

# IDE Research Bulletin

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Research Summary based on papers prepared for publication  
in academic journals with the aim of contributing to the academia

## **Female International Migration: A Case of Nurse Migration from Kerala, India**

Project Organizer

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IDE-JETRO

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Female International Migration: A Case of Nurse Migration from Kerala, India

### **Organizer:**

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### **Research Period**

April 2015 To March 2017

### **Objective of the Research Project**

This research aims to understand female international migration with focus on nurse migration from India. Based on nurse and nursing student surveys, this research project explored the factors influencing nurse migration and the impact of growing global demand on nurses on nursing students.

### **Background**

As developed countries face aging populations, a shortage of 'home grown' nurses is hindering families who lack the ability to take care of their dependents under the current demographic, economic and social transformations. Therefore, the demand for nurses has grown rapidly. Increasing demand for quality healthcare in developing countries has also increased the need for nurses. India suffers from a shortage of nurses; however, it is the second largest 'exporter' of nurses to OECD countries after the Philippines, and a large number of Indian nurses have migrated to work in the Gulf countries. The estimated number of Indian nurses abroad was reported to be 640,078 in 2011. English proficiency is a competitive advantage for Indian nurses in English-speaking developed countries and Gulf countries.

### **Surveys**

We carried out two surveys in Kerala and Tamil Nadu: one for BSc nursing final year students and the other for nurses based on the alumni list of institutions offering BSc

nursing programs. This was followed by project members' interviews with other nursing institution principals, faculty, state government officials, nursing council officials, nurse recruitment agencies, researchers working in this area and focus group discussions with a group of five to 10 final year BSc nursing students and nurses.

### **Major findings**

The growing global demand for nurses has led to the establishment of a large number of nursing institutions in Kerala, India. However, there is an uneven quality of nursing education across institutions. One paper examines the impacts of the globalized nursing market on nursing students. The social background of nursing students has been expanded from Christians to non-Christians. However, the economic background of students seems to be largely lower middle class. The family strategy of sending a child to nursing school has spread to non-Christians who want to escape from current economic conditions. Some students are even compelled to study nursing using family loans. Nursing students are interested in both joining public services and overseas employment. Meanwhile, students in government institutions see central government services and employment in developed countries as their career path. Their counterparts in private institutions are more inclined to develop careers in state government services or migrate to the Gulf countries as early as possible to repay their loans.

Based on our survey, the other paper analyses the characteristics of Indian migrant nurses and the factors influencing their migration. Many Indian nurses have migrated to work in OECD countries, the Gulf countries and some ASEAN countries. While Indian nurses are migrating overseas to fill shortages at their destinations, India has itself been suffering from an acute scarcity of nurses since its independence in 1947. Therefore, the large scale of nurse migration is a serious threat to the Indian healthcare system. The results of the survey imply that international migration by nurses can be explained in part by the gap between the private sector and the public sector in terms of salary and working environment. Since the impact of social status on the migration decisions of nurses has lessened, economic factors are the crucial determinant of international migration of nurses. Policy intervention in this area is the necessary first step to solving this long-standing problem. The priority in any policies formulated should be given to nurses working in the private sector whose salaries are considerably lower than those in the public sector and whose voices are unheard. The government should first of all work on understanding the current situation.