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**Migrants at Home: Gulf Migrations and the Restructuring of Class in Pakistan  
AIPS Narrative Report**

My dissertation research investigates the implications of migrations of men from Sahiwal, a small city in Pakistan, to the Arabian peninsula (hereafter, Gulf). I focus on these migrants' episodic returns to their home cities—on months-long visits during off-work seasons, for a few years between work stints in the Gulf, and when they stop working. My dissertation explores the sinews of their transnational lives and networks. While my project is primarily focused on the impact of transnational migrations on the class structures of Pakistan, an essential phase of my research, funded by AIPS, was to understand these migrants' work, visa, and living circumstances in the Gulf.

Starting in November 2019, I began my research in the UAE to document the living conditions, labor issues, and visa troubles Gulf migrants face, observe their interactions in group settings, and record their life-stories. I conducted participant observations and interviews in various migrant housing forms (employer-owned labor camps, dormitories that one can rent a cot in, and shared apartments) in Sharjah, Ajman, and Abu Dhabi. I took photos and drew layouts of the rooms, and made observations on migrants' domestic arrangements with one another (such as cooking, washing, etc.). Spending time with migrant workers working in small South Asian managed enterprises brought to my attention the forms of sociality that help them in matters both critical, such as navigating immigration bureaucracy and work conflicts, and mundane, like passing time during periods of joblessness. I took notes on what they do on their off-days, their “time-pass” activities and group practices—living with roommates, eating together, hanging out every so often after work. Spending time with my interlocutors helped build rapport between us, and enabled me to observe how these everyday practices create alliances and deep friendships that alleviate the loneliness of being away, and produce avenues for material advancement. These friendships enable reciprocities, mutual aid, and thickening of networks by helping migrants share chores and vital information, cut costs and corners, pool resources, and collectively solve problems big and small in a country where they may lack the necessary connections, know-how, and resources.

Through interview based work, I documented the process of setting up a small company and the processes and licenses through which a small construction crew incorporates itself and the crew-boss acquires visa-quotas to hire other migrant laborers. Interviews with employers, labor supply and recruitment firm staff, and construction workers helped me understand the practices of employers that turn their employees into a hyper-flexible “gig” workforce. While these same practices allow migrants the flexibility of an “independent contractor,” to return to their home cities, in some cases, whenever they choose to and for however long they want, this low-waged gig-work produces financial insecurity that is only somewhat alleviated by their side hustles that often target other migrants. Some of these practices lead to conflicts between workers and employers, or between workers. I was able to observe the attempts to resolve these conflicts through middle-men regarded well by both parties, and how these resolutions involved a set of actors in Pakistan.

In attuning me to the ways visa and labor regimes shape transnational networks, migrant subjectivities, and group relations, this AIPS-funded research turned up new directions for my dissertation. It also enabled me to create a diverse network of interlocutors with whom I have stayed in weekly phone and video contact during COVID-19. Currently at a standstill due to the

pandemic, I hope for the resumption of the second phase of my research in Pakistan sometime in late 2021.