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CONFERENCE PAPER • DR SYEDA ROZANA RASHID



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# First World War Implications of Labour Migration between and from Colonies: The Case of the Indian Sub-Continent

## **Abstract**

The nineteenth century witnessed an increasing integration of the world politico-economic system and consequent high demand for low-cost labourers to serve in the plantation, agriculture and mining sectors through the spread of European colonization to Asia, Africa and the Pacific and Indian Ocean islands. While indentured labour attracted considerable scholarly attention, there is a general dearth of research regarding the impact of the First World War on the nature, trend and magnitude of colonial labour migration as well as its effect on the lives and livelihoods of the migrants. Conventional knowledge suggests that colonial migration fell sharply during and after the First World War as war and depression halted the globalization trend coupled with the demise of European empire and violent conflict between indentured and indigenous ethnic groups at the receiving ends. The alternative thesis, however, suggests that the demand for colonial labour did not cease with the war, since the colonies were one of the major suppliers of agricultural and minerals products for war economies. Studies also highlight changes in the mode of livelihoods, de-peasantisation and permanent settlement of colonial labour migrants at destinations. In effect, there is a profound and multi-dimensional impact of the First World War on colonial migration--something which this paper intends to elucidate. It will explore the relations between colonies and the WWI through the lens of labour mobility between and from colonies. In doing so, it will take Indian sub-continent as a case. Although a micro-level analysis is beyond the scope of this work, it will try to examine existing micro and meso-level findings and analyses within the broader structural, historical and politico-economic contexts at home and abroad which fostered labour migration between and from the colonies.

## **Profile**

Dr Syeda Rozana Rashid teaches International Relations at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She was educated in Dhaka, Oxford and Sussex. She obtained her PhD in Migration Studies from the University of Sussex, UK. Her research areas include forced and voluntary migration, gender, social protection and livelihoods. She has published a number of books, modules and journal articles at home and abroad.