



The Pre-migration Impacts of Ethical Recruitment

Measuring the role of ethical recruitment on migration knowledge, decision-making, and vulnerability to forced labor

October 2021

©Seefar, 2021

This publication is distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	3
2. Research Approach	5
3. Research Findings	8
3.1. COVID-19 has decreased interest in migration.....	8
3.2. Migration interest motivated by economic pull factors, not push factors.....	9
3.3. Changes to COVID-19 context reinforce existing migration plans.....	9
3.4. Recruitment fees and other factors are highly relevant to individual decision-making.....	10
3.5. TERA beneficiaries are more informed and aware about migration processes and risks.....	11
3.6. TERA beneficiaries displayed greater risk internalization than non-TERA prospective migrants	12
3.7. TERA beneficiaries identified a greater diversity of risks.....	13
3.8. There is strong demand for ethical recruitment among prospective migrants	15
3.9. TERA beneficiaries often trust TERA and receive migration information from diverse sources.....	16
4. Conclusion	18

Executive Summary

Low- and semi-skilled migrant workers seeking work abroad are often highly vulnerable to forced labor. Their vulnerability is driven by exploitative recruitment practices, such as charging illegal fees, contract substitution, visa fraud, and confiscation of identification documents. Ethical recruitment -an approach that ensures legal compliance, eliminates recruitment fees, and adheres to international standards of worker welfare- has the potential to eliminate forced labor from recruitment and empower workers to benefit more from their employment. However, evidence on ethical recruitment remains scarce.

Seefar launched The Ethical Recruitment Agency (TERA) to demonstrate the effectiveness and sustainability of ethical recruitment.¹ Leveraging TERA's presence in northern India, Seefar conducted rapid research on pre-migration vulnerabilities and indicative impacts of ethical recruitment activities. In June and July 2021, Seefar's researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of TERA's beneficiaries ("TERA beneficiaries") and a comparison group that had not been involved in TERA's programs ("non-TERA prospective migrants"). Both groups were composed of adult Indian men in and near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, who have considered or are currently interested in migrating abroad. The results of this comparison provide some of the first evidence on the influence of ethical recruitment on vulnerability to forced labor and migration decision-making.

Key findings:

The research found that TERA beneficiaries were comprehensively more knowledgeable about the migration process, requirements, and risks than non-TERA prospective migrants. Ethical recruitment practices also had a strong influence on respondents' migration interest and decision-making.

- **TERA beneficiaries were significantly more knowledgeable about the risks of migrating abroad than non-TERA prospective migrants:**
 - TERA beneficiaries had knowledge of twice the number of migration documents and requirements (4.3 requirements) as non-TERA prospective migrants (1.9 requirements), on average.
 - TERA beneficiaries consistently identified a greater diversity of migration risks and potential concerns that they can be exposed to when migrating abroad.
 - TERA beneficiaries collectively held a more realistic understanding of migration costs, providing an average estimate more aligned with actual costs (INR 77,000 or USD 1,050) than non-TERA prospective migrants (INR 52,500 or USD 715).
 - Just two non-TERA prospective migrants could identify a recruitment agency that had a No Cost Policy, while the vast majority of TERA beneficiaries (82%) were aware of no-fee recruitment options.
- **TERA beneficiaries internalized migration risks at a significantly higher rate than non-TERA prospective migrants.** Even though similar proportions of both groups reported that people are generally likely to experience risks when migrating abroad, just 30% of non-TERA prospective migrants indicated that they would personally be likely to face risks abroad compared with nearly 50% of TERA beneficiaries.

¹ To learn more about TERA, visit <https://ethicalrecruitmentagency.com/>

- **TERA was reported as an important information source on migration by 34% of TERA beneficiaries.** 22% of TERA beneficiaries also said that TERA was their most trusted source of migration information. TERA beneficiaries who listed TERA as a trusted source of migration information assessed their personal migration risk to be lower than those who did not list it. This suggests that TERA beneficiaries a) feel more informed about the risks of migrating abroad and b) are more confident to make safer migration decisions as a result of their interaction with an ethical recruitment agency.
- **Respondents viewed the COVID-19 situation in India as a powerful reason to stay home and not migrate.** For both samples, the COVID-19 context at home was the most frequently listed reason deterring interest in migration. If the COVID-19 situation abroad improves, both groups reported that they would be more interested in migrating, as there would be fewer risks of being stranded abroad, contracting the virus, and increasing employment opportunities.
- **Economic pull factors were the dominant migration motivators.** Better jobs and higher salaries abroad were the most influential factors on reported migration interest. Nearly all respondents who listed jobs and money as a factor for their migration decision-making indicated that they were currently interested in migrating abroad (100% of non-TERA prospective migrants and 96% of TERA beneficiaries).
- **Recruitment fees were considered a barrier to migration.** 100% of respondents reported that zero-fee recruitment would increase their interest in migration.
- **Ethical recruitment practices were highly desired by respondents and linked with their interest in migration.** For both groups, the most influential factor that would increase their interest in migrating were recruitment agencies that provide jobs with good salaries (94% for TERA and 100% for non-TERA respondents), followed by recruitment agencies that do not charge recruitment fees (88% for TERA and 95% for non-TERA respondents). 93% of respondents were also interested in receiving more information about ethical recruitment practices.

This research points to the promise of ethical recruitment interventions to raise knowledge, build awareness, and decrease vulnerability to forced labor. It suggests that through marketing and outreach activities, ethical recruitment agencies like TERA are a cost-effective means of informing and protecting thousands of workers in the pre-migration phase. More research on ethical recruitment is still needed, particularly on post-departure impacts. Future research from Seefar in early 2022 will specifically focus on addressing this gap and helping governments, businesses, and concerned stakeholders to eliminate forced labor.

1. Introduction

Background

Migrant workers are often vulnerable to exploitation and experience challenging circumstances from the earliest stages of migration. As Seefar's research has shown, migrant workers' vulnerability is driven by information imbalances and illegal recruitment practices.² Specifically:

- Migrant workers are often dependent on local brokers and sub-agents to access jobs abroad. These unlicensed actors frequently deceive or mislead workers;
- Migrant workers are frequently charged illegal recruitment fees, which Seefar's research has found can be thousands of dollars on average;
- Unregulated and unlicensed recruitment actors often place migrant workers into situations of forced labor, where they experience document retention, contract substitution, wage theft, hazardous work, and inability to leave the employer.

Within this global context, Uttar Pradesh (UP), India, is a region particularly known for exploitative recruitment and acute vulnerability. One of the top sending states in India, UP sends thousands of low- and semi-skilled migrant workers abroad each year.³ Many are first-time migrants who seek work abroad due to limited economic opportunities at home.⁴ Relatively weak rule of law in UP allows a culture of exploitative recruitment to thrive. For example, recruitment agents provide insufficient or false information about the nature of the job abroad and salary, confiscate their identification documents, and do not prepare them adequately for the challenges abroad. Instead of transformative years working abroad and saving money, many migrant workers find themselves suffering forced labor and debt bondage.

Recruitment agents charge migrant workers high fees, which one study estimated to be between USD 800-1400.⁵ To put that in perspective, the average rural farmer household in UP earns less than USD 100 per month.⁶

UP is among the worst-affected states by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has severely impacted the local economy and migration dynamics.⁷ While this situation has directly impacted hundreds of migrant worker households -many of whom are poorly positioned to cope with the economic consequences of the pandemic- the impacts of COVID-19 on recruitment and migration have not been extensively researched.⁸

² Seefar (2019) [Making Migration Work](#).

³ ILO (2019) ["India Labour Migration Update 2018"](#).

⁴ Reserve Bank of India (2019). ["Press Release: India's Inward Remittances Survey 2016-17"](#);

Government of India (2019) ["District and State wise list of Active Recruitment Agents"](#).

⁵ ASK India (2019), *Beneficiary Vulnerability Analysis & Engagement for Migration from India*

⁶ Raghavan, Pyarelal (2017) ["Income of Uttar Pradesh farmers are among the lowest in the country"](#)

⁷ Khadria and Mishra (2021) ["Migration in Asia and its subregions: Data challenges and coping strategies for 2021"](#), Migration Policy Practice, IOM and Eurasylum.

⁸ BBC (2021) ["Covid in Uttar Pradesh: Coronavirus overwhelms India's most populous state"](#). April 21.

Research Purpose



With support from the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Seefar launched The Ethical Recruitment Agency (TERA) in Uttar Pradesh, India, to provide exploitation-free work opportunities to vulnerable people and enable migrant workers to benefit more from their employment. TERA adheres to top international recruitment standards, including the Employer Pays principle, and works with employers abroad who adhere to a set of ethical standards that range from clear and transparent contracts to adequate living and working conditions. TERA's long-term vision is to sustainably lower the prevalence of forced labor by incentivizing the overseas recruitment industry to shift towards ethical recruitment.

However, evidence on ethical recruitment's effectiveness remains scarce. To help fill this gap, **Seefar conducted rapid research to generate new insights on the impact and efficacy of ethical recruitment in the pre-migration phase.** Seefar's researchers implemented a research design that compared a group of prospective migrants who have received information on ethical recruitment by TERA ("TERA beneficiaries") and a separate group who have not interacted with TERA ("non-TERA prospective migrants"). This approach allowed Seefar's researchers to understand the influence that ethical recruitment has on migration decision-making, knowledge, and vulnerability.

This report is among the first empirical evidence on ethical recruitment and is intended to be an initial step to prove how ethical recruitment improves migrant worker outcomes during the pre-migration phase. It contributes to strengthening the case for ethical recruitment, promoting the mobilization of resources in order to reduce the prevalence of forced labor. Future Seefar research in 2022 will assess the impacts of ethical recruitment in the post-departure phase.

2. Research Approach

Seefar's researchers designed a rapid mixed-methods research approach to generate insights on ethical recruitment. This involved a flexible survey instrument that included structured quantitative questions and semi-structured qualitative questions.⁹ The research focused on understanding how attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions of migrating abroad varied between samples of TERA beneficiaries and non-TERA prospective migrants. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected remotely via phone between June and July, 2021.

The research targeted adult Indian men in and near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh who have considered or are currently interested in migrating abroad. This included two groups:

- **TERA beneficiaries:** The first group was randomly sampled from TERA's internal database of prospective migrant workers who have expressed interest in TERA's services.¹⁰ A total of 50 individuals were interviewed in this group.¹¹
- **Non-TERA prospective migrants:** The second group was randomly sampled from adults who have completed their skill training from Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) Centers, which are government recognized skill development centers. These individuals have not communicated with TERA's staff or been informed of TERA's ethical recruitment practices. A total of 43 individuals were interviewed for this group.

As non-experimental research, the findings in this report are not causal or representative of all prospective migrants within the target population. The research design permits a reasonable comparison between the two groups because:

- Respondents in both TERA beneficiaries and non-TERA prospective migrants samples were initially identified through similar channels. Outreach to PMKVY centers is one of TERA's primary marketing strategies.
- The groups have roughly similar observable characteristics (similar distributions on gender, education, and employment), though several minor differences were observed by Seefar's researchers. For example, the average age of each group is slightly different (see Sample Profiles).

Other limitations to the study include:

- Limitations that are common to remote research: For example, Seefar's researchers were unable to directly observe respondents. Some interviews were conducted over a series of phone calls due to network, scheduling, or connectivity issues.

⁹ Most of the survey consisted of closed questions, in option lists or scalar format, however, some open-ended and qualitative questions were included as well. Additional qualitative data was also gathered.

from observations by the Seefar's researchers.

¹⁰ The Seefar's researchers employed a stratified random sampling approach to select TERA beneficiaries, using major skill categories in TERA's database as strata. This approach offers the upside of random sampling with slightly more efficient estimates of the population of TERA beneficiaries.

¹¹ TERA beneficiaries are individuals who have expressed interest in TERA's services and have been informed about TERA ethical recruitment practices. Most TERA beneficiaries have had 1-1 conversations with TERA's recruitment team, and all are generally interested in safe work opportunities abroad.










- The survey was designed in English and delivered by Seefar's bilingual researchers in both English and Hindi to participants. Efforts were made to ensure respondent comprehension and explain questions in Hindi that were not directly translatable from English.
- Most surveys were conducted when respondents were not working, typically on nights and weekend days. As a result, some respondents reported feeling fatigued during their interviews, which could impact data quality.

Sample Profiles

TERA collected basic socio-demographic data for TERA beneficiaries and non-TERA prospective migrants including gender, age, place of residence, level of education, employment, and job satisfaction. All respondents were male and lived in and near Lucknow, UP. With the minor exception of age and job satisfaction, the two groups presented similar distributions along key observable characteristics.¹² Among the participants who are employed, TERA beneficiaries are more than twice as satisfied with their jobs than non-TERA prospective migrants.

¹² While the average age of the two groups was similar in general terms (28 years old compared to 25 years old), this difference was statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

SAMPLE PROFILE

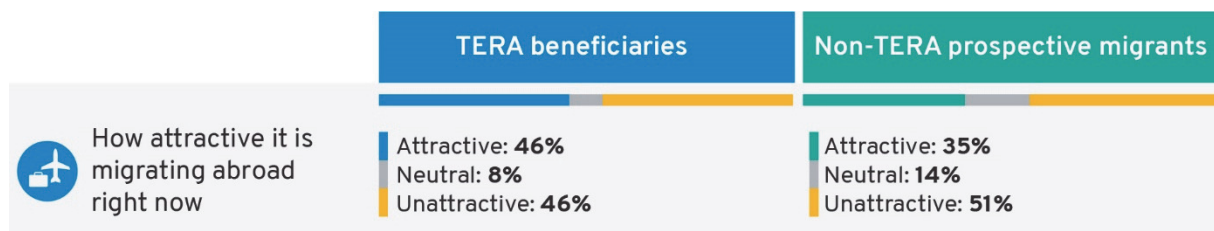
Total respondents 93		TERA beneficiaries	Non-TERA prospective migrants
 Sample		50 respondents	43 respondents
 Gender		Males	Males
 Location		In and near Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh, India)	In and near Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh, India)
 Age		Average: 28	Average: 25
 Education		Above secondary school: 70% (or 35/50 participants) Secondary school or below: 30% (or 15/50 participants)	Above secondary school: 77% (or 33/43 participants) Secondary school or below: 23% (or 10/43 participants)
 Employment		Employed: 46% (or 23/50 participants) Unemployed: 54% (or 27/50 participants)	Employed: 47% (or 20/43 participants) Unemployed: 53% (or 23/43 participants)
 Level of satisfaction with your job		Satisfied with their jobs: 74% (or 17/23 participants)	Satisfied with their jobs: 35% (or 7/20 participants)
 Level of optimism about your future in India		30% are optimistic 22% are neutral 48% not optimistic	33% are optimistic 35% are neutral 42% not optimistic
 How attractive it is migrating abroad right now		Attractive: 46% Neutral: 8% Unattractive: 46%	Attractive: 35% Neutral: 14% Unattractive: 51%

3. Research Findings

3.1. COVID-19 has decreased interest in migration

The research identified the powerful and complex role of COVID-19 on current migration interest and decision-making. Seefar's researchers conducted phone interviews between June and July 2021, when India was slowly recovering from a deadly second wave of the pandemic. Experts considered the COVID-19 context in India to be one of the worst pandemic surges in the world.¹³

The research found that the pandemic has significantly decreased interest in migration. Just 41% of respondents were currently interested in migrating abroad. Across both samples, COVID-19 conditions at home were the most frequently listed reason deterring interest in migration. It was also the single most influential factor affecting migration decision-making for those who were not currently interested in migration. 91% of TERA beneficiaries and non-TERA prospective migrants who listed the COVID-19 situation at home as an influence on their migration decision-making also reported that they were not currently interested in migrating abroad. Among those who are not attracted to migration, 43% of TERA beneficiaries and 50% of non-TERA prospective migrants listed it as the single most influential factor.



Respondents pointed to competing interests due to the pandemic impacting their interest in migration:

- Fear of COVID-19 abroad: Tens of thousands of Indian migrant workers lost their jobs in the Gulf countries or were stuck in transit, being unable to return home due to imposed lockdowns and travel restrictions.¹⁴
- Fear of COVID-19 at home: Respondents qualitatively discussed their interest in being close to family and friends during a time of crisis in UP.
- Lack of opportunities abroad: The lack of jobs for Indian migrants as a result of the pandemic directly impacted respondents' interest in migrating abroad.¹⁵

Findings on migration interest were not strongly correlated with group (TERA beneficiaries or non-TERA prospective workers) or socio-demographic factors, suggesting broad trends across the target population. For example, education level was not related to migration interest. 55% of TERA beneficiaries and 52% of non-TERA prospective migrants with education above secondary school were currently attracted to migrate; 52% of TERA beneficiaries with education equal to or below secondary school were interested in migrating right now, as opposed to 42% of non-TERA beneficiaries.

¹³ Washington Post. [How did the Covid-19 outbreak in India get so bad?](#). April 2021.

¹⁴ IOM (2021). [Stranded irregular migrant workers during the COVID-19 crisis: The question of repatriation](#).

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 18.

3.2. Migration interest motivated by economic pull factors, not push factors

Across the subset of survey respondents who reported interest in migrating abroad, interest in migration was closely linked with economic incentives overseas. Better jobs and higher salaries abroad were the most influential factors on reported migration interest. Nearly all respondents (100% of non-TERA prospective migrants and 96.29% of TERA beneficiaries) who listed jobs and money as a factor for their migration decision-making also indicated that they were currently interested in migrating abroad. Among those interested in migration, these factors were reported as the single most influential reason for migration decision-making among both non-TERA prospective migrants (66%) and TERA beneficiaries (43%).

Interestingly, economic indicators like unemployment and job satisfaction were not correlated with migration interest. In Seefar's research globally, these economic "push factors" are often among the most predictive of migration intentions, but in the current research they were less relevant. 30% of unemployed TERA beneficiaries were currently interested in migrating abroad, as opposed to 24% who were not interested. Similarly, 23% of unemployed non-TERA prospective migrants were currently interested in migrating abroad, compared to 30% who were not interested. Among respondents who were employed, 38% of those who were satisfied with their work were interested in migration, while 48% of those who were not satisfied with their work were interested in migration.¹⁶ The lack of correlation between economic conditions indicates that respondents were more influenced by perceptions of migration benefits abroad (i.e. "pull factor") rather than current economic conditions (i.e. "push factors").

Similarly, the research found no correlation between respondents' level of optimism and their intention to migrate. TERA beneficiaries and non-TERA prospective migrants had similar levels of optimism when it came to their life in India. In this regard, 30% of TERA beneficiaries were optimistic, as opposed to 33% of non-TERA prospective migrants.

3.3. Changes to COVID-19 context reinforce existing migration plans

Respondents were asked about how changes to the COVID-19 pandemic would impact their future migration decision-making. The research found that the potential for a worsening COVID-19 situation at home or an improving COVID-19 context abroad largely reinforces existing migration attitudes.

Overall, 60% of respondents said that a worsening COVID-19 situation in India would make them want to migrate less. Among respondents who were not currently interested in migration, 82% said that a worsening COVID-19 situation in India would only further decrease their interest in migrating abroad (100% of non-TERA prospective migrants and 65% of TERA beneficiaries). However, among respondents who are currently interested in migration, this figure stood at just 37%. 26% of respondents who were interested in migrating abroad said that a worsening COVID-19 would increase their migration interest, and 37% said that it would not impact their migration interest.

Researchers identified that TERA beneficiaries were significantly more likely to view a worsening COVID-19 environment at home as a migration motivator. Among TERA beneficiaries who were

¹⁶ This difference was not statistically significant.

interested in migrating abroad, 43% said that a worsening COVID-19 situation at home would make them want to migrate more; by comparison, not a single non-TERA prospective migrant currently interested in migrating abroad said that a worsening COVID-19 context in India would increase their migration interest. Seefar's researchers suggested that this difference could be attributed to TERA's information dissemination on the COVID-19 vaccine and TERA's COVID-19 safety protocols, which may help workers feel safer to migrate abroad.

On the other hand, if the COVID-19 situation abroad improves, then the majority of respondents would be even more interested in migrating abroad (56%). Qualitatively, respondents expressed concerns about being stranded abroad, either during transit or in the country of destination. They linked this with physical and economic risks and vulnerabilities, such as the reports of unemployed migrant workers forced to live on the street as borders remained closed and repatriation flights were limited.¹⁷ This belief could also explain why respondents preferred to migrate abroad with acquaintances rather than alone. Some respondents also expressed concerns about close living quarters migrants have abroad, which could raise vulnerability to COVID-19.

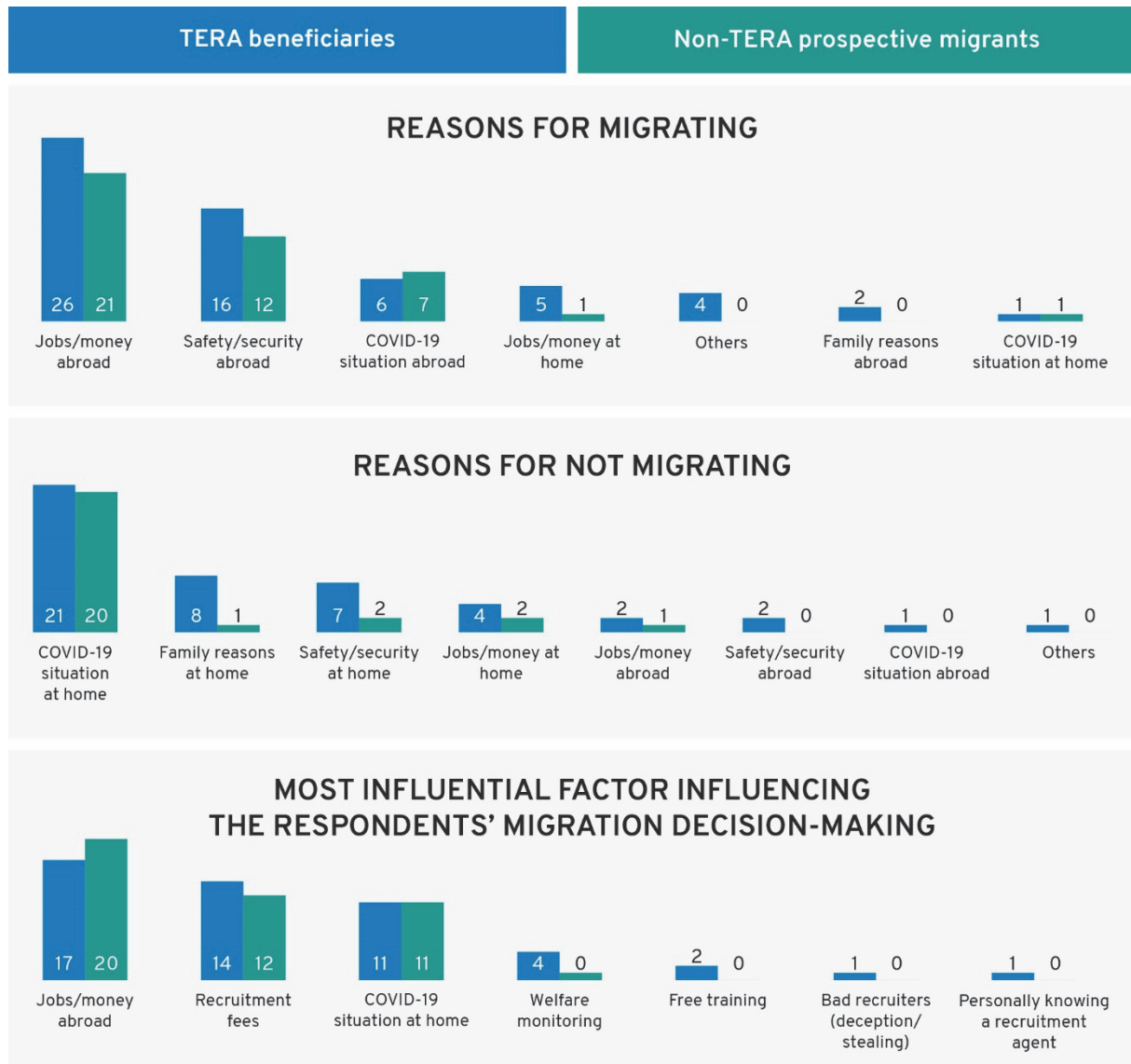
Again, responses to COVID-19 appeared directly linked with existing migration interest. Among those who were interested in migration, 79% of respondents said that improvements to the COVID-19 situation abroad would increase their migration interest (87% for TERA beneficiaries, 67% for non-TERA prospective migrants). Among those who were not currently interested in migration, just 40% said that improvements to the COVID-19 situation abroad would increase their migration interest.

3.4. Recruitment fees and other factors are highly relevant to individual decision-making

While not a primary motivator of migration interest, recruitment fees were central to the degree to which respondents were interested in migrating abroad. Just 46% of the sample were aware of recruitment agencies that did not charge fees (82% of TERA beneficiaries, 5% of non-TERA prospective migrants). However, 100% of respondents said that they would be more interested in migrating abroad if they did not have to pay recruitment fees. This suggests that zero-fee recruiters like TERA can generate significantly greater demand among workers than traditional recruiters.

Researchers also observed that the migration decision-making of TERA beneficiaries was influenced by a greater diversity of factors than non-TERA prospective migrants. Non-TERA prospective migrants were generally influenced by the COVID situation in India and the availability and quality of jobs abroad. On average, they listed 1.6 reasons for their migration interest or lack of interest. Meanwhile, TERA beneficiaries were statistically more likely to list more reasons for their migration interest or lack of interest (2.12 on average). For example, 34% of TERA beneficiaries listed three or more reasons compared to just 15% of non-TERA prospective migrants. TERA beneficiaries particularly pointed to the safety and security situations abroad and family needs at home as relevant to their decision-making. A minority of TERA beneficiaries also mentioned that ethical recruitment activities such as welfare monitoring and free training were influential on their migration interest.

¹⁷ BBC. [Coronavirus leaves Gulf migrant workers stranded](#). May 2020



3.5. TERA beneficiaries are more informed and aware about migration processes and risks

This research provided strong evidence that TERA beneficiaries are more knowledgeable and aware of the migration process and risks than non-TERA prospective migrants. Researchers observed greater knowledge among TERA beneficiaries relative to non-TERA workers in three areas: knowledge of migration requirements and documents, understanding of real migration costs, and awareness of zero-fee recruitment options. This suggests that information on ethical recruitment practices and migration risks provided by TERA during the pre-migration phase lowers TERA beneficiaries' vulnerabilities to forced labor, since they are more informed and better prepared to identify migration risks.

TERA beneficiaries were significantly more knowledgeable about the documentation required to migrate than non-TERA prospective migrants. In fact, TERA beneficiaries were likely to know double the number

of documents as non-TERA prospective migrants. While nearly every interviewed individual was aware that migration required a passport, TERA beneficiaries were:¹⁸

- 60% more likely to know they required their educational certificates,
- 50% more likely to know they required a work visa,
- 42% more likely to know they required an airplane ticket,
- 30% more likely to know they required a job contract,
- 22% more likely to know they required a bank statement, and
- 20% more likely to know they required government insurance.

Almost no respondents for TERA beneficiaries and non-TERA prospective migrants were aware that they required a medical check to migrate abroad. This points to a need for greater awareness-raising among those interested in migrating during pre-departure training. For example, TERA's pre-departure training could include a step-by-step explanation of the medical check process.

Additionally, TERA beneficiaries had a more realistic understanding of migration costs than non-TERA prospective migrants. TERA beneficiaries collectively held a more realistic understanding of migration costs, providing an average estimate more aligned with actual costs (INR 77,000 or USD 1,050) than non-TERA prospective migrants (INR 52,500 or USD 715). Using a standard cost of 800 USD for migrating abroad to assess the participants' knowledge between both groups, Seefar's researchers assessed that 58% of TERA beneficiaries, as opposed to 49% of non-TERA prospective migrants, had a reasonable understanding of migration costs. Further, 40% of non-TERA prospective migrants were not able to give an estimate for the costs of migration, in comparison to 22% of TERA beneficiaries.

TERA beneficiaries were also disproportionately aware of recruitment agencies that, by policy, do not charge recruitment fees. Just three non-TERA prospective migrants (5%) were aware of a recruitment agency that does not charge fees (one of those three respondents was aware of TERA). In contrast, 82% of TERA beneficiaries were aware of no-fee recruitment options. This difference is naturally explained by TERA's marketing and outreach, which emphasizes TERA's no-fee policy in its informational material distributed to the TERA beneficiaries.

Overall, respondents who were better-aware of migration requirements and documents also tended to give a more accurate estimate of migration costs and were more likely to know zero-fee recruiters, and this pattern was also associated with being a TERA beneficiary.

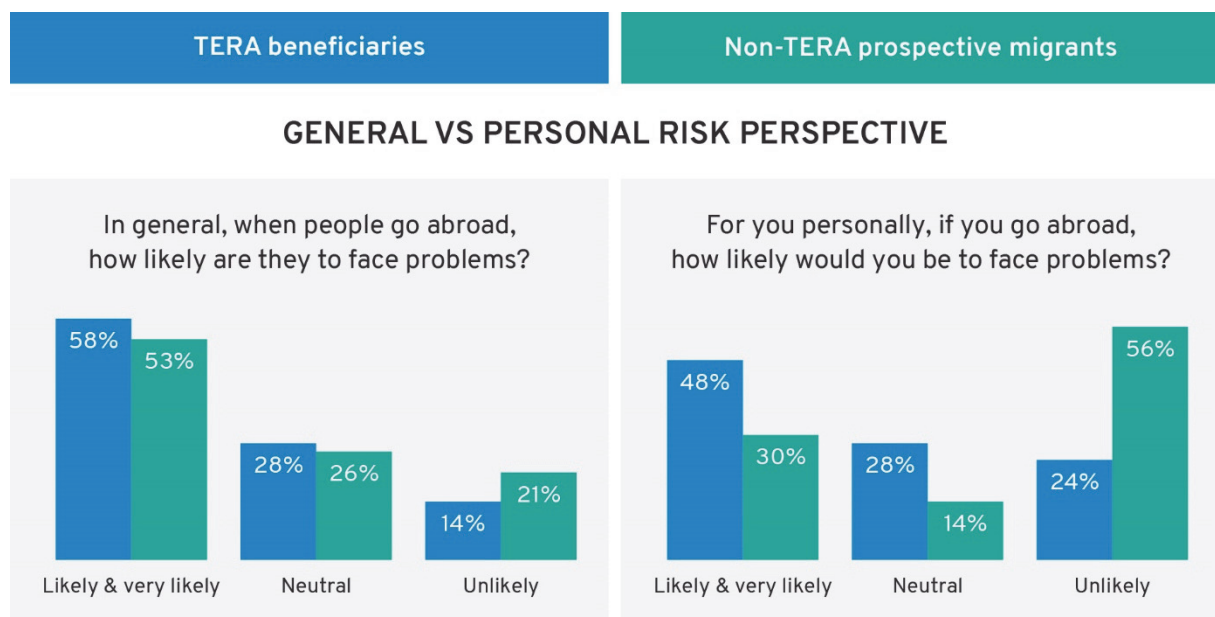
3.6. TERA beneficiaries displayed greater risk internalization than non-TERA prospective migrants

When asked to describe how likely people would be to face risks abroad in general, 58% of TERA beneficiaries said that individuals migrating abroad would be likely to face problems, as compared to 53% of non-TERA prospective migrants. In other words, the groups were roughly equivalent in how they perceived the general risks of migration.

However, the groups diverged when asked about their personal risk assessment, with TERA beneficiaries reporting responses that more closely aligned with their general risk responses. Even

¹⁸ TERA beneficiaries were statistically more likely to know these requirements than non-TERA workers ($p < .01$).

though half of both groups reported that individuals are likely to experience risks when migrating abroad, only 30% of non-TERA prospective migrants said that they would personally be likely to face risks abroad. In contrast, 48% of TERA beneficiaries said they would personally be likely to face risks abroad. Put another way, 26% of the non-TERA sample believed *others* would experience risks abroad, but they, personally, would not experience those risks. This number was just 14% of the TERA beneficiaries sample. This suggests that TERA beneficiaries have internalized migration risks at a significantly higher rate than non-TERA prospective migrants. One potential interpretation of this difference is that TERA's communication on migration risks helps its beneficiaries to not only be aware of potential risks, but to think and apply that knowledge to themselves. This is a key accomplishment necessary to achieving safe migration behavior change.



Interestingly, respondents who listed TERA as a trusted source of migration information assessed their personal risk to be lower than those who did not list it. That is, 82% of TERA beneficiaries who reported TERA as a trusted migration information source consider it unlikely that they will experience harm abroad. In contrast, 44% of TERA beneficiaries who did not list TERA as a trusted migration information source considered themselves unlikely to experience harm abroad. This suggests that TERA beneficiaries who get their migration information from TERA feel safer and better informed about the risks of migrating abroad than those who get their migration information elsewhere.

3.7. TERA beneficiaries identified a greater diversity of risks

Compared with non-TERA prospective migrants, TERA beneficiaries identified a greater diversity of risks and concerns that they can be exposed to when migrating abroad. When asked about migration risks, TERA beneficiaries pointed to poor living conditions (18% of respondents), physical abuse by the employer, and low wages (both 14% of respondents). On the other side, non-TERA prospective migrants highlighted financial debt (19% of respondents), physical abuse by the employer (16% of respondents), and low wages (12% of respondents).

However, TERA beneficiaries were also able to identify secondary risks not mentioned by the non-TERA prospective migrants sample. These included repatriation risks, deportation, death, discrimination, language barriers and difficulties adapting to a new country, none of which had been listed by non-TERA prospective migrants.

A significant number of respondents in both samples were unaware or believed that there are no risks when migrating abroad, an attitude that may suggest greater vulnerability to forced labor. When participants were asked about the major risks of migrating abroad, 21% of non-TERA prospective migrants and 18% of TERA beneficiaries considered that there were no risks. Additionally, 19% of non-TERA prospective migrants and 10% of TERA beneficiaries were unaware of any risks. Interestingly, these percentages are higher for unemployed respondents (24% said there were no risks) than employed respondents (14% said there were no risks) in both groups.

IDENTIFIED RISKS WHEN WORKING ABROAD

TERA beneficiaries		Non-TERA prospective migrants	
Bad living conditions	9	9	No risks
No risks	9	8	Do not know
Physical abuse from employers	7	8	Financial risks/debt
Work is low paying	7	7	Physical abuse from employers
Do not know	5	5	Work is low paying
Illness/COVID-19	3	3	Illness/COVID-19
Language barriers	2	2	Bad living conditions
Financial risk/debt	1	1	Abandoned/stranded abroad
Death	1		
Low profile companies couldn't pay their workers well as compared to well established company	1		
Return risks	1		
Repatriation risks	1		
Adapting to new country rules and language problems	1		
Deportation	1		
Discrimination based on locals/residents	1		



Number of respondents

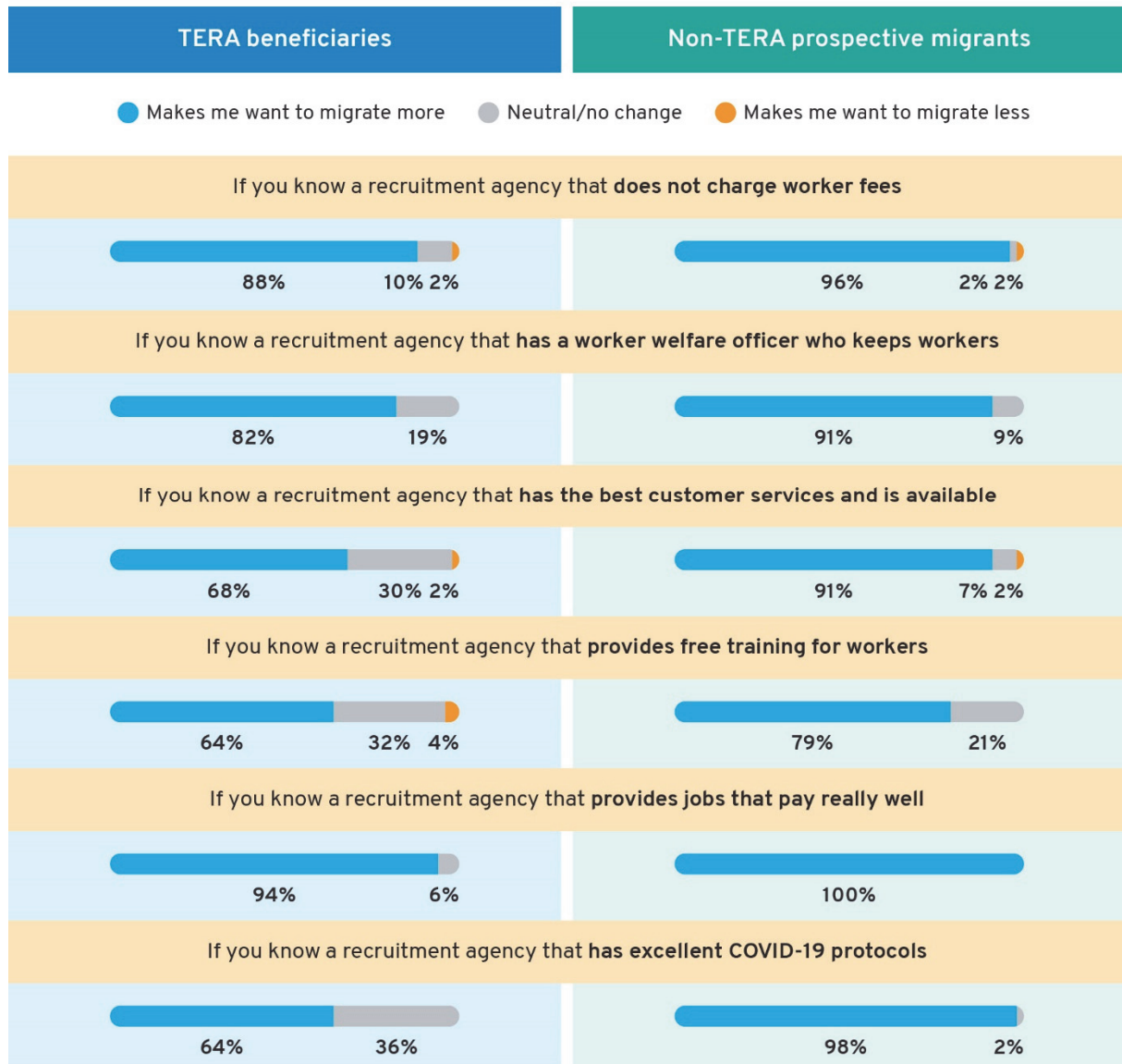
3.8. There is strong demand for ethical recruitment among prospective migrants

The research revealed significant interest in ethical recruitment practices among the target population. Respondents were asked if certain ethical recruitment practices would impact their migration decision-making (e.g. knowing a recruiter who does not charge recruitment fees, knowing a recruiter who offers free pre-departure training). In general, ethical recruitment messages were associated with greater migration interest for both TERA beneficiaries and non-TERA prospective migrants.

For both groups, the most influential factor that would make them want to migrate more are recruitment agencies that provide jobs with good salaries (94% for TERA and 100% for non-TERA respondents), followed by recruitment agencies that do not charge recruitment fees (86% for TERA and 93% for non-TERA respondents) and that have a worker welfare officer (82% for TERA and 91% for non-TERA respondents). Recruitment agencies that provide free training also received a positive response (60% for TERA beneficiaries and 79% for non-TERA prospective migrants).

To put these figures into context, respondents were also asked about the importance of personally knowing a recruiter - a factor that the literature and Seefar's own research has found is strongly associated with trust and migration interest. 70% of respondents said that personally knowing a recruiter would increase their migration interest. This suggests that prospective migrant workers value ethical recruitment practices and good-paying jobs above personal connections to recruiters. Underscoring this demand for ethical recruitment, nearly every non-TERA prospective worker (93%) were interested in receiving more information about TERA and its ethical recruitment policies upon conclusion of their interviews.

THE INFLUENCE OF ETHICAL RECRUITMENT ON MIGRATION PLANS

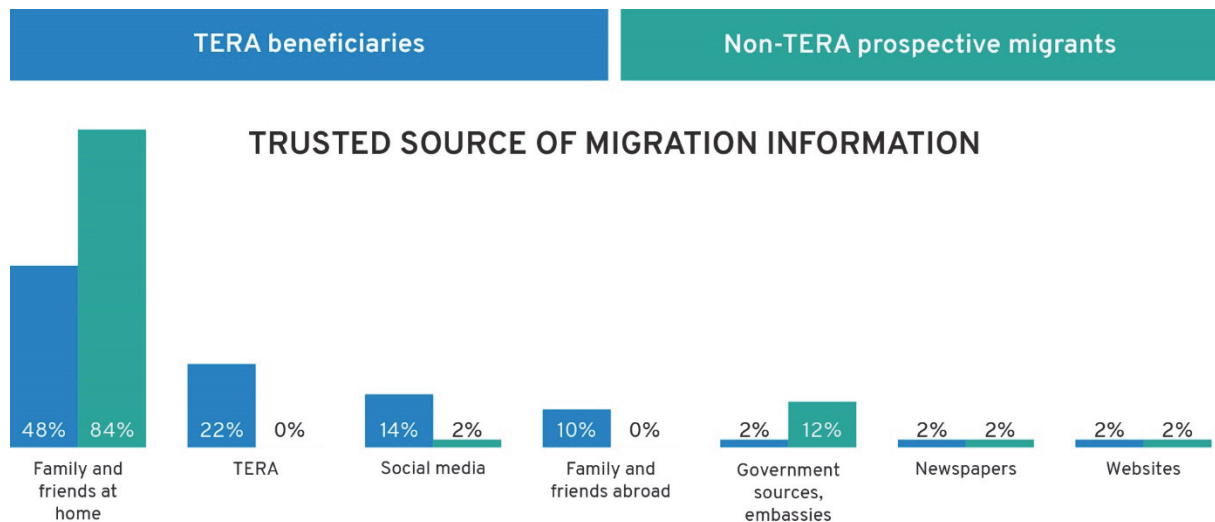


For respondents who were currently interested in migrating, the factor that would make them want to migrate the most was a recruitment agency with a no fee policy (100% for both groups) closely followed by well-paying jobs (97%) and a worker welfare officer (95%). For respondents who were not interested in migrating at present, respondents tended to value well-paying jobs (96%), zero recruitment fees (82%), and good COVID-19 protocols (76%) as the most influential factors motivating migration.

3.9. TERA beneficiaries often trust TERA and receive migration information from diverse sources

Seefar's research has consistently found that prospective migrants trust information from their friends and family above all other migration information sources. While the current research affirms that finding, TERA beneficiaries tended to be less dependent on their family and friends. While family and friends at

home were considered the most trusted source of getting migration information for both TERA and non-TERA respondents (48% and 84% of respondents respectively), TERA beneficiaries listed four primary information sources compared to just two from non-TERA prospective workers. For example, 22% of TERA beneficiaries considered TERA as the most trusted migration information source. Other sources of migration information mentioned by both groups are social media, government sources, embassies, and newspapers. Individuals who use more diverse and numerous migration information sources are likely to a) have access to a greater quantity of information and b) compare information between sources, which can both help identify migration risks and support informed decision-making.



Those who listed TERA as a source of migration information were better-informed, on average, than those who did not list TERA as a trusted source. For example, TERA beneficiaries who listed TERA as a trusted migration information source identified an average of 5.5 migration requirements, compared to 3.9 requirements listed for TERA beneficiaries who did not list TERA as a trusted migration source.

4. Conclusion

This research provides some of the first evidence on the influence that ethical recruitment has on vulnerability to forced labor and migration decision-making. Focused on the pre-migration phase, the research strengthens the case for ethical recruitment as an effective intervention to safeguard migrant workers. Specifically, the research provided preliminary evidence that TERA beneficiaries have overall better knowledge about migration requirements and documents; greater risk awareness and internalization; and receive their information from a broader array of sources, including TERA itself. While TERA's primary purpose is to help workers stay safe from exploitation during recruitment and while abroad, the findings from this research indicate that TERA is having a powerful communications and awareness-raising impact on individual beneficiaries.

The research also revealed that prospective migrant workers have strong demand for ethical recruitment practices but many are not aware of compliant recruitment providers. Many respondents also told Seefar's researchers that they were interested in working abroad but were not aware of specific job profiles that might fit their skill set. The research suggests that ethical recruiters can disrupt the role of traditional recruitment actors by capitalizing on broad worker demand for zero fee recruitment, better-paying jobs, and transparent information aligning skills with opportunities.

TERA's positive pre-migration outcomes points to a different way to understand the impacts of ethical recruitment agencies. Rather than conceptualizing an ethical recruitment agency like TERA as a single intervention, donors could distinguish between pre-migration and migration activities to better deploy resources and measure results. For example, donors could easily leverage an ethical recruitment agency's existing marketing infrastructure to achieve awareness-raising and safe migration behavior change at scale. Harnessing ethical recruitment agencies to engage key stakeholders such as government officials, community leaders, and private sector actors could also prove valuable. These activities are easy to integrate into ethical recruitment agencies' business models while offering the upside of empowering thousands of prospective workers to be protected from illegal recruitment activity, which in turn will ultimately decrease forced labor.

Further research on ethical recruitment is necessary to build on the current study and specifically examine the post-departure phases. Seefar is conducting research aligned with these goals that is scheduled for publication in mid-2022. Along with TERA's own sustainable operations, this research will further incentivize and engage stakeholders to support evidence-based practices to combat forced labor, including ethical recruitment.

The logo for SEEFAR is displayed in a clean, sans-serif font. The letters 'S', 'E', 'E', and 'F' are blue, while 'A' and 'R' are orange. The 'S' and 'F' have small orange triangular accents on their right and left sides, respectively. The logo is centered within a white rectangular area that is bordered by an orange line. The background of the entire image consists of large, overlapping geometric shapes in blue and orange.

SEEFAR