is admitted, he has to pay 150-200 JD/day in a ward and 1000 JD/day in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Likewise, the fee for normal baby delivery is 300 JD, and for cesarean delivery is 600 JD. These medical expenses are quite unaffordable for people with an average income of 300-400 JD/month. 35% of participants expressed concern about the lack of medical insurance.

Hisham belongs to the district Qamber Shehdad Kot in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan in 1977 and is now living in Shouna Janubia. He said that one of his close relatives caught cancer. He had no way to get affordable treatment for such a disease from Jordan. So, he left for Pakistan and faced a number of hardships during this treatment as his all family member were from him.

Salah Uddin hails from District Larkana in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan in 1985 and currently lives in Irbid. He went to a private hospital for his wife's delivery. After the delivery, his wife and newborn were to be admitted to the hospital for one week. He fell into heavy hospital debt because he could not pay such a huge amount of medical charges. Finally, the hospital administration discharged the patients only when he gave a written surety to pay all the medical debt in installments. Now, he has been paying that debt since one year.



With the Participants in an IOM Meeting about Immigrant Issues in Amman

Challenges Faced by Pakistani Immigrants from the Pakistani Side

1. Issuance of National Identity Card

One of the biggest challenges Pakistani immigrants face in Jordan is obtaining national identity cards. A national identity card is the official symbol of a Pakistani nationality. The card is issued by the National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA). Only after the issuance of a national identity card, their personal data is recorded in the national database. Normally, Pakistani immigrants are required to have two documents: a birth certificate and Form S-1, as the prerequisites for the issuance of a new Pakistani national identity card. The birth certificate is issued by Jordanian authorities, while Form S-1 is issued by the Embassy of Pakistan. Then, an applicant applies for the ID card online, as there is still no NADRA Section at the Embassy of Pakistan (NADRA system recently installed). Many times, NADRA places such applications in national verification process and sends its verification team to their home addresses. At that stage, the applications of Pakistani immigrants are stuck for a major reason; as their ancestors had left Pakistan long time ago, no one knows about them in their native areas in Pakistan. 95% of the participants highlighted this issue of national identity cards.

Ismail is from the district of Qamber Shehdad Kot in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan in 1977 and now lives in Qastal. He explained another major issue which lies with the Pakistani immigrants; such applicants have had their Pakistani documents expired for a long time. As a result, NADRA authorities have doubts about such cases and do not issue national identity cards in a timely manner.

Imran is from District Jafarabad in Pakistan. He was born in Jordan and currently lives in Dairalla. He said, "A vast majority of us are neither in contact with even our close relatives in Pakistan, nor do we visit Pakistan". As a result, when they have no record in the Pakistani database, no Pakistani identity card can be issued, and a passport cannot be issued without a valid ID card. Obviously, no one can obtain Jordanian documents without the documents of their country of origin. As a result, many Pakistanis face huge fines from the Jordanian government side.

2. No Pakistani Schooling for Children

It's astonishing that only a small number of participants mentioned the difficulties with the non-existence of Pakistani schools where their children can learn Urdu and gain knowledge about Pakistan. There are many obvious reasons for this. First, parents do not prioritize education because they lack awareness of its importance in today's world. Second, economic pressures often drive parents to send their children to labour work rather than to schools. Third, frequent relocations due to weather conditions and agricultural labour demands keep their children constantly away from attending school regularly. 50% of participants highlighted this Urdu language learning issue.

Riaz is from Qamber Shehdad Kot District in Pakistan. He was born in Jordan and currently lives in Qastal. According to him, a few Pakistanis tried their best in their personal capacity to educate the children of Pakistani immigrants in Jordan. Mr. Monder Faqeer Lashari established a school in Shouna Janubia in 1975. He used to teach children the Holy Quran and school education up to the eighth grade, without receiving any salary. Shoukat Ali was another person who provided such great service. He opened a school in Karama in 1985. Parents of the children used to donate some money to him as much as they liked. Likewise, Muhammad Khosa also established a school in Karama in 2010 without receiving any remuneration. Today, a majority of middle-aged people who received some education were the students of these three great personalities.

Sajid is from Qamber Shehdad Kot District in Pakistan. He arrived in Jordan in 1996 and now lives in Salt. He said, "Our children know very little about Pakistan. If there were Pakistani schools in Jordan, our children could learn Urdu and reconnect with Pakistan. University-level education may be a luxury, but basic education is a necessity for our children. I have 10 children and I want to send them to school regularly, but my frequent relocations for agricultural labour force them to leave school. We often live in faraway villages of Jordan, far from schools".

3. Issue of Forgetting Pakistani Culture

Many participants expressed their grave concerns about the decline of Pakistani culture. Because most of them have never visited Pakistan, they know very little about it. Pakistani culture is diminishing within the Pakistani community, as most second- and third-generation of Pakistanis have never seen Pakistan. 40% of the participants highlighted this cultural challenge.

Muhammad Munir is from District Qamber Shehdad Kot. He arrived in Jordan in 1996 and currently lives in Salt. He said, "I came in Jordan with my father, and now my all seven children are grown up. I can speak and understand Urdu easily, but my children can hardly speak or understand the national language of Pakistan. This is a great point of concern for our second and third generations".

Touqir is from District Larkana. He arrived in Jordan in 1998 and currently lives in Karama. According to him, his grandfather came to Jordan. They used to wear Pakistani dress Shalwaar and Qameez along with a turban. However, the newer generations have relinquished such symbols of Pakistani culture. Now, all male members of their joint family wear pent shirts with Akaal on the head as local Jordanians do. However, their women still wear Pakistani dress. He thanks social media, which has helped the new generation learn about Pakistani culture. Social media has once again enabled them to reconnect with their relatives in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The following steps can help address the issue of Pakistani immigrants in Jordan:

- The Jordanian government may be requested to implement its social security bylaws in practice.
- The Jordanian government may be requested to reduce the documents processing and university fees to a level affordable for poor laborer families.
- The existing MoU or agreement with the Jordanian Ministry of Education should be revised to increase the number of seats for Pakistani students at Jordanian universities.
- The Jordanian government should be requested to lift the ban on driving licenses.
- Both the governments of Pakistan and Jordan can negotiate with insurance companies to provide family medical coverage to Pakistanis at an affordable premium.
- The Government of Pakistan can establish schools or, at least, hire teachers to teach the children of Pakistani immigrants the Urdu language.
- And last but not least, the embassy of Pakistan should arrange programs on the history of Pakistan and culture to help Pakistani immigrants learn more about Pakistan and Pakistani culture.

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