Presentation and Remarks by Ashook Ramsaran (Indian Diaspora Council Int'l)
"Covid 19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities"
Organized & Hosted by Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT)
1 May 2020 at 5:30 PM (IST)

Namaste, Salaam, Greetings to one and all.

Good morning, good evening wherever you are.

Thanks to Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) for organizing this the organizers of this virtual panel discussion on

"**Covid 19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities**".

Before I begin with my presentation, I request that we observe a MOMENT of SILENCE for those who have lost their lives to **Covid 19**, including front line medical workers who risk their lives to save others, many of whom have also passed away.

Thank you.

I am honored to be selected to be on this panel with such esteemed presenters, conveners and moderator, as well as many participants worldwide. I understand that there is a large online audience and that is most welcome and reassuring. I look forward to a meaningful discussion on a critically important topic and information which can be useful for today and tomorrow as we confront this epidemic and its global consequences.

While I will focus on the impact of COVID-19 on Indian Diaspora migration to USA and Canada, it will also include the global impact, economically and socially.

There are 7 slides which I have prepared for this presentation and I am putting them on the screen now. I intend to follow this sequence and expand on each of the points shown.

The Current Situation: The graph shows over **235,000** deaths worldwide and over **64,000** deaths in USA

These could be under-estimated as reports may not be timely or accurate. The trend is increasing and alarming, affecting every country, some dramatically more than others. Current estimates predict that the trend would continue to climb until and unless a cure and/or vaccine is found, developed and used effectively worldwide. That process could take several months as there are frantic efforts to reach this goal to save lives.

Impact:
There is and most likely would continue to be a Global Economic Impact in 2021- 2022 with a slow-down of 20% - 25% in manufacturing, energy, services, trade.

This slowdown would result is social disruption of reduction in employment in most countries at home and abroad, such as North America (USA, Canada), Europe and Australia/New Zealand. THE US has suspended issuance of new immigrant visas.

This would also result in reduction in migration at home domestically (from villages to cities) and abroad (external) where economic opportunities would be reduced in the form of reduction in employment needs. In addition, in the USA there is currently a hold on H1B visas currently at 250,000 in the USA (including spouses) and averaging 85,000 new visas annually. My estimation is that there would exceptions for medical workers, software and automation engineers. In addition the US Census 2020 process would be adversely affected, impacting the resources and representation among migrant communities.

Migration Outlook:

There would be reduced migration both domestically and globally due to estimates of 20% to 25% slowdown in employment in most countries at home and abroad. Hence fewer skilled and unskilled workers would be needed domestically in cities as well as abroad. In addition, reduced consumption and the lowered price of fossil fuel and natural gas would significantly limit the number of migrant workers in the Gulf States.

Re: Indian Diaspora – Same pattern except opportunities for skilled medical workers, software, automation, pharmaceutical and bio-engineering which would be in demand as the economies of destination countries begin to revive, although not to the capacity before Covid-19. These countries include Gulf States, Europe and North America, as well as the Oceania region.

The global race for Covid-19 cure and vaccine continues and the length of time to achieve would directly affect economic conditions in various countries and determine the levels of business revival and employment levels, thereby affecting levels of migration.

Conclusions:

Estimates are that there would be a 20% to 25% slowdown in employment in most countries for 2021 and gradually revive in 2022 with many industries affected or changed. This would directly affect employment needs and impact the levels of migration.

Migration among the Indian Diaspora would be affected domestically (from rural to urban) and overseas (to destination countries). These migration trends would impact India as well as PIO countries which engage in migration to Gulf States, Europe, North America and Oceania region.

The can be tendency for illegal migration as risks versus benefits are considered, in particular among unskilled labour. In any case, there would be big challenges for the excess pool of both skilled & unskilled migrant labour.

Opportunities:

Due to the changing dynamics resulting from Covid-19, there would be more demand for medical expertise and services, pharmaceuticals, software, automation and bio-engineering, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship expertise. In addition, it could increase the opportunities for plant based foods which can be beneficial for Indian Diaspora with those skills and businesses.

Thank you.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OorSUUMZE0Q

Response to question from participant: **Racism against migrants in USA**

Yes, there is always some form of racism in USA as seen from 2016 presidential election campaign.
Health, economics and migration are closely intertwined.
Migration can be a contentious issue – except when migrants are needed.
Such as medical workers (doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, home healthcare) and farm workers.
These are the workers most exposed, bearing enormous risks but desperately needed now during this epidemic as the front line workers.

From lessons of the past, once this epidemic is over and society revives to some level of economic activity, it would still see some loss of jobs which can result in targeted discrimination against migrants.

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GRFDT Virtual Panel Discussion Series 1

COVID-19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities

On 'International Labour Day'

Friday 1 May 2020, at 5:30 pm (IST)

Ashook Ramsaran - Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC)

COVID-19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities

- Concept Note – Focus of Discussion
- COVID-19 – The Current Situation
- Impact:
  - Economic
  - Social
  - Migration – Domestic
  - Migration - External
  - Study Abroad
- Migration Outlook:
  - Global
  - Indian Diaspora
- Conclusions

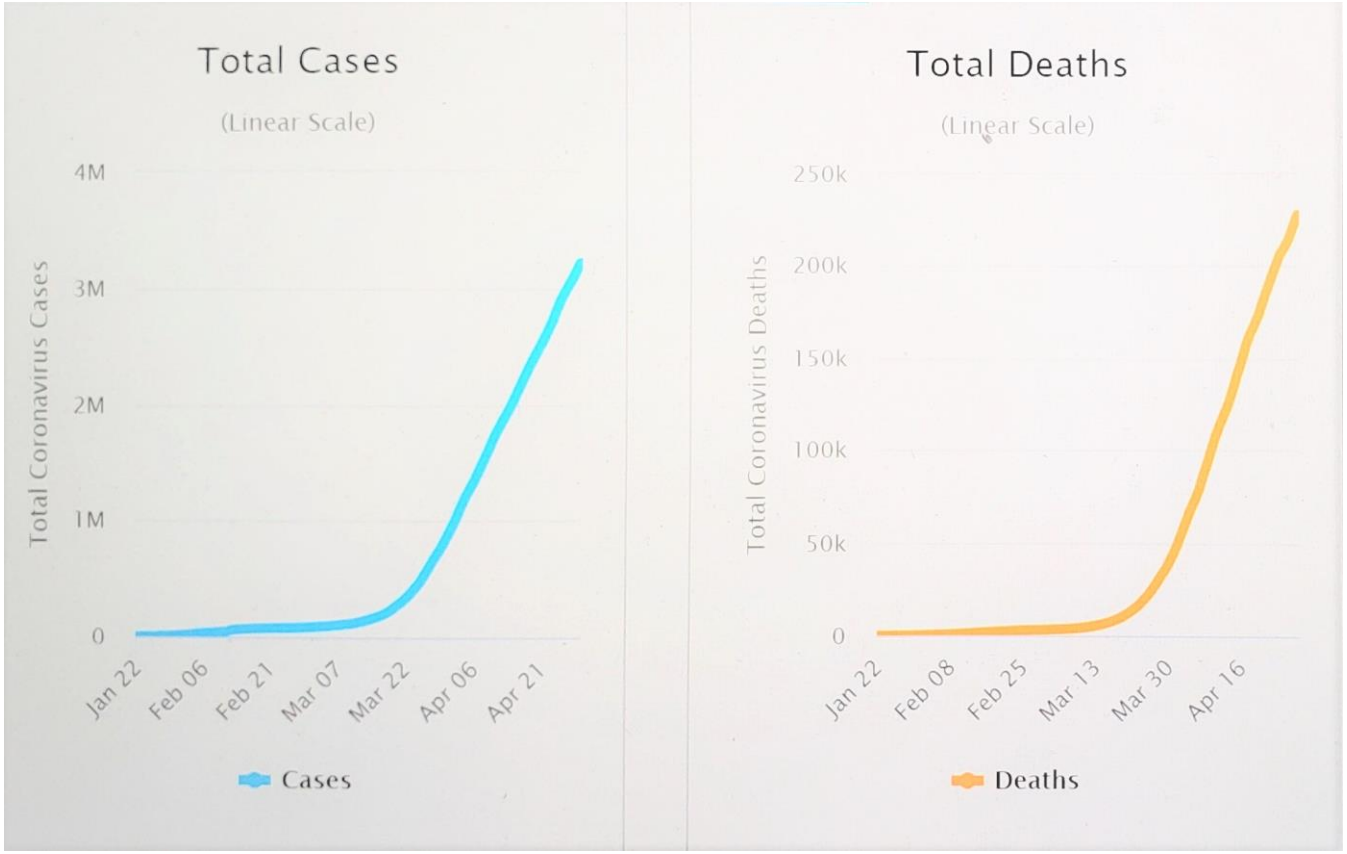
Concept Note – Focus of Discussion

1. How is the experience of immigrant or diaspora communities in various countries since the outbreak of COVID 19?
2. What are the best policy measures in any country relating to the immigrant and diaspora communities?
3. What are the future options for global migration?
4. What is the experience of Indian diaspora in major destination countries such as Gulf, USA etc.
5. What ways this entire change affect the migration and diaspora research?
6. When we talk about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2030), what are the possible roadmaps for it? COVID 19 has adversely affected the migration experience in a great way.

COVID-19: The Current Situation

GLOBALLY (as of 30th April, 2020): https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/

Coronavirus Cases ; **3,275,475** Deaths: **231,575** Recovered: **1,031,782**



COVID-19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities

- Impact:
  - Global Economic Impact
    - Slow-Down in Manufacturing, Energy, Services, Trade
  - Social Impact
    - Reduction in Employment
      - Home
      - Abroad
  - Migration – Domestic
    - Reduction in Large City (Urban) Jobs
  - Migration - External
    - Reduction in Employment Needs
    - Exceptions: Medical Workers; Software Designers

COVID-19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities

- Migration Outlook:
  - Domestic
  - Global Destinations
    - Europe
    - North America
    - Oceania (AU, NZ)
    - Gulf States
    - East Asia
  - Migration by Indian Diaspora
    - From India
    - From PIO Countries

COVID-19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities

- CONCLUSIONS
  - Global Economics 2021-22
  - Employment Marketplace Needs
  - Indian Diaspora Migration – Domestic (India)
  - Indian Diaspora Migration – Global
    - India
    - PIO Countries
  - Benefits *vs* Risks
  - Legal *vs* Illegal Migration
  - Challenges – Excess of skilled & unskilled labour
  - Opportunities
    - Medical expertise, services, pharmaceuticals
    - Software and Automation
    - Innovation & Entrepreneurship

COVID 19: Issues and challenges of migrant and diaspora communities

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Concept Note

On 'International Labour Day'

Friday 1 May 2020, at 5:30 pm (IST)

COVID 19 and the movement of people have a very close relation. In fact the Pandemic became global as a result of the movement of the people. As of 26 April 2020, 2.9 million infected, 200,000 deaths and 837,000 recovered cases of COVID-19 were reported from worldwide. In such a high concentration rate, the pathogenic disease has become a serious and unprecedented challenge for every aspects of life, including the migrant and diaspora issues. Argument regarding the migrants and diaspora are mostly reflected in relation to their condition of survival. The increase in cases of COVID 19 has brought a halt to major part of the economy. According the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) global economy growth is seen falling to 2.4 percent whole year compared to an already weak 2.9 percent in 2019. It noted that the global economy is estimated to rise to a modest 3.3 percent in the year 2021. However, in its report the WTO mentioned the expected recovery in 2021 is equally uncertain. All these have resulted in creating deep anxiety for millions who have lost their job.

The COVID 19 has not only changed the course of migration drastically but also it have made the migration experience more vulnerable in the future. Many countries now have substantial number of Migrants and diasporas who not only contribute to their national economy but global economy as well. Against this backdrop this panel discussion will explore the followings:

1. How is the experience of immigrant or diaspora communities in various countries since the outbreak of COVID 19?
2. What are the best policy measures in any country relating to the immigrant and diaspora communities?
3. What are the future options for global migration?
4. What is the experience of Indian diaspora in major destination countries such as Gulf, USA etc.
5. What ways this entire change affect the migration and diaspora research?
6. When we talk about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2030), what are the possible roadmaps for it? COVID 19 has adversely affected the migration experience in a great way.

GRFDT Virtual Panel Discussion Series 1

COVID-19: Issues and Challenges of Migrant and Diaspora Communities

On 'International Labour Day'

Friday 1 May 2020, at 5:30 pm (IST)

Panellists	
Nandini C. Sen *Moderator*	University of Delhi, India
Brij Maharaj	University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Denison Jayasooria	Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKM, Malaysia
Ashook Ramsaran	President, Indian Diaspora Council International (former President, GOPIO) New York, USA
Sadananda Sahoo	Indira Gandhi National Open University, India
Rakesh Ranjan	Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India
Feroz Khan	Institute for Research and Development in School Education, India
Monika Bisht	Institute for Research and Development in School Education, India

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ALL ARE WELCOME

Kindly Send an email to convenor@grfdt.com to register for the event. For more details, please visit: www.grfdt.com.

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Brief Biography of Panel Speakers

Nandini C Sen is an Associate Professor of English at the Bharati College, University of Delhi. She was Post-Doctoral Fellow at IIAS Shimla and also served at the Cluster Innovation Centre at the University of Delhi. She has been the recipient of the Charles Wallace Fellowship to London in 2001 and 2009, respectively. She has also been the Asia Representative at the African Literature Conference in 2003 and 2009, respectively.

Brij Maharaj is a Senior Professor of geography at the University of Kwazulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. He has received widespread recognition for his research on urban politics, segregation, local economic development, xenophobia and human rights, migration and diasporas, religion, philanthropy and development, and has published over 140 scholarly papers in renowned journals.

Denison Jayasooriya is Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKM, Malaysia. In March 2018 he was confirmed Practice Professor in Public Advocacy by the National University of Malaysia (UKM). He was honoured by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong with the conferment of the Darjah Panglima Jasa Negara (PJN) in 2006. In Oct 2017, the United Nations Office in Malaysia awarded him the UN Award for exceptional contributions in the promotions of SDGs.

Ashook Ramsaran, Guyanese-born, was former President of GOPIO Int'l and currently President of Indian Diaspora Council International. President and CEO of Ramex, Inc., an electronics manufacturing enterprise in New York. He has been named among the top 100 Indian Businessperson in the USA and recipient of India's Pravasi Samman Award and Uttar Pradesh Ratna Award among his many recognition.

Sadananda Sahoo is Faculty at the School of Interdisciplinary and Trans-disciplinary Studies (SOITS), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). He is working on International Migration and Diaspora and jointly editing the peer-reviewed journal "Migration and Diasporas: An Interdisciplinary Journal". He is a life member of GRFDT.

Rakesh Ranjan is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Development Practice and Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. He is also an Assistant Editor of Journal of Migration Affairs, the organizational journal of the TISS Patna Centre. He is working on the issues relating to international labour migration and Diaspora with the specific focus on West Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

Feroz Khan is currently associated with the Institute for Research and Development in School Education (IRDSE), Modern School. He did his Master and PhD on labour issues from Interdisciplinary and Trans-disciplinary Studies (SOITS), Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). He is an active member of GRFDT.

Monika Bisht is working with the Institute for Research and Development in School Education, New Delhi. She has completed her M. Phil and PhD from National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, India. She has been working on various issues relating to education, labour, Diaspora, international migration, exile, and diaspora philanthropy.

For detail profile of speakers, please visit www.grfdt.com

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