

International Day of Family Remittances **TODAY**, 16 June 2023

**Migrant Communities and Remittances in Crisis: Learning Lessons from the Pandemic** by *Dr Anna Lindley SOAS, Prof Kavita Datta QMUL, Prof Laura Hammond, SOAS & Prof Elaine Chase, UCL*

Migrant labour is vital for the UK economy. Migrants' remittances from the UK are significant for families and communities in many parts of the world. In recognition of this, the UK has pursued various policy initiatives aimed to '[keep remittances flowing](#)'. On the [International Day of Family Remittances](#), what have we learned from the pandemic about people's remittance practices? What are the implications for UK communities and policy?

Our UKRI-funded in-depth survey and qualitative [research](#) at SOAS and Queen Mary University of London document the many ways that **diaspora communities dug deep to meet escalating needs abroad** and also how some people began to send money specifically in response to the pandemic. But it also showed that **the factors underpinning remittances are precarious**:

- **UK economic upheavals take a toll on diaspora communities.** Some migrants were key workers, had relatively secure jobs, or benefitted from furlough or the self-employment income support scheme. But the pandemic had a disproportionate [impact on the health](#) of many ethnic minorities. It hit some sectors with high migrant recruitment hard, resulting in a sharp [increase in migrant unemployment](#) and many [struggling](#) to cover essential costs such as food, energy and housing. Squeezed at both ends, the need to support family members abroad pushed some people into multiple jobs, debt, or reliance on community solidarity and favours. Pressure falls hardest on those from poor and insecure [backgrounds](#). The rising cost of living is now further [squeezing](#) UK migrants.
- **The challenges of maintaining immigration status further undermine people's capacity to support themselves and help family members in the UK and abroad.** Many migrants grapple with repeated visa renewal fees, have no access to the public safety net, and/or survive on precarious work. Despite evidence of labour [shortages](#) in low-wage jobs, post-Brexit immigration policy has focused on issuing [temporary skilled work visas](#) and restricting migrants' [access](#) to publicly funded services and supports. This continues to obstruct many migrants trying to establish a [stable existence](#) in the UK, with detrimental effects on our economy and diaspora communities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

International development [policy](#) focuses on encouraging diaspora transfers by lowering transaction costs, increasing financial inclusion and promoting digital transfers. **Efforts to leverage diaspora contributions for development in origin communities also need to consider the motivation, capacities, and welfare of those sending remittances. Fostering migrants' rights and livelihoods is vital to keep remittances flowing and promote well-being in the UK's diverse society.** The government should consider the following:

- **reducing onerous visa renewal fees**
- **reviewing the No Recourse to Public Funds policy**
- **making the legal hiring of non-citizens into low-waged jobs easier and protecting their rights at work more effectively**
- **greater resourcing of civil society and migrant associations to fill gaps in advice and support.**

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