

Exit Options: How International Migration Opportunities Shape Economic Standing and Political Preferences

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Abstract

This paper demonstrates that access to overseas employment reduces support for taxation and redistribution by bolstering individuals' economic prospects. We present results from the first randomized controlled trial to result in international migration. Individuals who received the opportunity to migrate from India to the Middle East for work reported significantly higher wages, greater economic confidence, and more fiscally conservative attitudes. Moreover, the program had lasting effects even for those who decided not to migrate, which we link to improved exit options. Our results speak to longstanding debates about the impact of globalization on economic development and welfare state politics.

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1 Introduction

Emigration has long been viewed as a consequential yet hard-to-access avenue for economic mobility for individuals in developing countries (Clemens 2011). There were 272 million cross-border migrants worldwide in 2019, more than two-thirds of whom moved overseas in search of employment (United Nations 2019, 2). As previously isolated regions have integrated into the global economy in recent decades, new migration opportunities have become available for an even broader swathe of the world's population. For example, 27% of adults in Latin America now say that their household has concretely considered migrating internationally, while 17% of African adults report they have given “a lot” of consideration to moving abroad.¹ While a long line of scholarship has studied the economic and political effects of immigration in host countries, we know comparatively little about how gaining access to overseas employment opportunities affects potential migrants themselves, both those who move and those who choose not to do so.

In this paper, we study how emigration opportunities alter individuals' political preferences regarding taxation and redistribution by systematically shifting their economic standing and outlooks. Our focus contributes to a longstanding debate in the social sciences regarding the mechanisms by which globalization impacts the politics of the welfare state. Past work analyzing aggregate trends in developed economies emphasizes that globalization creates pressures for an expanded welfare state (Rodrik 1998; Cameron 1978), although new evidence from developing countries suggests just the opposite (Linardi and Rudra 2020). Here, we present the results of the first randomized controlled trial to have resulted in overseas migration, evaluating the impact of exit options associated with job opportunities abroad on individuals' economic standing and policy preferences (Beam, McKenzie and Yang 2016; McKenzie, Stillman and Gibson 2010). In doing so, we show how cross-border migration alters individuals' support for the size and the scope of the welfare state, providing microfoundations on how integration into the global economy reshapes the politics of sending regions.

¹AmericasBarometer (LatinoBarómetro) Data, Latin American Public Opinion Project, Round 8 (2018); Afrobarometer Data, All Countries, Round 7 (2016/2017).

Our central argument is that cross-border labor migration dampens support for state-led redistribution by bolstering economic prospects, both among migrants and potential migrants. We distinguish conceptually and empirically between the impact of having access to overseas labor markets and the impact of migrating for employment. First, we argue that labor migrants stand to realize substantial economic gains from working overseas, which in turn will reorder their political preferences. Higher paying jobs abroad provide an opportunity for migrants to improve their wages and send remittances home (Massey et al. 1993; Mobarak, Sharif and Shreshta 2021). Bolstered economic standing and confidence is also predicted to shape intra-household investments, such as delaying marriage and childbearing decisions (Jensen 2012; Goldin 2006). Importantly, improved economic outlooks in turn alters individuals' preferences regarding the size of the welfare state because wealthier and higher-income individuals are less likely to benefit from, and thus less likely to support, an expanded welfare state (Almond and Verba 2015; Ansell 2014; Margalit and Shayo 2021). Improved economic standing through migration, therefore, decreases support for state-led taxation and redistribution, increasing faith in principles of individual economic autonomy.

Second, new overseas exit options may improve individuals' confidence in their economic futures and augment their bargaining power—even for those who decide not to migrate. Research has shown that migration opportunities can enable workers to bargain with employers for greater benefits (Hirschman 1993; Karadja and Prawitz 2019; Saez and Veall 2005). Prior work also shows that individuals are aware of the prospect of upward mobility (POUM), and that they may shift economic decisions and political preferences based on anticipated gains (Benabou and Ok 2001). Thus, in response to exit options, individuals are predicted to become more fiscally conservative because they expect future economic gains (Alesina and La Ferrara 2005; Meltzer and Richard 1981; Ansell 2014). These two mechanisms suggest that cross-border migration can have sizable effects on political attitudes—both for migrants themselves and for the much broader category of individuals who gain access to migration opportunities when closed-off regions integrate into the global economy.

Studying the effects of migration and exit options is methodologically challenging. Individuals who are interested and successful in moving abroad are almost certainly systematically different from those who are not, confounding comparisons across

groups. Without altering the legal frameworks that structure cross-border migration, efforts to promote more international migration have largely proven unsuccessful. A central challenge in facilitating overseas migration has been identifying individuals who have a desire to migrate but lack the capacity to do so.

Our research design, geographical setting, and sample selection process allow us to overcome these hurdles. The experiment connected individuals in India seeking employment abroad with job opportunities in the hospitality sector in the Middle East. The sending region in our study is the North-East Indian state of Mizoram. Because Mizoram has traditionally been isolated from outside labor markets, international migration opportunities were both novel and potentially lucrative for residents facing curtailed domestic employment prospects. Working with local governmental and non-governmental agencies, as well as with training and recruitment firms, we identified individuals interested in overseas employment and randomly selected half for a skills training and placement program for employment in carefully-vetted hospitality sector jobs in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Program participants were surveyed at three points: at baseline before treatment assignment, at midline after the skills training program ended but before migration, and at endline following employment recruitment and international migration.

This setting is instructive for examining the impact of migration opportunities for at least three reasons. First, we situate our study within South-South labor migration channels. More migrants from developing countries now resettle in other developing regions than in industrialized nations; the India-UAE migration corridor is the second largest in the world, following only the Mexico-United States corridor (United Nations 2017). Second, our intervention took place in a geographically-isolated region of India, with little history or opportunity for out-migration. This enables us to cleanly identify the effect of our intervention; control group subjects lacked the networks or contacts to migrate overseas on their own. Third, targeting the hospitality sector for jobs allowed us to reduce potential risks to migrants that tend to be concentrated in the GCC's domestic labor and construction sectors.

To get a fuller picture of how migration affects migrants and sending communities, we analyzed the impact of our interventions on both potential migrants and their household members. Our experiment yielded a rich set of findings that shed light on the channels by which international mobility affects individuals' earnings, intra-household

investments, and political attitudes. Focusing on the first-stage impact, our intervention was highly effective in enabling young, educated Indians to move overseas. 23 percent of individuals in the treatment group migrated overseas for work, while the corresponding figure in the control group was just 3 percent. Although program participants across the board preferred overseas opportunities to domestic ones, only those in the treatment group were able to substitute the former for the latter. Notably, control group individuals were just as likely as those in the treatment group to move outside of Mizoram, but they did so for lower-paying jobs elsewhere in India.

In turn, overseas migration opportunities generated substantial economic benefits. Two years after the program began, individuals in the treatment group were earning more than double the monthly wages of those in the control group, notwithstanding similar rates of employment. This significantly improved their families' economic conditions as a consequence of remittances; those selected into treatment reported substantially higher household incomes and assets. Overall, treatment group individuals scored nearly 0.6 standard deviations higher on our pre-registered index of economic welfare. As an economic development program, the intervention was incredibly cost effective. For a cost of approximately 200 USD per job candidate, it generated more than 900 USD per year in increased wages, even when accounting for the fact that less than one quarter of the treatment group migrated. These material changes also impacted individuals' household economic decisions: individuals in the treatment group became more likely to prefer delaying marriage and childbearing plans to prioritize their careers. Strikingly, those selected for the program became significantly more confident about their economic prospects even at midline, before they received job offers or migrated overseas, illustrating how migration opportunities shape individuals' economic outlooks regardless of whether they migrate.

Crucially, the economic opportunities opened by labor migration substantially reduced individuals' support for state-led taxation and redistribution. At endline, our pre-registered economic policy index measuring preferences for fiscally conservative welfare state policies was 0.35 standard deviations higher in the treatment group than in the control group. Treatment group individuals were less likely to support taxation and redistribution, more likely to believe the poor should work their way out of poverty without government assistance, and more likely to express the belief that economic success was a result of individual effort rather than circumstance. Notably, the results

suggest that this change is driven both by prospective opportunity and by realized economic gains. Individuals in the treatment group became more fiscally conservative than those in the control group even before they received job offers or moved overseas, and even among demographic subgroups that were highly unlikely to migrate if given the opportunity. This suggests that migration opportunities alter political preferences both for those who migrate and for those who do not.

This paper makes several contributions. First, our research design sheds light on the drivers of migration (Massey et al. 1993); by identifying and focusing on individuals who wished to move abroad, we are able to disentangle desire and capacity to migrate and demonstrate that interventions that build capabilities can be effective policy levers spurring emigration (Clemens 2011; Beam, McKenzie and Yang 2016; McKenzie, Stillman and Gibson 2010).

Second, we provide rigorous causal evidence on the impacts of overseas migration on earnings, household wealth, and family investments. Existing work, largely based on analyses of oversubscribed lotteries of government migration programs, underlines a large positive impact of migration on migrants' wages (Mobarak, Sharif and Shreshta 2021; Gibson and McKenzie 2014; see also Abramitzky, Boustan and Eriksson 2012). Yet other research argues that the significant up-front costs of migration may outweigh its long-run benefits (Moniruzzaman and Walton-Roberts 2018). We show that even when emigration entails large costs, the economic benefits overshadow the costs, in line with the former studies. Unlike Gibson, McKenzie and Stillman (2011), however, we find that migration also leads to greater household wealth in migrant-sending households, providing evidence of the spillover effects of emigration on development in sending regions. Going even further, our finding that emigration-induced economic gains lead migrants to delay marriage and childbearing extends work illustrating how domestic labor market opportunities alter individuals' intra-household investments (Goldin 2006; Jensen 2012). Together, these results on emigration contribute to research that has focused on the economic effects of *internal* migration (Bryan, Chowdhury and Mobarak 2014; Derenoncourt 2022; Meghir et al. 2022; Beegle, De Weerd and Dercon 2011), as well as work investigating how immigration impacts *natives'* labor market opportunities (Tabellini 2020; Piyapromdee 2021; Dustmann, Frattini and Preston 2013; Sequeira, Nunn and Qian 2020; Bazzi et al. 2016).

Third, we isolate theoretically and empirically how new migration opportunities

affect not only people who cross national borders but also those who stay behind. Scholars and policymakers alike have long sought to understand how migration affects sending communities, particularly in developing countries (Zhou 2018; Kapur 2014). The results presented here demonstrate how international migration opportunities can alter economic conditions and policy preferences for individuals from countries that begin integrating into the global economy. Our study shows that migration opportunities can alter individuals' exit options and bargaining power, in addition to their earnings. This is particularly important for regions of the Global South that are rapidly joining global migratory networks because it suggests that individuals can leverage their exit options to bargain for better economic outcomes at home.

Finally, our study demonstrates that economic gains and increased bargaining power associated with migration opportunities dampen individuals' support for taxation and pro-poor welfare interventions. This is in line with prior work on the effect of internal migration to the American frontier, which had a long-term effect of lowering support for redistribution (Bazzi, Fiszbein and Gebresilasse 2020). However, our study contrasts with prior findings on international migration that suggests that migration has no effect on attitudes towards markets (Gibson et al. 2020). Taken together, our findings suggests that globalization has a nuanced impact on migrant-sending communities: increasing household wealth for migrant households, but undermining the welfare state in turn.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the setting, intervention, and estimation strategy. Section 3 reports the impact of our intervention on migration, policy preferences, wages, economic confidence, and intra-household investments. In sections 4 and 5, we probe potential mechanisms underpinning the effects. Sections 6 and 7 discuss implications and conclude.

2 Research Design

2.1 Setting

Our study focuses on hospitality sector employment opportunities in the GCC states for individuals from Mizoram (Gaikwad, Hanson and Toth 2022). Mizoram is a small, geographically-isolated border region that is home to Mizos, an ethnic group

classified by the Indian government as Scheduled Tribe (ST) to denote its historical marginalization. Like India's other ST groups, Mizos fare poorly on welfare indicators and face substantial obstacles in domestic labor markets. In Mizoram, private sector employment is anemic and government employment is highly politicized. Meanwhile, even educated English-speaking Mizos have difficulty finding work in mainland India, where they face discrimination as conspicuous racial and religious minorities (McDuaie-Ra 2012). Mizos are generally viewed as racially Southeast Asian (rather than South Asian) and the vast majority are Christians (rather than Hindu or Muslim). For additional information on our study setting, see *Appendix A.1*.

GCC employment opportunities, meanwhile, fuel a large and growing migration corridor from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa to the Middle East. More than 40 percent of the world's migrant population comes from countries in Asia, and more than 60 percent of these emigrate to other Asian and Middle Eastern countries (United Nations 2017). India is the world's largest source of emigrants (16.6 million per year) and recipient of remittances (USD 79 billion); migrants from South Asia account for large proportions of the populations of GCC countries (United Nations 2017).

The UAE and other GCC countries have a sizeable demand for foreign English-speaking workers to serve in the hospitality sector. Labor migrants earn far higher wages in the GCC than in similar work at home, and remittances from temporary workers frequently serve as engines of growth and investment for migrant-sending communities. Other regions of South Asia, such as Kerala, central Bangladesh, and Nepal, have leveraged labor migration and remittances into substantial economic growth (World Bank 2019). Because of Mizoram's remoteness and small population, the state has previously had few connections to employers abroad and little emigration to date. Following the example of these other regions, however, the Mizoram state government and local NGOs have recently encouraged workers to seek employment opportunities abroad, and have sought assistance to evaluate a program to place Mizos in hospitality sector jobs in the Gulf region.

2.2 Recruitment Strategy and Sample

We identified and recruited a group of prospective candidates interested in migrating to GCC countries for employment, but lacking the know-how and

connections to do so. We relied on a variety of different media to advertise the job training and placement opportunity. We posted advertisements in leading Mizo newspapers as well as on local Mizo television networks (specifically, Zonet and LPS). We sent recruitment materials and application forms to regional offices of local skills training organizations and visited job fairs organized by the government. One of the job fairs took place in a suburb of Aizawl (the state’s capital), while the other one took place in a neighboring district’s headquarter. Additionally, we placed banners around Aizawl advertising the program. Finally, we reached out to the largest Mizo community organization, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) to advertise on their social media platforms. Advertisement materials were translated to Mizo to reach a wide audience. The advertisement period lasted for two months in summer 2018. While we targeted the entire state of Mizoram with our advertising strategy, the majority of applicants came from Aizawl, which was unsurprising given the higher educational attainment and English skills in the capital city.

All our advertising materials asked applicants to be above the age of 18 and have at least Grade 10 standard education. We also required English competency. Once registration for the program took place, our team in Aizawl called back all registered applicants and screened them for their English skills over the phone (see *Appendix A.2* for additional details). We randomly assigned treatment status using the final list of applicants who passed the English language screening.

Prior to treatment assignment, all subjects were surveyed at baseline by a Delhi-based survey firm (CVoter, Inc.) to record basic demographics and pre-treatment outcome measures (*Appendix A.3* discusses our survey methodology).

Table 1: Demographics of Subjects

N	389
Mean Age	22.9
Pct Male	56
Pct Completed Grade 12	72
Pct Employed	14
Pct Married	2
Pct ST	95

The resulting pool of 392 candidates is broadly reflective of the upwardly-mobile

population that stands to benefit from work abroad: young, educated, and unemployed (Table 1). The average age in our sample was 23. More than 70% of participants had completed Grade 12 and more than 85% were unemployed at the start of the program. These characteristics are similar to those of South Asian migrants in the UAE and other Gulf countries more broadly (Section 6 compares our sample to Gulf migrants from other parts of India). From this pool, half were randomly selected to attend a training and recruitment module (T=196, C=196). Before selecting individuals into treatment and control, we used a matching algorithm to generate blocked pairs to ensure balance along key covariates which might predict economic prospects: age, gender, education level, and English proficiency (judged in the English screening).² We then randomized between each pair, assigning one to treatment and the other to control. Our randomizations resulted in observably similar groups of respondents distributed between each treatment condition (see *Appendix B.1* for balance tables).

2.3 Treatment: Job Training and Recruitment

The main treatment in this study has two parts, designed specifically to connect subjects with potentially lucrative employment opportunities in the GCC.

First, all selected individuals were eligible for a free, five-week hospitality training program (from October through November 2018) administered by a Bangalore-based job-training firm (Free Climb, Inc.) and hosted by a local NGO (Social Justice and Development India, SJnDI) in conjunction with the Government of Mizoram's Mizoram Youth Commission (MYC). This program was designed to impart basic service and interview skills for service jobs in the Gulf and consisted of two parts. The first, classroom-based part (3 weeks, full time), included instruction and role-playing on basic food preparation, counter service, casual dining service, and housekeeping. Concurrently, instructors also helped participants prepare resumes for foreign employers and practice interview skills, while also providing basic information on regulations and resources in the Gulf Region. During the second part (2 weeks, part time), managers of local hotels and restaurants showed participants how their establishments function. This part of the training was intended only to provide

²English is a main language of instruction, apart from Mizo, in Mizoram schools; thus a large proportion of candidates had the required skills.

candidates with a basic understanding of the industry in order to credibly interview for positions with employers abroad; employers in GCC regions provide extensive job-specific training once employees are hired.

In the second component of the intervention, individuals in the treatment group were invited for interviews with employers in the hospitality sector in the GCC. Our recruitment partner, Mumbai-based Vira International, vetted for ethical labor practices and selected potential employers interested in recruiting and sponsoring workers from Mizoram. Prospective employers ranged from multinational food and beverage service outlets such as Pizza Hut and Costa Coffee to luxury hotels such as Mandarin Oriental. These employers conducted several rounds of remote and in-person interviews between March and July 2019. Every individual in the treatment group was invited for interviews, typically multiple times, and employers offered jobs to the majority of those who attended interviews. Upon the offer of employment, employers applied for visas on behalf of job candidates. Individuals with job offers received logistical assistance in obtaining immigration documents and medical certificates, requirements for employment in the GCC. The recruitment firm and our local project manager scheduled meetings and checked paperwork for candidates. Although seemingly basic, these tasks represent significant barriers for potential migrants living in areas where migration is rare. Additional details about our intervention are provided in *Appendix A.4*.

The treatment bundles two elements: the training program and opportunity for overseas placement. This was by necessity—our recruitment partner and foreign employers, who have limited information about the labor market in Mizoram, wanted assurance from an outside training firm that candidates had the basic knowledge of hospitality sector jobs. However, an array of qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that the placement opportunity itself, not the training, explains any significant differences between the treatment and control groups. Our local training partners regularly conduct similar programs to promote domestic hospitality employment, and nearly half of the control group attended one of these programs. In both the treatment and control groups, individuals that attended job training programs were not significantly different from those that did not on any of our main outcomes, controlling for actually migrating. Extensive interviews with individuals in treatment and control also support the idea the training by itself did not significantly affect their job prospects

or attitudes. We investigate this evidence more fully in Section 5.1.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Careful consideration was given to the ethics of this study, which was approved by IRB committees at Columbia University, Stanford University, Dartmouth College, and the US Naval War College. While international employment provides otherwise unattainable economic opportunities for many would-be migrants, it potentially poses a risk to their physical and psychological wellbeing. There have been reported cases of migrant worker exploitation in the GCC (Sasikumar and Timothy 2015). This study was embedded within the Research & Empirical Analysis of Labor Migration Program (REALM), which aims to improve empirical knowledge regarding labor migration to the Gulf in order to promote fairer migration processes and better outcomes for migrants. The goal of our project was to evaluate a blueprint for ethical cross-border labor migration, for governments' and NGOs' future use. We worked closely with partners to minimize potential risks that participants might face, to ensure that the benefits of the program flowed to participants, and to protect participants' informed consent (Humphreys 2015).

We situated the study in Mizoram because of the demand for international employment, both from individuals and the state government. The Government's MYC, Mizoram's Chief Minister, and local NGOs sought to create recruitment opportunities for Mizo workers in the GCC, and called upon researchers to assist in scientifically evaluating training and overseas placement processes that were already underway. By helping connect government and community organizations with reputable partners both inside and outside of India, the program enabled local stakeholders to better screen potential employers, protect citizens during their employment tenures abroad, and facilitate migrant integration. We carefully vetted project partners; selected the hospitality sector that is relatively reputable compared to others (e.g., construction); screened employers for fair recruitment and labor practices; connected would-be migrants with agencies safeguarding migrants' rights; and offered subjects extensive information on risks, rights, and resources. In particular, the program was designed to improve recruitment processes for prospective migrants relative to those who migrate on their own. Future government initiatives in the region

were expected to benefit from the knowledge generated and the connections created. *Appendix A.5* provides an extended discussion on ethics.

2.5 Outcomes and Estimation

The main endline survey was conducted in January—March 2021, roughly two and a half years after the beginning of the program. 248 out of 392 (63%) pre-treatment subjects responded to this survey. In addition, we conducted a midline survey in January—March 2019, after selection to the training program (and post-training), but before individuals interviewed with employers, received job offers or moved abroad. 290 individuals responded (74%) to this survey. These surveys lasted around 30–45 minutes and asked a variety of economic, social, and political questions. By contacting participants via WhatsApp as well as phone, the survey firm was able to reach both those in India and those overseas.

We find no evidence of systematic bias resulting from attrition for either survey (see *Appendix B.2*). In fact, there appear to be no systematic patterns in response rates. First, based on multi-sample t-tests, there are no significant differences in response rates between the treatment and control subjects. Second, there are no significant patterns in attrition based on pre-treatment characteristics: OLS models predicting response rates based on these characteristics have no predictive value according to omnibus F-tests. Third, there is no evidence of any significant imbalance between the treatment and control groups before or after attrition (see *Appendix B.1*). OLS models predicting treatment status by pre-treatment covariates provide no predictive value in baseline, midline, or endline respondents, based on omnibus F-tests. These results suggest that differences-in-means between treatment and control respondents are likely to be valid estimates of the treatment effect among respondents, and possibly among non-respondents as well.

We evaluated migration and economic outcomes, alongside attitudinal and behavioral effects, associated with international job opportunities corresponding to the main pre-registered hypotheses in our pre-analysis plans, asking two to six survey questions for each. We present all components individually (see *Appendix C* for question wording). However, our main test of each hypothesis measures the effect of the treatment on a single, z-score index combining all of the measures (as per

our pre-analysis plan). Combining multiple measures into a single index has several advantages. It reduces multiple comparisons, false positives, and statistical noise, and increases the power of our tests. Results tables display all outcome variables such that the hypothesized direction of the effect is positive. Each index is constructed such that the mean of the control group is zero and the standard deviation of the control group is one, so effect sizes can be interpreted in standard deviations of the dependent variable.

We analyzed all data with an *intention-to-treat* framework, substituting the endogenous treatment (decision to migrate) with the exogenous assignment to treatment (invitation to attend the training session). As an additional analysis, we assessed the *complier average causal effect* of treatment using two stage least squares to assess the likely effect of migration.

All of our major hypotheses posit an effect of treatment assignment on some attitude or behavior. For every primary outcomes, we have a measure of the same outcome from the baseline survey. We therefore test these hypotheses with an OLS model of outcome y on treatment τ , with the baseline outcome measure X :

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \tau_i + \alpha X_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

We did not preregister any additional covariates in the model because we matched treatment and control respondents prior to treatment selection (that is, we created pre-treatment blocks of two) based on several key covariates. Indeed, we found that including additional covariates did not improve the predictiveness of the model. Due to the limited number of observations, small size of blocks, and the possibility of attrition, we did not include block (pair) fixed effects.

Because of the nature of the randomization (blocked to reduce imbalance between treatment and control groups), we used randomization inference to calculate our primary p-values. This involves simulating the treatment assignment and estimation process 100,000 additional times, calculating the expected distribution of estimated effects under the (strict) null hypothesis. We report the one-sided p-value for one-sided hypotheses and two-sided p-value for two-sided hypotheses. Given that this analysis does not yield meaningful confidence intervals, the figures in the paper show the equivalent confidence intervals from a parametric OLS analysis – which was preregistered as a robustness check. The p-values from the two analyses are nearly

identical. All hypotheses and procedures were pre-registered on the Experiments in Governance and Politics online registry (20210608AE and 20190327AB). We note that this pre-analysis plan includes hypotheses on other topics examined in two other working papers.

2.6 Evaluating Mechanisms

We are interested in understanding if and why the placement program changed political and economic outcomes: were these changes the result of enhanced economic opportunities, or of the experience of realizing those opportunities? Not everyone assigned to the treatment group migrated overseas, interviewed for jobs abroad, or even attended the training program. At the same time, all individuals in the treatment group—even those who decided against migrating—confronted the possibility of overseas employment. By contrast, control group individuals, while free to pursue their own training programs and options, were not provided international placement opportunities in our program.

Therefore, we took three steps to disentangle the effects of the prospect of upward mobility from the realized economic gains of employment abroad. All three analyses were pre-registered in our pre-analysis plan. The quantitative results of these tests are reported in Section 4. First, we compare the main effects at two points: (a) after the treatment group were selected for opportunities but before they moved or realized any gain, and (b) after some had moved abroad and realized economic gain. Second, we use pre-treatment covariates to identify demographic subgroups in which migration was more likely to occur and compare treatment effects among these subgroups with the effects among likely non-migrants. Third, we conducted long-form, semi-structured interviews with members of the treatment group who moved abroad, as well as comparable “likely migrants” in the control group (determined by the analysis described above) in 2021 following our endline survey. The purpose of these interviews was to investigate possible causal processes in greater detail. The interviews covered topics including motivations for moving abroad, experiences in a new country, comparisons between Mizoram and the host country, descriptions of social acquaintances, and subjects’ views on their economic circumstances and life plans.

3 Main Results

Overall, the endline survey produced strong evidence that opportunities to work overseas shape political preferences and economic conditions. Treatment group individuals were significantly more likely to move overseas for work and they became significantly more opposed to taxation and redistribution. We provide evidence that these changes were due to treatment group individuals becoming more confident in their economic prospects, registering substantial gains in personal and family incomes, and delaying family planning.

3.1 Migration

First, we find that the treatment had a large first-stage effect on individuals' ability to migrate abroad, as Table 2 documents. While 23% of the treatment group lived overseas at some point during the two years following the program, only 3% of the control group did (see also Appendix Table D.10). This effect size is large relative to other field experiments facilitating overseas migration. Beam, McKenzie and Yang (2016) provides assistance and information about migration to potential migrants, but post-intervention finds that only 2.2 percent of the entire sample migrated with the treatment having no significant impact on migration rates.³ A novelty of our research design is that it identified a sending region without an established history of out-migration and it selected subjects at baseline who wished to emigrate abroad for employment. This allows us to isolate capacity from desire to emigrate, and cleanly identify the impact of interventions that increase individuals' capabilities to pursue employment overseas.

The vast majority of the migrants moved to Kuwait and the UAE, with a handful moving to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. About half of these migrants returned home at the end of their initial one-year contract, while half remained overseas, as some accepted multi-year contracts with greater stability and status. These results are consistent with migration patterns between South Asia and the Gulf, where most labor migrants return home after one- to five-year employment stints.

³Bazzi et al. (2016) in a similar experiment provide information on migration intermediaries, lowering migration rates.

Table 2: International and Internal Migration Results

	Migrated	Training	Offer	Internal
OLS	+ .20 (.04)	+ .14 (.06)	+ .25 (.05)	-.19 (.05)
RI P-Value	.000	.009	.000	.000
Baseline Control?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean	.03	.43	.08	.32
N	248	245	231	247

Note: *Migrated*: Migrated overseas during the period of the study. *Training*: Attended a hospitality job training program. *Offer*: Offered a job overseas. *Internal*: Moved elsewhere in India.

The endline survey illuminates how the program assisted with the migration process. Individuals in the treatment and control group faced several hurdles in moving overseas, but the results suggest that the recruitment program reduced barriers to migration at every step (see Appendix Table D.11): individuals in the treatment group were more likely to apply for a job overseas, receive a job offer if they applied, receive a visa if they received an offer, and move overseas if they received a visa. Given the barriers that individuals face in accessing overseas employment and completing emigration logistics, it is unsurprising that nearly all of those in the treatment group who moved abroad did so with the connections and help of our recruitment partner.

Strikingly, the treatment did not significantly increase the proportion of individuals who left Mizoram for work. While individuals in the treatment group were more likely to move *overseas* for work (23% vs. 3%), those in the control group were more likely to move *elsewhere within India* (32% vs. 13%). In lieu of international placement opportunities, control group subjects took domestic jobs elsewhere—particularly in the hospitality sector hubs of Goa, Delhi, and Mumbai. Appendix Figure D.3 temporally illustrates these trends, demonstrating the proportions of each group that migrated domestically or overseas over the study period.

Why did so many individuals in the treatment group choose to migrate overseas rather than stay in India? Because wage differentials are starker across national boundaries than internally (Clemens, Montenegro and Pritchett 2019), migrants likely anticipated greater economic gains internationally than domestically (McKenzie,

Gibson and Stillman 2013). Additionally, members of historically marginalized ethnic groups face systemic barriers to economic advancement in local labor markets (Banerjee and Knight 1985) and thus might find international employment opportunities to be especially appealing.⁴ Thus, in low-income countries, particularly for members of historically marginalized groups, international employment provides economic opportunities that are otherwise unattainable in domestic labor markets.

Our results provide strong evidence for this claim. First, program participants viewed international employment as uniquely rewarding. In our midline survey, we asked all participants to rate their interest in job opportunities in the Gulf compared to other parts of India (Table 3). Respondents consistently reported that compared to mainland India, jobs in the GCC would be better-paying, provide more opportunities for promotions, feature better treatment by employers, and involve less ethnicity-based discrimination. This evidence supports the claim that members of marginalized groups look toward employment in the global economy to escape discriminatory practices in domestic labor markets.

Second, many individuals in the treatment group considered moving abroad, even if they eventually decided not to do so. Treatment group subjects were more likely than those in the control group to have applied for a passport and sought out information about employers and labor laws abroad.⁵ None of these activities were included in the training program; therefore, they are evidence of a credible desire—one requiring considerable time and effort—to prepare to move abroad for work. That international

⁴Minorities encounter discrimination in hiring and promotion, lack access to kinship-based professional networks, and frequently face wage differentials in identical jobs performed by members of majority groups (Gaikwad and Suryanarayan 2021). Overseas employers, by contrast, have fewer incentives to discriminate in hiring and promotion based on social hierarchies in migrant-origin regions, making international employment especially attractive for members of these groups (Osgood and Peters 2017).

⁵Appendix Table D.12 presents the results of a pre-registered hypothesis that the treatment would lead individuals to take concrete steps toward emigration. Passport fees in India range between Rs.1,500 and Rs.4,000, half of the average month's wage for employed individuals at baseline.

Table 3: Individuals Perceive International Job Opportunities as More Valuable

	<i>Gulf Region</i>	<i>Mainland India</i>
In which place...		
will you be able to get a better paying job?	81%	3%
will employers value your skills more?	61%	10%
are you more likely to be promoted?	40%	4%
are employers more likely to treat you better?	54%	7%
will Mizos face less employment discrimination?	55%	8%

Note: Hypothesis was pre-registered that Gulf jobs would be preferable to Mainland India jobs across all dimensions. Both treatment and control group subjects were polled. Remainder of responses were “Don’t Know / Can’t Say.”

opportunities are uniquely attractive for those who obtain access to them explains the sizable effect of our treatment on cross-border labor migration.

3.2 Political Attitudes

In this section, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence, we test our main argument on the role of exit options in lowering support for state-led redistribution. Consistent with our main argument, we find that international employment opportunities significantly altered individuals’ attitudes toward welfare state policies. Table 4 shows the effect of overseas employment opportunities on three measures of support for state-led taxation and redistribution in their home country. At the endline, treatment group individuals were more likely to strongly oppose high taxes for social spending (36% vs. 30%) and more likely to disagree with the government intervening to reduce income inequality (16% vs. 7%) than those in the control group.⁶ They also were more likely to agree with a sentiment that is known to underpin opposition to the welfare state:⁷ that it is “very possible” for the poor to advance economically with hard work alone (63% vs. 50%). When these measures are indexed together, receiving access to overseas employment opportunities shifted the welfare state attitudes of the treatment group by more than one third of a standard deviation

⁶Our question on taxation specifically asked about taxation in India.

⁷See Margalit and Shayo 2021; Alesina and La Ferrara 2005.

relative to the control group (see also Appendix Table D.16). These effects are quite large given the strongly pro-redistributive views of most low-income voters in India. The changes in general attitudes toward taxation and redistribution are noteworthy given that treatment group individuals were themselves beneficiaries of a subsidized government program.

Table 4: Redistribution Attitudes Results

	Index	Components		
		Taxes	Mobility	Inequality
Treatment Effect	+ .350	+ .13	+ .10	+ .23
(SE)	(.142)	(.14)	(.08)	(.15)
RI P-Value	.005	.163	.079	.062
Baseline Control?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean	0	3.78	2.46	1.81
N	248	246	247	248

Treatment effects measured by OLS, controlling for baseline measure of DV. P-values are one-sided according to pre-registered hypothesis. All components are measured on a scale from 1-5, with 5 representing strong agreement with the anti-redistribution position. *Taxes*: Should the government lower taxes for ordinary people, even if that means it will have less funding for public services to help the poor in Mizoram? *Inequality*: Should the government reduce income differences between the rich and the poor? *Mobility*: In general, do you think it is possible for someone who is born poor to become rich by working hard?

The evidence from qualitative interviews shows that migrants began to view economic success—particularly their own—as a product of hard work rather than circumstance. One respondent felt that they had become “more mature and confident,” and “more stable, and secure” than their friends back home (Respondent #179). Another commented, “I think I am more mature than when I was in Mizoram and I am more disciplined, and I have now the mindset to become better and do well and improve in the future” (Respondent #40). One respondent remarked that he felt more confident than his friends at home, not only because of his higher earnings but “[because he] was able to work in a country where [he] knew no one and ... adjust very well” (Respondent #80). These statements reflect migrants’ belief that their higher earnings were the result of their ability to succeed in a new environment. They also expressed a desire to protect their economic gains, both now and in the future. One

interviewee stated, “One thing I realised is when it is our own money that we earn, we tend to spend it wisely and save up more than before” (Respondent #44). Another noted that in Kuwait, “the government here does not take tax from the people, so I think that is good and better” (Respondent #88). Migrants’ greater opposition to redistribution and belief in the power of hard work dovetails with prior work that shows that success in unequal environments is associated with a greater belief in meritocracy (Newman, Johnston and Lown 2015).

Our results carry implications for debates regarding the impact of cross-border migration on policy. The immigration literature presents competing accounts of how migrant remittances shape redistribution attitudes within families that receive remittances (cf. Acevedo 2020) and, more broadly, on welfare state policies in sending regions (Doyle 2015; Ahmed 2012; Adida and Girod 2011; Duquette-Rury 2014). Our evidence shows that finding lucrative employment abroad reduces preferences for domestic redistribution, according with the claim that the opening of migration opportunities in the global economy may reduce redistributive demands in sending regions, with knock-on implications for development and welfare state politics in countries of the Global South.⁸

3.3 Economic Standing and Expectations

We argue that this political effect is driven primarily by bolstered economic standing and opportunities. First, our study provides overwhelming evidence that access to overseas opportunities substantially improved economic outcomes. As of the endline survey (Table 5), individuals in the treatment group were on average earning more than double the wages of individuals in the control group. The mean wage in the control group was approximately 4,800 INR per month (approximately 65 USD), while the mean wage in the treatment group was over 10,400 INR (140 USD). This is particularly striking given that the majority of individuals in both groups remained unemployed and rates of employment were not different between treatment and control groups (44% vs. 39%) at endline. The wage increase was nearly entirely driven by the relatively small number of individuals in the treatment group (23%) who moved

⁸Appendix F provides a Benjamini-Hochberg false discovery rate analysis for the main pre-registered hypotheses evaluated in this paper.

Table 5: Economic Standing Results

	Index	Components			
		Employed	Wages	Family	Goods
Treatment Effect	+ .558 (.153)	+ .05 (.06)	+ 5530 (1780)	+ .61 (.22)	+ .35 (.12)
RI P-Value	.000	.217	.001	.004	.001
Baseline Control?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean	0	.39	4790	4.45	0
N	248	246	234	238	248

Note: Treatment effects measured by OLS, controlling for baseline measure of DV. P-values are one-sided according to pre-registered hypothesis. *Employed*: Employed at endline survey. *Wages*: Personal monthly wages, in INR. *Family*: Family income on 1-8 scale. *Goods*: Standardized index of 6 household goods.

overseas for work. At endline, the mean monthly wage was 40,100 INR (approx. 540 USD) for those currently employed overseas; 18,400 INR (250 USD) for those currently employed in Mainland India; and 12,800 INR (170 USD) for those currently employed in Mizoram (see Appendix Figure D.4).

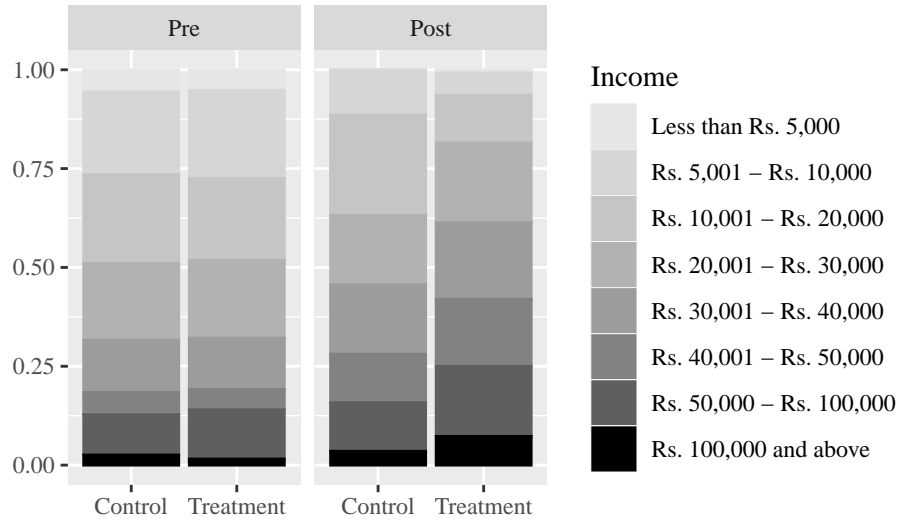
Table 6: Remittances Results

	Self-Reported	Family-Reported
Treatment Effect (SE)	+ 3150 (730)	+ 1380 (750)
RI P-Value	.000	.032
Baseline Control?	Yes	Yes
Control Mean	150	560
N	248	303

Note: *Family-reported remittances* include family members residing elsewhere in India. Treatment effects measured by OLS, controlling for pre-treatment income. P-values are one-sided according to pre-registered hypothesis.

These individual wages, moreover, had a significant effect on the economic standing of participants' families (see Figure 1 and Appendix Table D.13). On average, those who moved abroad reported sending 14,000 INR per month, or about half of

Figure 1: Family Income, Treatment vs. Control



their wages, home to their families. Selection to the treatment group, therefore, had a significant and positive effect on remittances (Table 6). This was true both of the self-reported overseas remittances from the individuals themselves and of total household remittances (both overseas and domestic) reported by household members (mostly parents and siblings) in a separate survey. Consequently, treatment group individuals reported a significantly higher family income. They were half as likely to report a family income below 20,000 INR (18% vs. 36%) and nearly twice as likely to report a family income above 50,000 INR (25% vs. 16%). These differences also manifested in an index of household material goods. Treatment group individuals were more likely to report their families owning at least one computer (62% vs. 53%), refrigerator (99% vs. 95%), and motorbike (76% vs. 68%).

Our results also show that access to migration overseas significantly affected individuals’ economic outlooks and intra-household decision-making. Table 7 shows the effect of the treatment on an index of four measures of economic confidence (see also Appendix Table D.15). At the endline survey, individuals were modestly more likely to express confidence that they would be able to advance professionally, and that their next job would pay well. Overall, treatment group individuals’ economic confidence was approximately 0.2 standard deviations higher than in the control group

($p < .10$).

Table 7: Economic Confidence Results

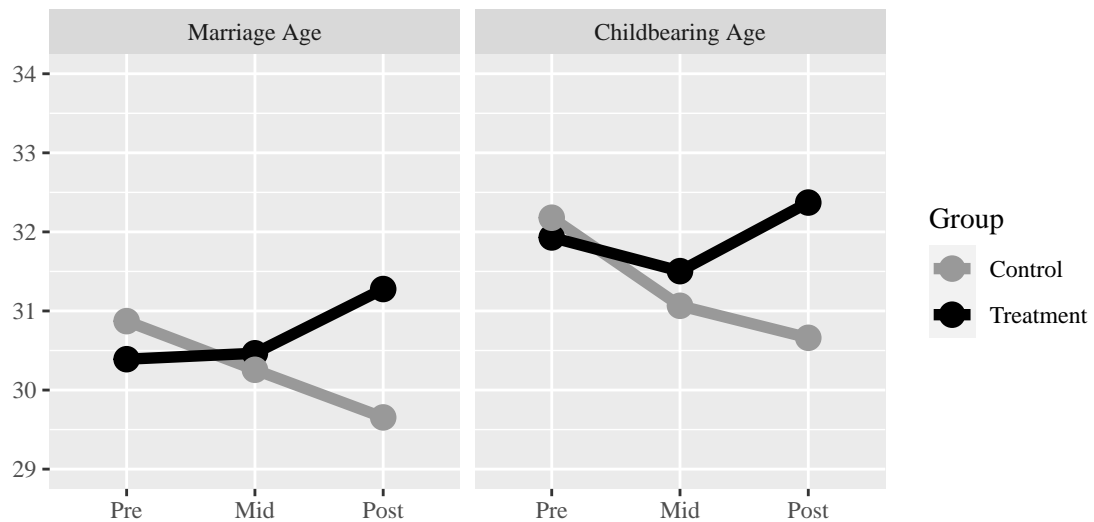
	Index	Components			
		Mobility	Wages	Family	Lifetime
Treatment Effect	+ .197 (.139)	+ .12 (.11)	+ .28 (.09)	+ .10 (.08)	- .09 (.08)
RI P-Value	.090	.118	.002	.128	.859
Baseline Control?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Mean	0	4.20	3.46	3.79	4.03
N	243	243	243	243	243

Note: Treatment effects measured by OLS, controlling for baseline measure of DV. P-values are one-sided according to pre-registered hypothesis. All components are measured on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). *Mobility*: In the future, will you be able to advance professionally? *Wages*: Do you think your next job will pay better or worse than the average salary in Mizoram? *Family*: In the next year, do you think your own and your family’s economic situation will be better or worse? *Lifetime*: When you are the age your parents are now, do you think you will be better off or worse off financially than them?

Lastly, Figure 2 shows the effects of the treatment on more durable measures of economic expectations: marriage and childbearing plans. Compared to the control group, treatment group individuals expressed a significantly greater preference for delaying marriage and childbearing by the endline. Asked at what ages they intend to marry and have children, those in the treatment group gave ages that were nearly two years older than those given by the control group ($p < .001$). This difference is notable; it is larger, for instance, than the difference between men and women’s preferences at baseline (see also Appendix Table D.14). To the extent that the welfare state alleviates the financial burden of family expansion and child-rearing, these shifts in the household decisions of treatment group subjects aligns with their diminished support for state-led taxation and redistribution.

Evidence from qualitative interviews also supports the notion that cross-border migration opportunities improved subjects’ economic confidence and resources. Subjects interviewed in the treatment group emphasized that jobs abroad afforded them more security and stability, noting that “in Mizoram [they] would not be getting this much pay and unless [they] work with the government—there is no job security, but

Figure 2: Family Planning Preferences over Time



Note: Differences are statistically significant only in the endline survey.

in Dubai even during the pandemic [they were] able to work and get [their] salary regularly” (Respondent #59). Others corroborated this by stating that they are “the most secure one among [their] friends financially” and that they are now able to save and no longer have to rely on their families for financial support (Respondent #228). Others noted that thanks to job opportunities in the Gulf, “[they were] seeing a lot of improvement in [themselves] and financial security is also there to some extent” (Respondent #44).

In contrast with the increased financial optimism of the treatment group, control group respondents described instability in their economic lives. These interviewees reported varied trajectories: some migrated within the country and returned later, while others stayed in Mizoram. A few respondents reported not having any salaried job at all. Regarding jobs, one respondent said that he has not been able to work “because of the pandemic and the road block by [neighbouring] government [causing a] shortage of supply” (Respondent #3). Despite his savings, he reported: “I don’t think I am stable.” Another respondent noted that due to the pandemic “[she] had to spend without earning so [she is not] secure right now” (Respondent #16). Even those who have returned from employment elsewhere in India expressed a lack of financial stability

due to lower salaries in Aizawl, Mizoram’s capital: “I don’t think I am secure because I come from a poor family background and I am renting a flat here in Aizawl, so there are many things to spend money on, and it is difficult to have proper savings” (Respondent #23). Together, these interviews show that our results were not driven by the treatment group’s access to greater wages alone, but also by international job opportunities spurring greater economic confidence.

4 Mechanisms: Economic Prospects and Realized Gains

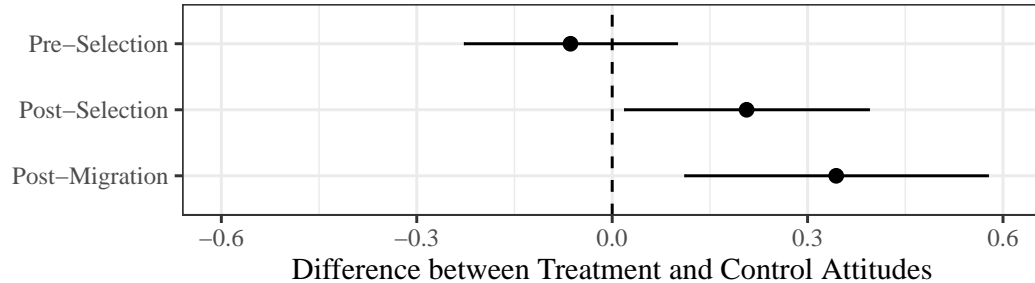
We have argued that migration opportunities create two separate types of economic effects which may influence economic standing and political attitudes. First, individuals who migrate benefit directly from employment overseas. Second, even individuals who do not migrate (or have not yet migrated) may still gain from having the exit option of migration. In this section, we present the results of two pre-registered analyses (see Section 2.6) that attempt to distinguish between these two mechanisms. We find evidence that improved economic opportunities—both direct benefits from migration and indirect benefits from greater exit options—contribute to the effects.

4.1 Over Time Comparisons

First, treatment group individuals’ economic and political attitudes shifted both before and after they migrated and worked overseas (Figure 3 and Appendix D). For this analysis, we tracked both economic confidence and political preferences regarding taxes and redistribution at two points: the midline survey in early 2019 (after candidates had been selected for the program but before they accepted jobs or moved overseas) and the endline survey two years later (after many candidates had been working overseas for more than one year). By comparing attitudes at these two distinct points, it is possible to separate the effects of economic prospects from the realized benefits that may follow.

We find that treatment group subjects experienced an increase in economic confidence relative to the control group by the midline. Even before they interviewed with foreign employers or were offered jobs, treatment group individuals perceived their economic opportunities to be significantly greater than those in the control group.

Figure 3: Redistribution Attitudes over Time



Note: Comparison of 3-question redistribution index from Table 4. 1 unit = 1 SD of index in control group.

In fact, the difference between treatment and control was greater at the midline, before individuals migrated overseas, than at the endline. Long before securing jobs or migrating, individuals who gained access to overseas opportunities became more confident in their economic futures.⁹ Any changes in political attitudes at the midline survey, therefore, are likely the result not of realized benefits but of future prospects.

Individuals in the treatment group also shifted their political preferences by the midline survey, becoming more fiscally conservative even before realizing the income gains from migration. As Figure 3 shows, members of the treatment group were .21 standard deviations more anti-redistribution than the control group at the midline ($p < .05$). At the endline, after some in the treatment group had received two years of high salaries overseas, these differences were qualitatively larger and more statistically significant (.34 SD, $p < .01$). These results suggest not only that higher-income individuals are less apt to favor taxation and redistribution (Meltzer and Richard 1981), but also that the mere prospect of upward mobility is sufficient to trigger similar attitudinal shifts (Benabou and Ok 2001). At midline, the treatment group had neither

⁹At the midline survey, there were no significant differences between the treatment and control groups in life planning preferences (preferred age of marriage and childbirth). This may be because costly investments in one's career are slower moving than economic confidence, or that they are more responsive to realized economic gains than to economic expectations.

realized any material benefits nor moved overseas. Instead, their increase in opposition to taxation and redistribution appears to be based merely on prospective gains.

4.2 Comparing Effects among Likely Migrants and Non-Migrants

Second, overseas work opportunities significantly boosted economic outcomes and decreased individuals' support for taxation and redistribution—even for those who were unlikely to migrate. While all treatment group individuals were offered the chance to migrate overseas, some demographic groups were more likely than others to actually do so if given the opportunity. We find that even among individuals who were very unlikely to migrate, the treatment still had a significant effect on redistribution preferences. In other words, the mere exit option of overseas employment appears to have shifted political views.

To identify those likely (and unlikely) to migrate if selected, we conducted an analysis in two steps using a machine-learning algorithm called Bayesian Additive Regression Trees (BART), included in the pre-analysis plan. First, we used BART to identify which pre-treatment characteristics (from the baseline survey) best predicted an individual's decision to migrate among the treatment group. Second, we used this model to identify the individuals in both the treatment and control groups who most resembled the migrants in the treatment group. For example, men in our sample were far more likely to migrate, so they received higher propensity scores on average. This resulted in two subgroups based on pre-treatment covariates: “likely migrants,” of whom 59% migrated if selected for the program, and “likely non-migrants,” of whom just 6% migrated if selected. We then test the effect of the main treatment (selection to the program) within each subgroup. Unlike the comparisons in a standard mediation analysis, these comparisons are each causally identified, although the difference between the two comparisons is not.

First, the results (Table 8) show that while most of the economic benefits appear to be driven by migration itself, likely non-migrants also benefited from receiving the opportunity to migrate. Among the likely migrants, the treatment had a large effect on economic standing: more than one standard deviation measured by the index, more than three times as large as for the likely non-migrants. However, in the likely non-migrant group, the treatment still had a sizable and statistically significant effect:

Table 8: Main Effects: Likely Migrants vs. Likely Non-Migrants

	<i>Effect Size</i>		<i>Difference</i>
	<i>Likely Migrants</i>	<i>Likely Non-Migrants</i>	
Migrated Overseas	+ .59 (.07)	+ .06 (.04)	.53 (.08)
Economic Standing	+ 1.12 (.29)	+ .35 (.18)	.77 (.34)
Redistribution Attitudes	+ .49 (.27)	+ .29 (.17)	.20 (.32)
N	68	180	

Note: Each row comes from an OLS regression of treatment (with an interaction term by respondent group) on the index of each outcome variable.

providing merely the opportunity to move overseas still paid economic dividends. This result is mirrored in the observational data. Among those who remained in Mizoram, employed individuals in the treatment group were earning significantly higher wages (15,700 INR [approx 200 USD] per month) than those in the control group (10,100 INR [125 USD] per month).

Second, the treatment had a large effect on the political opinions of those who were unlikely to move as well as those who were likely to move. Despite having considerably lower economic gains from the treatment, likely non-migrants still became significantly less supportive of taxation and redistribution if selected for the program, and the difference between the treatment effect in the two subgroups is not statistically significant. These results suggest that the mere option to migrate shaped individuals' attitudes toward taxation and redistribution—even for those who did not migrate. This result, too, is reflected in observational comparisons. Even among those who remained in Mizoram, individuals in the treatment group held views that were significantly more fiscally conservative—nearly 0.3 standard deviations in our index.

5 Alternative Explanations

By contrast, we do not find evidence that the effects of our program are driven either by the training course itself or by differential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.1 Training Program

Given that job training programs are a common strategy for economic advancement, it is worth asking whether the job training program itself altered economic standing or political attitudes. However, we have significant reasons, both theoretical and empirical, to suggest that our results are not driven by the training program.

First, overseas job opportunities are extremely rare in Mizoram, while hospitality training programs are common. Local government organizations and NGOs regularly conduct free skills training programs as a way to reduce the region's high unemployment rate. A large proportion of both treatment and control individuals had previously attended one of these programs and typically reported that the content was similar to our program. More importantly, 43% of individuals in the control group reported attending a job training program in the months following the baseline survey (compared to 58% of treatment group individuals). In fact, most of these control group individuals attended a course that was inspired by our program and conducted by two of our project partners. By contrast, reliable connections to overseas jobs are scarce and thus overwhelmingly desired in Mizoram's isolated economy. In the baseline survey, just three percent of respondents had any friends who had moved abroad, and only ten percent knew anyone in their extended family who had emigrated. At endline, just three percent of the control group worked overseas in the two years after the program began, and all of them had returned to Mizoram by the endline survey.

Second, treatment group individuals who have migrated emphasized that the Mizoram-based training program was basic and that in fact the consequential job-specific training that they received was given by the foreign companies that eventually hired them. For example, one respondent told us that he spent his first week at his new job doing theoretical training by the company and only afterward was assigned to a line of work based on his skills (Respondent #44). Another respondent told us that “[they] went through training and [they] were taught how to make a pizza according to the brand's standard” once hired by his company (Respondent #80). Others were taught by their superiors abroad how to set the tables according to the restaurant standard or how to be a barista (Respondent #156). This illustrates how the training program in the study did not provide specialized skills required for particular

hospitality sector jobs; rather it served to signal potential candidates' interest and basic interviewing eligibility to foreign employers who were unfamiliar with Mizoram's local labor market. All participants acquired the specialized skills required for their jobs when they were trained by their employer.

Third, quantitative evidence from the survey results strongly and consistently shows that job training by itself had little effect on economic standing or political attitudes. In *Appendix E*, we examine differences in our four main outcomes across two sets of comparisons (controlling for pre-treatment covariates). First, there were no significant differences within the control group between individuals who attended our program partners' training program versus those who did not attend. Second, within the treatment group, there were no significant differences between individuals who attended our training program and those that did not when we controlled for subsequent migration. These results strongly suggest that, independent of overseas job opportunities, the training programs did not boost candidates' economic prospects or affect attitudes on taxation or redistribution.

5.2 COVID-19 Shutdowns

Given that our program timeline (Aug 2018 - Mar 2021) included the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth asking whether the effects we observe are due in part to the effects of shutdowns or other economic impacts on individuals. However, we find little evidence that shutdowns differentially impacted the economic standing of treatment and control groups. Asked about COVID-related shutdowns, individuals in the treatment and control groups were about equally likely to have been laid off (15% vs. 18%), had work temporarily suspended (32% vs. 32%), and had hours or wages cut (23% vs. 22%). Even at the endline survey, which was conducted during the peak of India's 2021 shutdowns, there was no significant difference between the overall employment rate of the treatment and control groups (43% vs. 39%). Instead, the economic effects were driven entirely by the income differences between employed individuals in the treatment and control groups, which are much less likely to have been COVID-related.

6 Discussion

Our results provide unprecedented, causally-identified evidence on the effects of access to overseas employment on migration, policy preferences, migrants' material well-being, and intra-household decisions. Individuals who were assigned to the treatment group became significantly less supportive of state-led taxation and redistribution. We document that this change in preferences about the state's role in reducing inequality is due to significantly higher wages, increased assets, and higher confidence about economic futures in the treatment group compared to the control group. Mechanism tests indicate that migration alters political preferences for two separate reasons: because migrants themselves realize real economic gains, and because even those who do not migrate receive valuable future exit options. Together, these findings demonstrate that access to even short-term labor migration can reshape economic conditions and political preferences.

Exit options and the POUM hypothesis Our results shed light on several mechanisms by which migration may shape individuals' economic standing and attitudes. Importantly, two of these mechanisms apply not only to those who decide to migrate but also to those who gain the option to do so—even if they decide against migrating. These effects are particularly important in the migration context because many more people receive access to new opportunities than those who eventually move. Even if individuals opt not to move, they appear to shift their political and economic views in response to accessing greater out-migration opportunities.

First, our results indicate that the outside options provided by overseas employment can boost economic standing even for those who opt not to migrate. The analysis in Section 4.2 demonstrates that being selected for the program paid economic dividends even among the demographic groups that were extremely unlikely to actually migrate. Among those who were working in Mizoram at the end of the program, individuals selected for the program were earning more than 50% higher wages than those who were not selected. This suggests that migration opportunities carry benefits for many more people than those who actually migrate. Individuals with greater exit options may be more confident in negotiating for higher wages and hold greater leverage when they do, resulting in better economic outcomes (Sellars 2019; Karadja and Prawitz

2019).

Second, the results also show that political preferences are shaped by individuals' future economic prospects, not just their current resources. Work in political economy has long argued that low-income individuals oppose redistribution in part because they believe that one day they may be rich (Benabou and Ok 2001). However, it's hard to find definitive evidence of this effect, since individuals with greater confidence likely differ systematically from those with less confidence, and because events that increase confidence may also increase resources. Our study shows that providing individuals with valuable job opportunities overseas decreased their support for redistribution. Critically, these effects were observable before individuals actually received job offers or realized economic benefits, demonstrating that political preferences can shift based merely on the prospect of economic gain.

External validity. Two other features of our study help to explain the strength and direction of the results. First, the participants in our program were highly educated and members of a marginalized ethnic group. Both of these characteristics should make overseas employment particularly remunerative compared to domestic employment. Highly educated Indians, especially those with strong English skills, are particularly well-suited to higher-paying service work overseas. Likewise, members of underrepresented ethnic groups, like the Mizos in our study, often face systemic barriers to hiring, promotion, and wage-earning in local labor markets (Banerjee and Knight 1985). Overseas employers, however, often have fewer incentives to discriminate based on social hierarchies (e.g., caste) in migrant-origin regions, making international employment especially attractive for members of these groups (Osgood and Peters 2017). That said, even if the subjects in our study are unrepresentative of the population as a whole, they are much more representative of labor migrants, particularly in the Global South.

For the same reasons described above, migrants elsewhere in the Global South also tend to be from well-educated and minority backgrounds. To assess this claim, we compared our sample to migrants in the Kerala Migration Study (KMS), one of the few studies that systematically tracks labor migrants from entire sending communities in the Global South, and the Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS), a nationally representative survey of Indians. Like the subjects in our study, migrants in the

Kerala study are significantly more likely to have completed secondary education (50 percent) than non-migrants in the region. We see similar patterns using the nationally-representative IHDS: while 32 percent of overseas migrants from India have completed high school, only 22 percent of the general population have. Kerala migrants are also significantly more likely to be from underrepresented Muslim or Christian communities (65 percent) than their peers. Looking at all Indian migrants, 22 percent of them are Muslim, compared to only 14 percent of the entire population.

Second, the individuals in our program generally saw their economic gains as earned achievements rather than fortuitous windfalls. In interviews, individuals in our treatment group repeatedly emphasized the pride they took in succeeding in a foreign environment and attributed their newfound financial stability to hard work. The treatment group in our study received significant benefits, but also made costly investments in their futures and overcame important hurdles to do so: applying for various approvals and certifications, living in a foreign country, and working for their wages. This may partially explain why individuals in the treatment group became less supportive of redistribution and government assistance, despite benefiting themselves from a government assistance program. It also points to other globalization-related domains where beneficiaries of government programs might register similar effects. Economic processes that generate employment, such as foreign direct investment or trade-related job gains, might trigger a similar backlash to taxation and redistribution (Linardi and Rudra 2020). Meanwhile, government cash transfers and other economic rewards that require less individual effort may have the opposite effect. Hence, our findings are more closely related to prior research showing that succeeding in a highly unequal environment is associated with greater belief in meritocracy (Newman, Johnston and Lown 2015).

We note that our study focuses on South-South migration, whereas the majority of research on the political economy effects of migration is centered on South-North migration. Yet the majority of migration flows in the global economy today is South-South. In 2017, more international migrants from developing countries had resettled in other developing regions than in industrialized nations; migration within Asia and the Middle East now comprises the largest regional migration corridor in the world (United Nations 2017, 1-3). Sending community effects are particularly important in these contexts because labor migrants typically maintain citizenship and

social ties to their home countries, return home after employment stints overseas, and alter the economic landscape in sending regions through remittances. Consequently, evaluating whether and how overseas opportunities influence the economic outlooks and political behavior of potential migrants is essential for understanding the impact of migration on political and policy outcomes in the Global South today.

Facilitating employment migration. This project represents, to our knowledge, the first significant randomized controlled trial that spurred overseas labor migration. Therefore, comparing our program to prior attempts at spurring migration (Beam, McKenzie and Yang 2016; McKenzie and Sasin 2007), can shed light on the factors that limit migration more generally. In particular, we would highlight two ways that our project departs from prior policy experiments.

First, our program was based in a region, Mizoram, where overseas migration opportunities are scarce. In regions where migration is more common, such as in the Greater Manila region, potential migrants are likely to have more connections and know-how to find jobs overseas. Programs designed to encourage migration with information and logistical support, therefore, may struggle to encourage further migration. In Mizoram, by contrast, there are many individuals interested in migration who have difficulty finding opportunities to do so. Our study's success, therefore, suggests that development programs to encourage migration may be most effective in regions where migration is comparatively low. It also suggests that the political and economic effects of migration are likely to be felt most keenly in newly-opened migration corridors.

Second, our program focused on providing connections for potential migrants to overseas employers. Prior experiments have provided a host of services to potential migrants: job training programs, information about employers, and assistance with application and migration processes. Our program provided these elements, but none of them were unusual in Mizoram or in migration RCTs. What was unusual was the connections to vetted, reliable overseas employers through a recruitment agency. In contexts with little prior migration, placement agencies serve as critical "migration institutions" (Goss and Lindquist 1995; Sasikumar and Timothy 2015), closing gaps in knowledge and access and enabling migration. The success of our program suggests that these connections are effective at encouraging migration.

Labor migration as a development program. Our findings show that migration can provide otherwise unattainable economic benefits for individuals in developing countries. Many observational studies argue that migration has significant economic benefits (Yang and Choi 2007; Abramitzky and Braggion 2006; Abramitzky, Boustan and Eriksson 2012; Doyle 2015; Ahmed 2012), yet ascertaining these effects is difficult because migrants differ systematically from non-migrants. In the absence of strong affirmative evidence that migration can be economically beneficial, changes in migration policy is often politically fraught.

Our study provides clear evidence in favor of the development impacts of migration. Individuals who were randomly selected to receive migration opportunities earned more than double the wages of the control group subjects two years later—despite the fact that less than a quarter actually took jobs overseas. Comparing these benefits to the costs of our placement program (*Appendix A.6*) suggests that migration can serve as a cost-effective path to upward mobility for individuals in developing countries, particularly those from marginalized communities who face limited prospects domestically. All told, the program cost about 200 USD per person and generated nearly 900 USD per person per year in additional wages. These results have important implications for governments in low- and middle-income countries seeking to promote development. Our experiment demonstrates that supporting safe and ethical labor migration (e.g., connecting migrants with job opportunities and helping them navigate the migration process) can be a valuable tool for development.

7 Conclusion

Randomized controlled trials have often been criticized for not being suitable to understand the impact of transformative policies that matter for reducing poverty (Ravallion 2014; Rodrik 2008). Our intervention captures the enormous potential of migration opportunities in the developing world to reshape economic prospects and political attitudes. We go one step further by documenting that it is not only those who migrate who experience these changes, but also those with access to unequally distributed *access to migration opportunities*.

Our work complements prior studies on emigration and exit options by demonstrating the importance of foreign labor market opportunities for bargaining

with domestic employers and engaging with the state (Hirschman 1993; Sellars 2019). Karadja and Prawitz (2019), for example, show that new migration channels to the United States allowed workers in late 19th-century Sweden to organize more effectively when negotiating with domestic employers and shift their demands of the state. Saez and Veall (2005) show that the threat of brain drain to the United States allowed the top decile to negotiate for higher wages in Canada. Here, we provide experimental evidence that the option to migrate affects the economic standing and preferences not only of migrants, but also those who have access to these opportunities. This has implications for our understanding of how globalization and policies that lower barriers to emigration can fundamentally affect domestic labor market conditions and outcomes.

As the first field experiment to successfully facilitate international migration, this research also contributes to the literature on the drivers of migration. Theoretically, migration is the product of both the willingness and the capacity to move. However, past research has found it difficult to identify individuals who have the desire to move but not the means, because in most places where migration is an established livelihood strategy individuals who are willing to migrate tend to have the information and networks to do so. Because prior experimental research has often situated interventions in high out-migration areas, studies have often found no impact of lessening capacity constraints on outmigration (Beam, McKenzie and Yang 2016; McKenzie and Sasin 2007; Bazzi et al. 2021). Our study overcomes this hurdle by focusing on a region of India—a country with otherwise large volumes of out-migration—where individuals had little information or access to overseas employers. This suggests that capacity constraints are most likely to bind in areas with relatively low out-migration.

Together, our results illustrate the complex role that globalization plays for individuals in low- and middle-income countries. On the one hand, like other aspects of international economic integration, overseas employment can generate significant economic gains, especially for those from marginalized communities (Adams Jr. and Page 2005; Yang and Choi 2007). At the same time, an implication of our finding is that globalization can seriously undermine the welfare state by increasing opposition to redistribution among its economic winners. While this closely aligns with Linardi and Rudra (2020), which shows that foreign direct investment can depress demands for redistribution, it runs against conventional wisdom that suggests that

globalization gives rise to pressures for a larger welfare state (Cameron 1978; Rodrik 1998). Taken together, our research implies that an important unintended consequence of policies promoting greater global integration could be rising inequality as a consequence of a shrinking welfare state. Future research can build on the micro-level experimental evidence that we have presented in order to analyze whether and how new out-migration opportunities alter broader policy trends in regions integrating into the global economy.

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Supporting Information (For Online Publication)

Exit Options: How International Migration Opportunities Shape Economic Standing and Political Preferences

Contents

- A Additional Information about the Experiment
- B Balance and Attrition
- C Key Outcome Questions
- D Main Results
- E Exploratory Tests for Mechanisms
- F Multiple Comparisons Analysis

A Additional Information about the Experiment

Note: Some of the material in these appendices, particularly in Sections A-B, also appears in the appendices of: Gaikwad, Hanson and Toth (2022), which examines a different set of results from the same field experiment.

A.1 Intervention Location and Study Context

Figure A.1: Map of Mizoram, India



Mizoram is situated in northeastern India, bordering Bangladesh on the west and Myanmar on the east. The state is sparsely populated, with around one million residents. Aizawl, the capital city, hosts a third of this population with 300,000 residents. Mizoram has a highly educated population: the literacy rate is 91.33 percent according to the 2011 Census. Female literacy is 89.27 percent, which puts Mizoram amongst the highest literacy and female literacy rates in India (Government of India 2011). Mizoram also has one of the highest female-to-male demographic ratios as well as one of the lowest literacy gender gaps in the country (Government of India 2011). While most people in Mizoram speak the local language, Mizo, English is also widely spoken and used as the other official language of the state. The vast majority of the state's population belong to various tribes that are collectively known as Mizos. These tribes have been classified under the Indian Constitution as Scheduled Tribes, a category indicating groups that have been historically marginalized and discriminated. Today, the Indian Constitution guarantees Scheduled Tribes quotas in government jobs, educational institutions, as well as elected positions. The majority of Mizos identify as Christians and only a small minority identifies as Hindus or Buddhists (Government of Mizoram 2014).

Mizos migrated to current Mizoram from upper Burma sometime between the 15th and 18th centuries (Government of Mizoram 2014). British colonization was formalized in 1895 after the Lushai Hills were declared to be part of British India. Mizoram administratively became a district of the province of Assam. This was also the time when Christian missionaries arrived to the area and set up schools. Missionaries achieved wide-reaching changes in Mizo society by converting the majority of the population to Christianity, opening schools, and educating the masses (Government of Mizoram 2014). After India's independence, Mizoram remained a part of the state of Assam, but centralized control from Assam frustrated Mizos and in the 1960s the Mizo National Front (MNF) started an armed insurgency. Mizoram became the 23rd state of India in 1986, following a peace accord between the Government of India and the MNF (Government of Mizoram 2014).

Subsequently, the MNF reformed itself as a political party and contested elections in 1987. The Indian National Congress (INC)—established in 1961—is the other major political party in the state (Government of Mizoram 2014). The INC and the MNF have regularly alternated in power in the state's legislative assembly. At the local level, after the abolition of chieftainship, village councils were established in 1957. Mizoram, as a Sixth Schedule state, is excluded from quotas instituted for women, Scheduled Castes, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), in village councils under the 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution (Government of Mizoram 2014).

Despite its high human capital, Mizoram lacks employment opportunities. The relative geographic isolation and mountainous topography have constrained industrial growth and produced high unemployment rates. Mizoram's GDP per capita is around US\$1,600, which puts it at 19th amongst 27 Indian states (Government of Mizoram 2014). The majority of the population remains employed in agriculture, even though the contribution of agriculture to GDP has been declining (Government of Mizoram 2014). Industrial output is only 19.39 percent of the state's GDP, whereas the tertiary sector makes up 66.29 percent of the GDP. The largest employer within the services sector, however, remains the government. Taken together, Mizoram has struggled to create employment opportunities outside of small-scale agriculture

and the public sector, which leaves its educated population without adequate employment opportunities.

Why focus on the India-GCC migration corridor? Much of prior research on migration has analyzed population flows from the Global South to the North, but migration across countries in the Global South has increased exponentially in the past twenty years. According to the 2017 United Nations Migration Report, migrants around the world are most likely to originate from Asia, which sends 41 percent of the world's migrant population (United Nations 2017). India alone sends 16.6 million migrants abroad making it the country with the largest number of emigrants in absolute terms. Furthermore, Sasikumar and Timothy (2015) estimates that around 600,000–800,000 migrants leave India annually, whereas annually the country adds 7–8 million new workers to the labor force. This makes out-migration one of the major sources of new employment for Indian workers.

Due to the role of economic incentives, social networks, and immigration policy regimes, migrants often end up in a small set of countries. Around 60 percent of Asian migrants, for instance, migrate to another Asian or Middle Eastern country, and only a much smaller subset, 16 and 19 percent, migrate to Europe and North America, respectively.¹⁰ Moreover, the 2017 United Nations Migration Report estimates that more than 67 percent of the world's migrant population live in only twenty countries. Out of these twenty, Saudi Arabia has the second largest migrant population, the United Arab Emirates the eighth and Kuwait the twentieth. This has not always been the case. Countries outside of a small group of Western industrialized countries have been registering rapid growth in migrant populations only in the past twenty years (United Nations 2017). GCC countries are amongst the world's most significant migrant destinations today both in terms of volume and growth in migration.

When looking at migration flows between countries, Indian migration to the UAE is second only to the Mexico-US migration corridor (United Nations 2017). However, migration between India and the Gulf is growing much more rapidly. Migration between India and the UAE nearly tripled in the past twenty years, with migration from India to Saudi Arabia doubling within the same time period (United Nations 2017).

It is not only the size of migration within the Global South that warrants scholarly and policy attention, but also its economic impact. India is the largest recipient of overseas migrants' remittances, with US\$78.6 billion received in 2018 (World Bank 2019). For comparison, India received US\$44.37 billion in foreign direct investment. Over half of these remittances are sent from GCC countries by Indian migrants. For low or middle income countries, the size of these remittances often make up a significant portion of the economy. For India's northeastern neighbor, Nepal, remittances equal 28 percent of its gross domestic product (World Bank 2019). Unlike development assistance, remittances flow directly to recipient households making it an important source for consumption and investment.

An important difference between South-South migration and South-North migration is that many Western industrialized countries offer a route to citizenship, although they restrict

¹⁰In absolute terms this means that out of 105 million Asian migrants in 2017, 63 million migrated within Asia, 20 million migrated to Europe, and 17 million migrated to North America.

labor migration flows tightly and often privilege educated and skilled migrants in the case of employment-based immigration (Peters 2017). By contrast, countries in the Global South usually welcome labor migrants of varying skill levels, but make it very difficult for newcomers to obtain citizenship and permanent residency status. This means that most migrants return home after temporary work abroad in the case of South-South migration.

A.2 Recruitment Strategy

We identified and recruited a group of prospective candidates interested in migrating to GCC countries for employment, but lacking the know-how and connections to do so. We relied on a variety of different media to advertise the job training and placement opportunity. We posted advertisements in leading Mizo newspapers as well as on local Mizo television networks (specifically, Zonet and LPS). We sent recruitment materials and application forms to regional offices of local skills training organizations and visited job fairs organized by the government. One of the job fairs took place in a suburb of Aizawl, while the other one took place in a neighboring district's headquarter. Additionally, we placed banners around Aizawl advertising the program. Finally, we reached out to the largest Mizo community organization, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) to advertise on their social media platforms. Advertisement materials were translated to Mizo to reach a wide audience. The advertisement period lasted for two months over the summer of 2018. While we targeted the entire state of Mizoram with our advertising strategy, the majority of applicants came from Aizawl, which was unsurprising given the higher educational attainment and English skills in the capital city.

All our advertising materials asked applicants to be above the age of 18 and have at least Grade 10 standard education. We also required English competency. Once registration for the program took place, our team in Aizawl called back all registered applicants and screened them for their English skills over the phone.

We randomly assigned treatment status using the final list of applicants who passed the English language screening. We matched these applicants into blocked pairs based on age, gender, education level, and English proficiency (judged in the English screening). We then randomized between each pair, assigning one to treatment and the other to control.

A.3 Survey Methodology

We were interested in examining the prospective effects of economic opportunity, as distinct from the effects of realized economic gains as well as the effects of migrating abroad, on our theoretical outcome variables of interest. Therefore, we interviewed subjects (both treatment and control) in three survey rounds: a baseline survey before participants were selected for the treatment, a midline survey after the training program for the treatment group had finished but before individuals secured jobs and began migrating abroad, and an endline survey after migration had occurred.

All surveys were administered by a New Delhi-based survey company (CVoter Inc.), that hired twenty local, Mizo-speaking male and female enumerators to conduct the surveys. This ensured that participants had access to enumerators of the same gender. The surveys were

written in English and then translated into Mizo and back-translated into English by CVoter’s team. We offered subjects the choice of Mizo and English versions of the survey. The topics that formed the basis of our surveys are socio-political topics that are routinely discussed in Indian society and that are identical or similar to questions that are commonly asked in many types of preexisting surveys, including government surveys (notably, the National Family and Health Surveys) carried out across India on a regular basis.

The baseline survey was a face-to-face survey that took place in Aizawl. Survey subjects were invited to the research team’s offices in central Aizawl, where they were asked to fill out a survey by enumerators using handheld tablets. In order to facilitate re-contacting, we collected the phone numbers and addresses of each respondent as well as back-up family member contact information. Shortly after the baseline survey, we contacted our respondents via telephone to ensure that appropriate contact information had been given and to verify respondents’ willingness to participate in future surveys.

After our training sessions were concluded, we fielded our second survey round. The survey was administered as a 30-minute computer assisted telephone interview (CATI) by CVoter enumerators. To boost participation, we offered phone credits worth a month of free calls, text messages, and 1 GB of data to participants for taking the survey.¹¹ The third survey was conducted about two years following the second survey round. This survey was administered as a 45-minute CATI survey fielded by CVoter enumerators. Respondents were offered cash incentives of 1,000 INR that were deposited directly in their bank accounts.

A.4 Training and Recruitment Program

In this section, we provide further details regarding the treatment component related to the training program geared toward employment opportunities abroad. The training program was designed to equip individuals with the skills required to access employment opportunities overseas and overcome logistical barriers to migration. Individuals selected for the program had the opportunity to attend a five-week job training program designed to impart skills that would be useful in hospitality sector employment in GCC countries. Individuals were also informed that upon completion of the program, they would be contacted for employment opportunities by a recruitment firm partnering with the training program.

During the first half of the program, participants attended classroom training sessions administered by a Bangalore-based training firm, Free Climb. This component of the program included modules on restaurant food service, beverage and counter service, and housekeeping. Specifically, the training sessions included instructions on food preparation (e.g., food safety, knife skills, cooking methods, kitchen equipment handling and maintenance), beverage production (e.g., beverage equipment handling, inventory and storage principles, cleaning schedules, safety and accident prevention), counter services (e.g., customer interaction, communication, order-taking principles, cash register control, cleanliness and hygiene), casual dining service (e.g., table set-up, communication, billing standards and cash control, handling

¹¹Depending on the telephone operator, this cost around 169–199 INR (US\$2.36–2.78) per person.

of complaints, food handling principles), and housekeeping (e.g., making beds, cleaning guest rooms and baths, re-stocking guest amenities, handling special requests, managing household equipment), among others. Students attended class five days a week for six hours a day.

Figure A.2: Photos of Training Program and Participants



In the second half of the program, participants conducted on-the-job training in hotels, restaurants, and fast food chains in Aizawl. Overall, this part of the intervention was designed to upgrade candidates' skills, equipping them with basic knowledge required to demonstrate eligibility for hospitality-sector job opportunities in international destinations at the interview stage. Concurrently, instructors also helped participants prepare resumes and practice interview skills. Resume formats and interview preparations were designed with the input of our Mumbai-based recruitment firm to ensure that participants' job application materials were consistent with GCC hiring standards. To prepare participants for integration into the GCC countries, instructors also provided them with information on regulations and resources abroad. The focus on preparing trainees for jobs abroad distinguished the training program from other

skills-training initiatives that were geared toward domestic employment opportunities. Upon completion of the training session, participants were given a course completion certificate.

In the recruitment stage of the intervention, program participants were invited for interviews with several employers. These interviews were organized by our recruitment partner, Vira International. Every program participant was invited to interview, and most were offered multiple opportunities to do so. The vast majority of those who chose to attend interviews received job offers. Following job offers, Vira and our project manager assisted program participants in obtaining passports and medical certifications. The employers were responsible for providing everything else: work visas, airline tickets, and room and board.

A.5 Ethical Considerations

Researchers have both moral and professional obligations to minimize harm and maximize potential benefits for research participants. This section details the steps we took to protect research participants from potential harm in this project. We organize our discussion following the “Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research” of the American Political Science Association.

Principle 1: Political science researchers should respect autonomy, consider the wellbeing of participants and other people affected by their research, and be open about the ethical issues they face and the decisions they make when conducting their research. While international employment offers otherwise unattainable economic opportunities for many immigrants, it potentially poses certain costs and risks to their physical or psychological wellbeing. Labor migrants sometimes struggle to integrate into new political and social environments. Relocating for work, especially overseas, requires navigating a complex, often uncertain set of costs and benefits. International employment can be lucrative but it also requires migration-specific knowledge that is difficult to obtain. This explains why individuals who could gain the most from migration often do not migrate (Bryan, Chowdhury and Mobarak 2014). Specifically, in the context of the GCC, there have been documented instances of migrants facing extortion by recruitment agencies that charge illegal recruitment fees (Sasikumar and Timothy 2015). Furthermore, Gulf countries have also faced criticism for overlooking employer exploitation, such as the withholding of workers’ passports or employers’ reneging on promised salaries (Human Rights Watch 2019). Reports of labor code violations have been concentrated in the construction sector; domestic household workers have also experienced exploitation (Human Rights Watch 2019).

This study was conceptualized and embedded within Research & Empirical Analysis of Labor Migration Program (REALM): “REALM aims to shed light on the processes that sustain unfair migrant labor by improving our empirical understanding of the structures and dynamics implicated in recruitment for temporary work in the Gulf region (and, where relevant, elsewhere).” REALM was founded in order to generate scientific knowledge regarding labor migration as a way to remedy labor recruitment practices in the Persian Gulf that are often private, unsupervised, and opaque, and to help develop and promote fairer migrant labor processes that can lead to better outcomes for migrants and their communities.

Within REALM, the goal of our project was to design and evaluate a blueprint for ethical and safe cross-border labor migration, to be used by governments and NGOs in the future. While designing our project, we paid significant consideration to the ethics of the study. We were mindful of the general obligation of researchers “to anticipate and protect participants from trauma stemming from participation in research” (APSA 2020). We worked closely with our partners to minimize the potential risks and costs that participants might face, to ensure that the benefits of this program flow to participants and their communities, and to protect participants’ informed consent (Humphreys 2015; Teele 2014).

We situated the study in Mizoram because of the demand for international employment opportunities, both from individuals and from the state government, in this region. The Government of Mizoram’s earlier attempts at training and recruitment had drawn large numbers of youth looking for lucrative international work, given the scarcity of employment opportunities within Mizoram. The Government’s Mizoram Youth Commission (MYC), the Chief Minister of Mizoram, and several leading Mizo community organizations sought to create recruitment opportunities for Mizo workers in GCC countries, and called upon researchers to assist in scientifically evaluating processes of skills training and overseas placement that were already underway. By helping connect government and community organizations with reputable partners both inside and outside of India, the program enabled local stakeholders to better screen potential employers, protect citizens during their employment tenures abroad, and facilitate migrant integration. Although we (and the government) could not possibly facilitate supervised employment opportunities for *all* individuals seeking employment abroad, our goal was to help the government and NGOs build an ethical template for future skills development and employment placement programs in the region.

Principle 2: Political science researchers have an individual responsibility to consider the ethics of their research-related activities and cannot outsource ethical reflection to review boards, other institutional bodies, or regulatory agencies. This research project has received IRB approval from Columbia University, Stanford University, Dartmouth College, and the US Naval War College. The project proposal was also reviewed by the grant selection committee of REALM and an advisory committee of five social science faculty unaffiliated with the research team. Apart from the formal IRB reviews, we strove to ensure that our involvement minimized risk to participants and that the benefits of the program flowed directly to participants (Teale 2014; Humphreys 2015). In particular, we worked closely with New York University–Abu Dhabi Office for Compliance & Risk Management to select an employment sector (hospitality) that is relatively reputable compared to sectors where labor violations had previously been reported (e.g. construction), and to choose a recruitment partner with a long and tested history for fair recruitment practices in the hospitality sector in the Persian Gulf. Additionally, we screened specific employers who participated in the job placement component of the study for reputable labor practices.

Principle 3: These principles describe the standards of conduct and reflexive openness that are expected of political science researchers. In some cases,

researchers may have good reasons to deviate from these principles (for example, when the principles conflict with each other). In such cases, researchers should acknowledge and justify deviations in scholarly publications and presentations of their work. There were no significant deviations from the principles. Below we discuss the ethical considerations that guided our study.

Principle 4: When designing and conducting research, political scientists should be aware of power differentials between researcher and researched, and the ways in which such power differentials can affect the voluntariness of consent and the evaluation of risk and benefit. Given the economic opportunities presented by our program and the potential power imbalances between the research team and the individuals in our study, we took two major steps to protect the sanctity of the informed consent process. First, we decided that PIs would not interact directly with any of the research subjects. We made this decision so as to not put pressure on potential research participants to take part in the program. The main point of contact for subjects was our project manager in Aizawl. The project manager is Mizo, of a similar age and background as the subjects. Most of these interactions happened in person or by phone/WhatsApp, in the Mizo language. Similarly, all surveys and interviews were also conducted by Mizos, by either our project manager or local enumerators hired by the survey firm. Subjects were given the option to conduct the surveys and interviews in either Mizo or English.

Second, the recruitment for the program and the three survey waves created distinct decision points for individuals in which they were informed that they could withdraw from the study without any negative impact. In addition, we did not make participation in the training program a condition for attending overseas job interviews. Consequently, many individuals in the treatment group decided against participating in either the training or placement interviews. In addition to the formal consent processes, we specifically trained our project manager to be honest and clear about the potential costs and benefits in any informal interactions with the participants. Our recruitment partner also conducted extensive information sessions with subjects, in which they were provided information about various aspects related to the risks and benefits of working abroad and in the Persian Gulf in particular. Finally, information sessions about the program conducted by the Mizoram Youth Commission and local community organizations were also designed to provide even-handed information about the risks and opportunities associated with pursuing employment abroad.

Principle 5: Political science researchers should generally seek informed consent from individuals who are directly engaged by the research process, especially if research involves more than minimal risk of harm or if it is plausible to expect that engaged individuals would withhold consent if consent were sought. Subjects were required to provide informed consent prior to participating in the study and had the right to withdraw from the project at any point. Additionally, participants had distinct decision points (from participating in surveys and attending the training program, to sitting for placement interviews and deciding to accept employment contracts) where they were able to reaffirm or withdraw consent. For example, participants were asked to provide informed consent at each

survey wave: baseline, midline, and endline. The informed consent process is central to the study design (Humphreys 2015; APSA 2020): the participants themselves were the parties most affected by the intervention, and they had clearly marked opportunities throughout the process in which to provide and withdraw consent.

Principle 6: Political science researchers should carefully consider any use of deception and the ways in which deception can conflict with participant autonomy. No deception was used in this study.

Principle 7: Political science researchers should consider the harms associated with their research. One of the major obstacles to fair labor migration is the high costs of migration, often due to illegal recruitment fees (Sasikumar and Timothy 2015). Prospective migrants may also be subject to the possibility of exploitation overseas. We strived to minimize both of these costs and risks for participants. We designed our skills training and placement program for employment within the hospitality sector, which is relatively reputable, remunerative, and desirable compared to sectors where labor violations had previously been reported (e.g., construction or household work). We worked closely with New York University–Abu Dhabi Office for Compliance & Risk Management to carefully vet project partners and employers. We scrutinized our recruitment partner closely and worked alongside them to screen and assess specific employers that entered the placement program for fair recruitment practices, working conditions, and migrant worker treatment. Employers agreed to charge no recruitment fees, sponsor and guide prospective employees through the work visa authorization process for the receiving country, cover expenses for round-trip flights, visas, and other immigration costs, help recruited workers relocate and find housing abroad, provide competitive salaries and benefits, and enter into labor contracts that permitted workers to switch employers or leave their jobs at any time. All labor contracts were registered with governmental agencies in both home and host countries. To minimize participants' financial obligations, training (including tuition, course materials, and on-the-job training) was provided free of charge. While not all participants may eventually obtain employment in the GCC, their training was deemed broadly useful for jobs in the hospitality sector.

Cognizant of potential power differentials between employees and employers, we strove to empower participants by informing them of their rights and resources in destination countries. The GCC states have passed several decrees in recent years that require employers to cover recruitment expenses (including visas and costs of travel), provide competitive salaries and benefits, and furnish housing and health fees for foreign workers. New reforms allow workers to leave their jobs at any time (subject to contractual obligations) and make it easier for workers to switch employers. Under the new policies in the U.A.E., for instance, prospective migrants sign a standard employment offer in their home country that is registered at the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) before a work permit is issued. Once the worker arrives in the country, the agreement becomes registered as the contract and no changes are allowed unless the employer extends further benefits to the worker. Our project provided subjects with detailed information regarding the locations and helpline numbers of MoHRE offices. Additionally, the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India

has established Indian Workers Resource Centres in GCC countries that provide helplines and conduct awareness classes and counseling programs on legal, financial, and social issues. Our project ensured that subjects were aware of these resources and had access to them. In addition, in order to assist with integration and reintegration, our project provided participants with access to comprehensive information regarding legal and counseling services both in the GCC states and in Mizoram. They were made aware of the option of availing counseling services free of cost (with the cost of these services covered by the project).

We took a number of steps to guarantee that participants were provided extensive information regarding the potential risks associated with international employment before agreeing to participate in the training and recruitment program. Individuals attended information sessions detailing opportunities and challenges associated with overseas employment. During these presentations, subjects were informed about the potential risks associated with the process of international employment, including the risk of labor law violations by employers. Additionally, we designed the project such that our field research team would follow up regularly with all participants who undertook employment abroad to check on their wellbeing and safety.

Principle 8: Political science researchers should anticipate and protect individual participants from trauma stemming from participation in research. Under Principles 1 and 7, we discussed the steps taken to protect participants from harms stemming from this research project. In addition to providing migrants with information on risks, rights, and resources for working in the GCC, we have followed up with subjects regularly outside of the three survey waves.

We wished to ensure that those who have received job offers abroad, in particular, did not face harm from employment practices in the GCC. To address this possibility, our local research manager contacted research subjects regularly to make sure that they received help from our recruitment partner in obtaining necessary documents and information prior to migration, that after arrival to the host country employers did not violate their rights, and that during the Covid-19 pandemic they had the resources to return home or to stay in the GCC, according to their wishes. After the endline survey, we also conducted long-form, semi-structured interviews with individual subjects who had migrated abroad in order to better understand the migration experience and to provide access to counselling, if needed. Within these interviews, we specifically asked respondents if they had experienced any discrimination in the workplace and none of the respondents indicated any such experience.

Principle 9: Political science researchers should generally keep the identities of research participants confidential; when circumstances require, researchers should adopt the higher standard of ensuring anonymity. We took steps to keep our participants' identities confidential in this project. Enumerators collected the names and contact information of respondents, but that information was immediately encrypted and uploaded to a secure central server. Only the project investigators and the survey team's project manager were able to access the file linking the encrypted identifying information to the anonymous numerical ID associated with each respondent. In other words, anyone else

working on the survey (e.g., enumerators, other employees of the survey firm, etc.), was only able to see a number ID associated with the survey responses. In any reproduction material, we will only make the numerical IDs of respondents available, stripped of any identifying information.

Principle 10: Political science researchers conducting studies on political processes should consider the broader social impacts of the research process as well as the impact on the experience of individuals directly engaged by the research. In general, political science researchers should not compromise the integrity of political processes for research purposes without the consent of individuals that are directly engaged by the research process. Besides the research subjects, one other group of individuals directly impacted by our study was the subjects' family members. Therefore, it was important that families were aware of the process, costs, and benefits of the program. During the registration process, the project manager encouraged subjects to take information home to their families and discuss the opportunity before signing up. We also held public information sessions open to the community, particularly to interested individuals and their families. At these sessions, the project manager, the head of our local NGO training partner, and one of our co-PIs answered any questions, attempting to be as honest as possible about the purpose, costs, and benefits of the program. Additionally, our study was conducted in conjunction with the Government of Mizoram's Mizoram Youth Commission, with the permission of the Chief Minister of Mizoram, and prominent local community organizations such as the MZP. Receiving government and community buy-in for the study helped ensure that the broader social impacts of the research were understood by relevant stakeholders apart from the research subjects themselves. Note that our study was designed to not interfere with nor compromise the integrity of political processes either in the home country or in any of the host countries.

Principle 11: Political science researchers should be aware of relevant laws and regulations governing their research related activities. Given that India does not have laws about non-clinical human subjects research, the guidelines of the Indian Council of Medical Research to have ethical review boards examine research design were followed by obtaining IRB approval from the home institutions of all members of the research team. In addition, this research project has also complied with all applicable Indian and GCC laws about labor migration by making sure with our recruitment partner that all labor contracts were registered at the appropriate agencies prior to migration. Overall, the program was designed to significantly improve and safeguard recruitment and employment processes for prospective migrants as compared to individuals who decided to migrate on their own accord or through unsupervised private channels. It was anticipated that future government initiatives in the region would be able to benefit from the knowledge generated and the connections created by the program.

A principal reason for working with partners was to ensure that our project followed relevant laws and regulations, both in Mizoram and in the Gulf Region. In Mizoram, we partnered with a state government office (Mizoram Youth Commission) and a local

non-governmental organization (SJnDI), who helped us navigate local laws and regulations. In the Gulf Region, our recruitment partner assisted our research subjects in navigating immigration laws and provided legal recourse for any workplace issues. Subjects were also provided a list of counseling services in both Mizoram and the GCC, and were given the option of availing these services with the cost covered by the program budget.

Principle 12: The responsibility to promote ethical research goes beyond the individual researcher or research team. Throughout the research design and implementation phase, we workshopped the research design and solicited feedback on research ethics with scholars in several social scientific scholarly venues, including conferences on migration, gender, and experimental research (notably Evidence in Governance and Politics).

A.6 Cost-Benefit Comparison for Intervention

Lastly, we conducted a rough estimate of the costs and benefits of our training and recruitment program. This is valuable for two reasons. First, it acts as an impact evaluation for the program as an economic development intervention. Second, it helps inform the discussion of ethical considerations to weigh the benefits for candidates against the costs for researchers.

For costs, we estimated all major costs of conducting the training and recruitment program in 2018 and 2019. This did not include, for example, the costs of the surveys and the time of the research team. It did, however, include travel costs for researchers and for the training program team, as well as all costs for training and placement.

For benefits, we used the endline survey's estimates of individuals' monthly wages at endline. On average, individuals in the treatment group had monthly wages approximately 5,650 INR higher than those in the control group, or 5,530 INR when controlling for pre-treatment covariates. Using the more conservative estimate, we estimated the annual increase in candidates' wages.

Overall, we estimate that the program generated nearly 900 USD per person per year in benefits (despite just 23% of the treatment group migrating) against just over 200 USD per person in costs. Though much of this financial benefit accrued to the migrants themselves, beneficiaries of the program sent significant remittances home to family. We estimate that treatment individuals sent home between 200 and 500 USD more per year than their counterparts in the control group, depending on which measures are used. Even using the more conservative estimates, this suggests that the program paid yearly dividends to the families of treatment individuals that approximately matched the total cost of the program. As an economic development program, the intervention was extremely cost-effective.

Table A.1: Costs and Benefits of the Program

<u>Costs of Intervention</u>	
Training Program (USD)	22,200
Location Rental for Training (USD)	4,000
Advertising & Registration Costs (USD)	1,000
Visa & Certification Assistance for Candidates (USD)	1,700
One Year of Salary for Program Manager (USD)	8,000
Travel Costs for Research Team (USD)	6,000
Total Cost (USD)	42,900
Cost Per Person (USD)	220
<u>Benefits to Candidates (Per Year)</u>	
Monthly Wages Increase Per Person (INR)	5,530
Yearly Wages Increase Per Person (USD)	885
<u>Benefits to Families (Per Year)</u>	
Monthly Remittances Per Person, Self-Reported (INR)	3,150
Monthly Remittances Per Household, Family-Reported (INR)	1,340
Yearly Remittances Per Person (USD)	200-475

B Balance and Attrition

B.1 Balance Table

The following regressions attempt to predict treatment status by pre-treatment covariates, among each of the three sample stages (pre-treatment, post-treatment, and two years later). The covariates include both demographic characteristics and pre-treatment measures of key outcome variables. We find little evidence of significant differences between treatment and control group in any of the three survey stages, even after attrition. In fact, the treatment groups were remarkably balanced. Not one of the ten pre-treatment covariates predicted treatment status at any stage, and the omnibus F-test (p-values at the bottom) shows that even the combination of all ten variables provides no predictive value on treatment group at any stage. This balance is partly because the subjects were grouped into demographically similar pairs for treatment assignment.

Table B.2: Balance Test at Three Survey Stages

	<i>Dependent variable: Treatment</i>		
	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Age	−0.008 (0.009)	−0.005 (0.011)	−0.006 (0.011)
Male	0.005 (0.053)	0.016 (0.062)	−0.041 (0.067)
Education	0.028 (0.033)	0.008 (0.038)	0.060 (0.041)
Employed	0.035 (0.109)	−0.116 (0.128)	−0.116 (0.145)
Scheduled Tribe	−0.044 (0.123)	−0.057 (0.162)	−0.095 (0.166)
Married	0.131 (0.202)	0.147 (0.310)	0.266 (0.314)
English Ability	0.002 (0.026)	−0.015 (0.030)	−0.006 (0.032)
Economic Status	−0.025 (0.040)	0.031 (0.050)	0.051 (0.052)
Economic Confidence	−0.013 (0.039)	0.023 (0.045)	0.008 (0.052)
Economic Attitudes	−0.016 (0.025)	−0.018 (0.029)	0.017 (0.030)
Observations	384	286	244
F-Stat P-Value	.990	.993	.912
F-Stat P-Value (RI)	.944	.980	.851

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

B.2 Tests for Attrition Bias

In addition to the balance tests before and after treatment (and attrition), we also conducted two tests for attrition bias in the midline and endline surveys.

First, we tested whether attrition was greatly affected by treatment assignment itself – i.e. whether the differences in response rates between the treatment and control groups are larger than what might be expected based purely on chance. There is no significant evidence that the treatment affected response rates. The RI-based test shows that even if the treatment had no effect on attrition in any individual case, the randomization procedure would have resulted in

larger differences between the two groups in almost 30% of cases for the endline and 40% of cases for the midline.

Table B.3: Response Rates: Treatment vs. Control Group

	<i>Midline</i>	<i>Endline</i>
Response Rate: Treatment Group	76.0 %	65.8%
Response Rate: Control Group	71.9 %	60.7%
Difference in Response Rate	4.1 %	5.1%
P-Value: Two-Sample T-Test	.358	.296
P-Value: RI-based Test	.392	.268

We also tested whether attrition rates for the midline or endline surveys were affected by any pre-treatment covariates. For each survey, we ran three regressions predicting survey response based on pre-treatment covariates. The first column predicts response rates based on the seven key demographic covariates. The second column adds in the pre-treatment measures of the key outcome variables: economic status, economic confidence, and economic policy attitudes. Overall, these variables provide no additional predictive value, as shown by the F-tests at the bottom of the tables, whose p-values range roughly from .2 to .5.

The third column of each table adds in interaction terms to test whether each of these covariates differentially affected attrition in treatment and control groups. On these models, there was no evidence overall that pre-treatment characteristics systematically predicted attrition in the treatment or control group. While there are a few significant effects on response rate, these are to be expected because so many explanatory variables are being tested. Omnibus F-tests show that these models also do not provide any predictive value beyond what would be expected from randomly-generated covariates.

Table B.4: Predictors of Response Rate: Midline

	<i>Dependent variable: Response</i>		
Age	-0.010 (0.008)	-0.010 (0.008)	-0.014 (0.010)
Education	0.0001 (0.028)	0.004 (0.028)	0.030 (0.038)
Scheduled Tribe	0.128 (0.105)	0.131 (0.106)	0.099 (0.164)
Employed	-0.024 (0.065)	0.031 (0.094)	0.250* (0.136)
Married	-0.236 (0.172)	-0.208 (0.175)	-0.171 (0.295)
Male	-0.046 (0.045)	-0.039 (0.046)	-0.071 (0.065)
English Ability	0.006 (0.022)	0.012 (0.022)	0.033 (0.031)
Economic Status		-0.035 (0.035)	-0.104** (0.047)
Economic Confidence		-0.021 (0.034)	-0.067 (0.047)
Economic Attitudes		-0.004 (0.022)	-0.004 (0.030)
Treatment			-0.391 (0.550)
Treat x Age			0.010 (0.016)
Treat x Education			-0.061 (0.057)
Treat x ST			0.055 (0.221)
Treat x Employed			-0.437** (0.190)
Treat x Married			-0.136 (0.373)
Treat x Male			0.046 (0.093)
Treat x English			-0.043 (0.045)
Treat x Econ. Status			0.148** (0.071)
Treat x Econ. Confidence			0.095 (0.069)
Treat x Econ. Attitudes	18		0.0002 (0.043)
Observations	389	384	384
F-Stat P-Value	.252	.399	.417

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.5: Predictors of Response Rate: Endline

	<i>Dependent variable: Response</i>		
Age	0.001 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.011)
Education	0.018 (0.031)	0.014 (0.031)	-0.018 (0.042)
Scheduled Tribe	0.123 (0.116)	0.108 (0.117)	0.154 (0.180)
Employed	-0.098 (0.072)	-0.110 (0.104)	0.042 (0.150)
Married	-0.137 (0.190)	-0.140 (0.193)	-0.072 (0.324)
Male	-0.031 (0.050)	-0.042 (0.051)	0.014 (0.072)
English Ability	0.043* (0.024)	0.036 (0.024)	0.040 (0.034)
Economic Status		0.008 (0.039)	-0.069 (0.052)
Economic Confidence		0.047 (0.038)	0.024 (0.052)
Economic Attitudes		-0.004 (0.024)	-0.048 (0.032)
Treatment			-0.714 (0.604)
Treat x Age			0.011 (0.017)
Treat x Education			0.066 (0.062)
Treat x ST			-0.064 (0.242)
Treat x Employed			-0.317 (0.209)
Treat x Married			-0.093 (0.410)
Treat x Male			-0.135 (0.102)
Treat x English			-0.014 (0.049)
Treat x Econ. Status			0.175** (0.078)
Treat x Econ. Confidence			0.061 (0.075)
Treat x Econ. Attitudes	19		0.087* (0.048)
Observations	389	384	384
F-Stat P-Value	.314	.461	.220

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

C Key Outcome Questions

Table C.6: Questions: Economic Position

Question	Options
Are you currently employed?	Yes No
[If employed] What are your currently monthly wages?	Amount (in INR)
What category best describes your total monthly household income?	Less than Rs. 5,000 Rs. 5,001 - Rs. 10,000 Rs. 10,001 - Rs. 20,000 Rs. 20,001 - Rs. 30,000 Rs. 30,001 - Rs. 40,000 Rs. 40,001 - Rs. 50,000 Rs. 50,001 - Rs. 100,000 Rs. 100,001 and above
Please indicate the number of the following items in your home: Car Motorbike Refrigerator Mobile phone with internet connection Computer Washing Machine	[Number for each] [For analysis, we reduced this to a standardized index of material possessions.]

Table C.7: Questions: Family Planning

Question	Options
[If not married] At what age do you plan to marry?	[Number]
[If no children] At what age do you plan to have children?	[Number]

Table C.8: Questions: Confidence in Economic Prospects

Question	Options
Do you think your next job will pay better or worse than the average salary in Mizoram?	Much better Somewhat better About the same Somewhat worse Much worse
In the next year, do you think your own and your family's economic situation will be better or worse?	Much better Somewhat better About the same Somewhat worse Much worse
When you are the age your parents are now, do you think you will be better off or worse off financially than them?	Much better off Somewhat better off About the same Somewhat worse off Much worse off
Do you agree or disagree that in the future you will be able to advance professionally, get promoted, and earn higher incomes?	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Table C.9: Questions: Economy Policy Preferences

Question	Options
In general, do you think that it is possible for someone who is born poor to become rich by working hard?	It is almost impossible It is somewhat possible It is very possible
Do you agree or disagree: Should the government reduce income differences between the rich and the poor?	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Do you agree or disagree: The government should lower taxes for ordinary people, even if it means that it will have less funding for public services to help the poor in Mizoram.	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

D Main Results

All of our major hypotheses posit an effect of treatment assignment (τ) on some attitude or behavior (y). For each outcome, we also have a measure of the same outcome (or a similar outcome) from the baseline survey (X). The results, then are estimated using OLS with the following model:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \tau_i + \alpha X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Due to the limited number of observations, small size of blocks, and the possibility of attrition, we do not use block (pair) fixed effects. The main p-values given in the paper are calculated using randomization inference with this model, but here we also include the p-values derived from OLS standard errors. We also include the RI-based p-values for the difference-in-means between the treatment and control group.

Table D.10: Full Results: Migration

	Diff-in-Means			OLS		<i>N</i>	
	<i>Treat</i>	<i>Ctrl</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>		<i>P(OLS)</i>
Moved Overseas	.23	.03	.000	+ .20	.000	.000	248
Training Program	.58	.43	.011	+ .14	.009	.012	245
Job Offer	.34	.08	.000	+ .26	.000	.000	231
Moved in India	.13	.32	.000	- .19	.000	.000	247

Figure D.3: Location of Subjects over Time

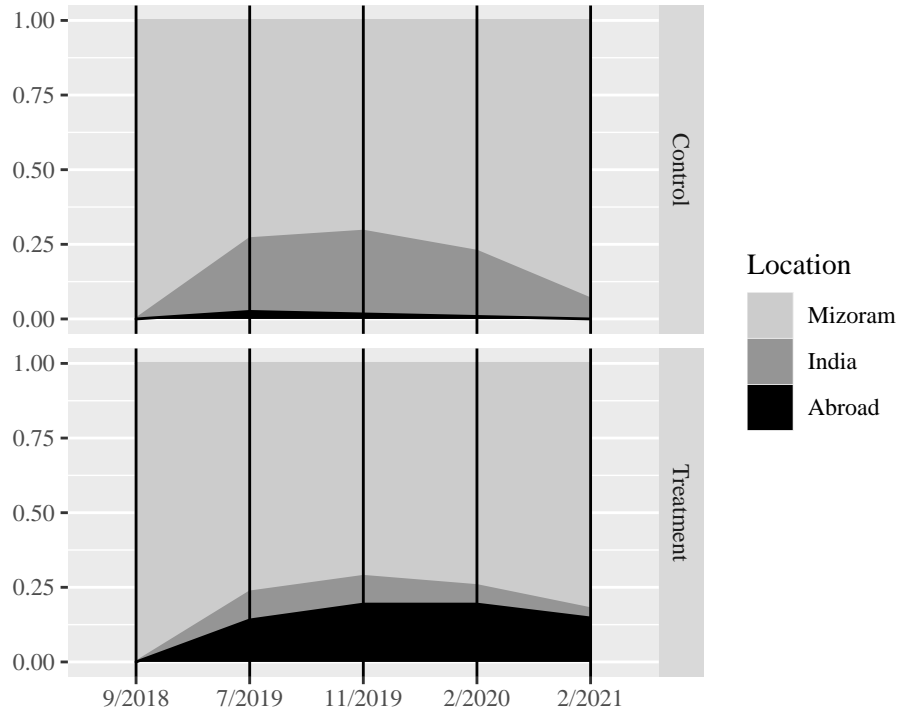


Table D.11: Barriers in the Migration Process for Treatment and Control Subjects

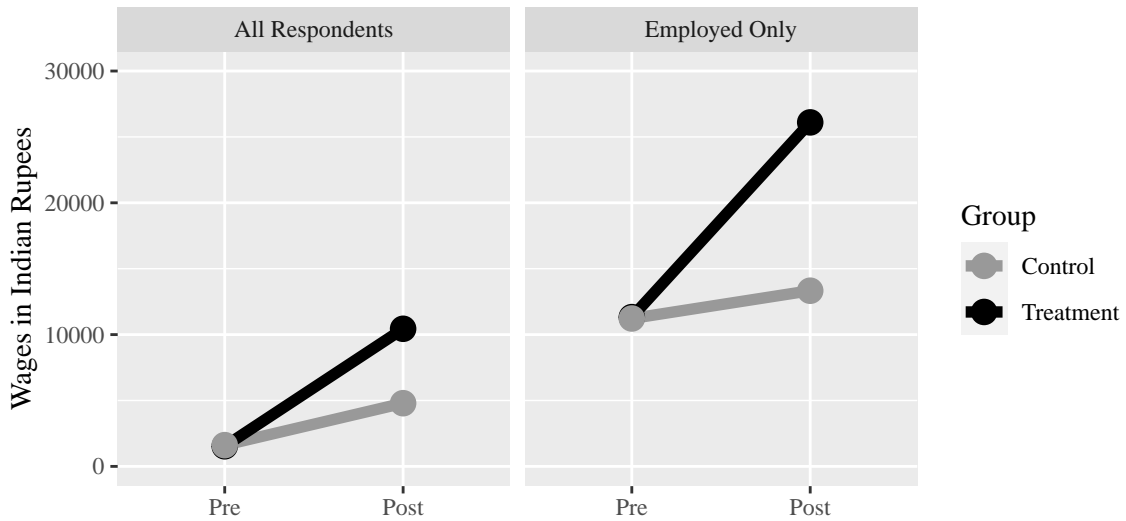
	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Control</i>
Did not apply for a job abroad	48	64
Applied, but did not receive an offer	18	27
Received an offer, but did not accept	7	4
Accepted a job, but did not receive a visa	2	3
Received a visa, but did not move	1	0
Moved abroad	23	2

Percentage of each group that stopped at a certain step of moving abroad.

Table D.12: Results: Efforts to Migrate

Index	Diff-in-Means			OLS			N
	<i>Treat</i>	<i>Ctrl</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>P(OLS)</i>	
Index	.742	—	.000	+ .746	.000	.000	290
Obtained Passport	.80	.40	.000	+ .40	.000	.000	289
Researched Labor Laws (1-3)	1.91	1.70	.004	+ .21	.004	.004	288
Researched Employers (1-3)	1.70	1.54	.002	+ .17	.002	.002	287

Figure D.4: Monthly Wages over Time



Endline wages in the treatment group translate to approximately 140 USD/month for all respondents and 350 USD/month for employed respondents.

Table D.13: Full Results: Economic Standing

	Diff-in-Means			OLS			N
	<i>Treat</i>	<i>Ctrl</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>P(OLS)</i>	
Economic Index	.584	—	.000	+ .558	.000	.000	248
Employed	.43	.39	.233	+ .05	.217	.222	246
Family Income	5.10	4.45	.003	+ .61	.004	.003	238
Material Goods Index	.386	—	.002	+ .349	.001	.001	248
Wages	10,440	4,790	.001	+ 5,530	.001	.001	234

Table D.14: Full Results: Family Planning

	Diff-in-Means			OLS			<i>N</i>
	<i>Treat</i>	<i>Ctrl</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>P(OLS)</i>	
Endline: Life Plans Index	.635	—	.000	+ .649	.000	.000	234
Marriage Age	31.3	29.7	.000	+ 1.8	.000	.000	223
Childbearing Age	32.4	30.7	.000	+ 1.7	.000	.000	233
Midline: Life Plans Index	.118	—	.188	+ .122	.169	.171	267
Marriage Age	30.5	30.3	.283	+ 0.3	.192	.191	250
Childbearing Age	31.5	31.1	.131	+ 0.4	.142	.139	251

Table D.15: Full Results: Economic Confidence

	Diff-in-Means			OLS			<i>N</i>
	<i>Treat</i>	<i>Ctrl</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>P(OLS)</i>	
Midline: Confidence Index	.226	—	.027	+ .220	.027	.022	290
Will Advance Professionally	4.66	4.51	.016	+ .14	.016	.014	289
Next Job Will Pay Well	4.60	4.47	.040	+ .13	.040	.041	290
Family Situation Will Improve	4.49	4.48	.430	+ .02	.409	.409	289
Someday Better off than parents	4.47	4.37	.094	+ .09	.109	.099	290
Endline: Confidence Index	.198	—	.090	+ .197	.090	.078	243
Will Advance Professionally	4.33	4.20	.121	+ .12	.118	.128	243
Next Job Will Pay Well	3.74	3.46	.002	+ .28	.002	.001	243
Family Situation Will Improve	3.88	3.79	.151	+ .10	.128	.110	243
Someday Better off than Parents	3.94	4.03	.844	− .09	.859	.871	243

Table D.16: Full Results: Economic Policy Preferences

	Diff-in-Means			OLS			<i>N</i>
	<i>Treat</i>	<i>Ctrl</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>ATE</i>	<i>P(RI)</i>	<i>P(OLS)</i>	
Endline: Policy Index	.344	—	.006	+ .350	.005	.007	248
Govt Should Lower Taxes	3.91	3.78	.168	+ .13	.163	.174	246
Govt Shouldn't Reduce Inequality	2.04	1.81	.061	+ .23	.062	.059	248
Poor Can Advance	2.56	2.46	.090	+ .10	.079	.085	247
Midline: Policy Index	.206	—	.028	+ .208	.029	.036	288
Govt Should Lower Taxes	4.00	3.89	.145	+ .12	.139	.141	288
Govt Shouldn't Reduce Inequality	2.15	2.06	.267	+ .09	.266	.270	288
Poor Can Advance	2.70	2.62	.080	+ .08	.086	.086	288

E Exploratory Tests for Mechanisms

E.1 Job Training

One question regarding our results is whether our treatment effects are due to unrelated aspects of the training program itself (e.g., such as social interactions with other participants) rather than subjects' improved economic prospects. As stated in the paper, our job training program does not appear to be particularly unusual in the local context. More than one-third of our control group attended a similar training program offered by an alternate training firm, and many more had attended similar programs in the past. To probe this question further, we tested whether job training attendance was predictive of our key outcomes in two ways: (1) within the control group, and (2) within the treatment group, controlling for actually migrating. These tests are not causally-identified, but we control for our standard battery of pre-treatment demographics (age, gender, employment status, marriage status, education level, and scheduled tribe status) and the pre-treatment measure of each outcome variable. We do not see any evidence that training has any significant effect on the primary outcomes. These tests were not pre-registered, and we view them as exploratory and suggestive non-experimental investigations.

Table E.17: Effect of Job Training on Key Outcomes (Control Group)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Econ. Status	Life Planning	Confidence	Redist. Attitudes
Attended Training	0.003 (0.173)	0.028 (0.178)	0.116 (0.187)	0.198 (0.187)
Pre-Econ. Status	0.582*** (0.128)			
Pre-Life Planning		0.488*** (0.116)		
Pre-Confidence			-0.032 (0.141)	
Pre-Attitudes				0.040 (0.082)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	118	103	116	117

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Pre-treatment controls: age, gender, employment status, marriage status, education level, and scheduled tribe status.

Table E.18: Effect of Job Training on Key Outcomes (Treatment Group)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Econ. Status	Life Planning	Confidence	Redist. Attitudes
Attended Training	0.038 (0.246)	0.015 (0.271)	0.063 (0.221)	-0.301 (0.238)
Migrated	1.404*** (0.293)	0.280 (0.332)	0.448* (0.259)	0.246 (0.284)
Pre-Econ. Status	0.410* (0.208)			
Pre-Life Planning		0.847*** (0.171)		
Pre-Confidence			0.360** (0.171)	
Pre-Attitudes				0.004 (0.109)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	127	118	122	126

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Pre-treatment controls: age, gender, employment status, marriage status, education level, and scheduled tribe status.

F Multiple Comparisons Analysis

As specified in the pre-analysis plan, we also provide a Benjamini-Hochberg false discovery rate analysis for the main pre-registered hypotheses—besides the primary hypothesis related to international migration, which was listed separately. The below analysis uses a conservative false discovery rate of $Q < .05$. The analysis largely confirms the main results of the paper. The correction confirms that the main featured hypotheses at the endline reported in the manuscript all fall below the threshold for false discovery rate. The treatment effect on future confidence at the endline meets neither the $p < .05$ threshold nor the adjusted B-H threshold, which is somewhat unsurprising given that the treatment group had already experienced significant economic gains (unlike at the midline survey, where the effect passed both thresholds). The PAP also included one other hypothesis which we did not include in the paper: that the treatment group would be more likely to say that they were satisfied with their economic situation compared to a year before. We did not include this hypothesis because the wording was accidentally awkward given that the treatment group would have already realized substantial economic gains a year before the endline survey. The treatment group did express more current economic satisfaction, but the difference was relatively small and statistically insignificant.

Table F.19: Benjamini-Hochberg Correction

	<i>P-Value</i>	<i>Target</i>
(H2): Material Economic Status	.000	.01
(H2c): Marriage & Family Decisions	.001	.02
(H2d): Views on Redistribution	.005	.03
(H2b): Future Economic Confidence	.090	.04
(H2a): Current Economic Satisfaction	.172	.05

Pre-analysis plan hypothesis numbers in parentheses.

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