



Information Needs of Potential Migrants and Returnees in Bangladesh

Migrant Resource Centres

Final Report

Implemented by
Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) &
Pathways Consulting Services Ltd. (PCSL)

Funded by the European Union



Implemented by



Acknowledgements

This report is the result of a needs assessment exercise conducted by Centre for Women and Children Studies for ICMPD's Migrant Resource Centre in 2020 and funded by the European Union.

The report is based on desk research, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and interviews among potential, intending and returning migrants in selected districts of Bangladesh.

The report was authored by CWCS and edited by ICMPD. CWCS and ICMPD would like to thank stakeholders in Bangladesh for their contributions and support in producing this report.

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
Gonzagagasse 1
A-1010 Vienna
www.icmpd.org

International Centre for Migration Policy Development
Vienna, Austria

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission of the copyright owners.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors at Dynamic Consulting Services (CWCS), and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICMPD, the Government of Bangladesh or the European Union.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	7
2. Introduction	10
3. Methodology	12
3.1 Desk review	12
3.2 Primary data gathering	12
3.2.1 Key informant interviews (KIIs)	13
3.2.2 Focus group discussions (FGDs)	13
3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews	14
3.4 Sample	14
3.4.1 Districts covered	14
3.4.2 Sampling of migrants	15
3.5 Limitations	18
4. Background information	19
4.1 Destinations of Bangladeshi migrant workers	20
4.2 Source districts of migration	22
4.3 Irregular migration	23
4.3.1 Smuggling of migrants and trafficking	24
4.3.2 Recruitment process through formal and informal agents	25
4.4 Challenges of migration	25
4.4.1 Gender and migration	26
4.4.2 COVID-19 impact on migration	27
4.5 Needs of migrants	28
4.6 Legal framework and institutional arrangements governing migration in Bangladesh	30
5. Migrant needs: Interviews with migrants	34
5.1 Qualitative findings of potential and outgoing migrants	34
5.1.1 Migration process	34
5.1.2 Information needs of potential migrants	40
5.1.3 Information sources	42
5.1.4 Information and services expected from Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)	43
5.2 Qualitative findings of returnees	45
5.2.1 Migration process	45
5.2.2 Information needs of returnees	53
5.2.3 Information sources	54

5.2.4 Information and services expected from Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)	55
5.2.5 Suggestions for potential migrants	57
6. Migrants needs: Interviews with other stakeholders	58
6.1 Profile of migrants	58
6.1.1 Drivers of migration	60
6.1.2 Choice of destination country	61
6.2 Challenges of migrants	61
6.3 Information needs of migrants	64
6.3.1 Information needs of potential migrants	64
6.3.2 Information needs on risks and dangers of exploitation abroad	67
6.3.3 Information needs of returnees	68
6.3.4 Information sources and training	70
6.4 Information sources and awareness raising	71
6.4.1 National and local government stakeholders	71
6.4.2 Other Stakeholders	73
6.5 MRCs and outreach to migrants	76
6.5.1 National and local government stakeholders	76
6.5.2 Other stakeholders	77
7. Conclusions and recommendations	79
7.1 Conclusions	79
7.2 Recommendations	80
Bibliography	83
Annex	87
Methodological Annex	90
A. Potential migrant interviews	90
B. Returnee Migrant interviews	91
C. FGDs with potential migrants, returnee migrants and their families	92
D. FGDs with CBOs	92
E. KIs with stakeholders	93

Abbreviations

BAIRA	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BMET	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited
CBO	Community Based Organization
CWCS	Centre for Women and Children Studies
DEMO	District Employment and Manpower Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IO	International Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OKUP	Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program
PKB	Probashi Kallyan Bank
TTC	Technical Training Centre
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN Women	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WEWB	Wage Earners' Welfare Board
WEWF	Wage Earners' Welfare Fund

Definitions

Community Based Organization (CBO)	CBOs are non-profit groups that work at a local level to improve life for people in the community. The focus is to build equality across society in all streams - health care, environment, quality of education, access to technology, access to spaces and information for the disabled, to name but a few. NGOs on the other hand, are independent of government involvement founded by citizens, which include clubs and associations that provide services to their members and others.
Dalal	Dalals are migration brokers and/or intermediaries. They can also be family members, neighbours and/or friends. Dalals operate informally, sometimes exploiting migrants. While dalals can be sub-agents (of the formal recruitment agencies that are located in Dhaka), for the purposes of this report, sub-agents are mentioned in addition to dalals.
Intending migrant	Any person who intends to move permanently or temporarily outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national.
Kafeel	A kafeel is “a citizen of the respective Gulf State who manages the migrants' visa process, workplace recruitment as well as obtains the migrant workers' passports during the contract period.”
Migrant worker / Labour migrant Outgoing migrant	“A person who is to be engaged, is engaged, or had been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national”. For the purposes of this study, an outgoing migrant is any person who is ready to go abroad for employment, having completed the legal formalities to migrate, such as pre-departure training, health check-up, obtaining a passport with visa.
Potential migrant	For the purposes of this study, a potential migrant is any person who is in the pre-decision stage planning to leave the country in any manner (regular or irregular) and for any purpose, labour, studies or family reunification within the next 2 years (the longer time period has been decided on due to the COVID-19 pandemic).
Returning migrant / Returnee	Any person who either resided and/or worked (regularly or irregularly) abroad for at least 6 months, returned to Bangladesh within the last 3 years. [This definition has been adapted for this study]
Union Parishad	A Union Parishad consists of a chairman and twelve members including three members exclusively reserved for women. There are nine wards of each union represented by ward members. Usually one village is designated as a ward.

1. Executive Summary

This study aims to understand the information needs of Bangladeshi migrants on migration, as well as the tools and means on how rural and urban communities could be better reached through information campaigns. It provides the basis for community needs-driven strategic interventions and activities of the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs). This information needs assessment also serves as a baseline to enable the effective measurement of the changes, outcomes and long-term impacts of such interventions and activities.

The MRCs are information centres placed within Bangladesh's Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) in Dhaka and Cumilla. They provide potential, outgoing and returnee migrants with information on a broad range of migration-related challenges and opportunities, including safe and legal migration, work and living conditions abroad, rights and obligations of migrants, risks and dangers of irregular migration and the reintegration of returning migrants.

For this study, data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from union or local level potential, outgoing and returnee migrants, Community Based Organizations (CBOs),⁴ District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMOs), Technical Training Centres (TTCs) and local government representatives. In addition, at Dhaka, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders such as government agencies, International Organizations (IOs), International Non-Government Organization (INGOs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) and media entities. Secondary data were collected through a desk review of relevant information from various sources, including study reports, legal and policy papers and newspaper clippings.

The research revealed that most of the potential migrants are from areas that are poverty stricken, affected by natural disasters, living in the coastal belts and areas that have traditionally high migration. The highest number of potential migrants are between the ages of 20 and 30. The major destination countries of Bangladeshi migrants are Middle Eastern countries followed by Asian and European countries. The destination countries of female migrants were Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries. Those who acquired some level of education preferred Europe and North America.

Based on the data collected for the study, it was found that male potential migrants identified financial benefits such as higher income, more savings and job opportunities, in addition to education and fulfilling the desire to go abroad as the most important drivers of migration for them. The drivers for female potential migrants were poor financial conditions due to lack of employment, and social problems such as divorce, separation and domestic violence. Women aspired to go abroad to become self-reliant, independent and earn a decent living for their family back home.

4. CBOs are nonprofit groups that work at a local level to improve life for people in the community. The focus is to build equality across society in all streams - health care, environment, quality of education, access to technology, access to spaces and information for the disabled, to name but a few. NGOs on the other hand, are independent of government involvement founded by citizens, which include clubs and associations that provide services to their members and others.

Migrants face challenges before departure, after going to the destination country and after returning to Bangladesh. Migrants usually go abroad unskilled and develop their skills by working in the destination countries. Based on interviews with migrants, it was found that potential migrants spend large amounts of money on migration, which forces them to borrow, or sell family assets. Moreover, they often do not find the assured availability of jobs after their arrival at the destination countries. In the destination countries, migrant workers face low wages, discrimination and exploitation. Many find themselves in vulnerable situations as they do not have well-negotiated contracts. In some cases, they are deprived of wages or paid less than originally agreed upon.

Migrants return when they can no longer cope with the adverse working environment abroad or when they do not get their desired job and/or wages. The Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) encountered cases where migrants were deceived by dalals⁵ and, sometimes, by their family members. The entirety of the migrant's remittances is spent on supporting their family and as a result there are no savings. Most migrants face a lot of difficulties starting a business on their own after returning, due to illiteracy, bureaucratic formalities and lack of knowledge about banking and loan requirements. It could be inferred that most of the returnee migrants who had migrated for low skilled jobs with little pay, return with empty hands, especially female migrants. Moreover, there is no database on returnee migrants in Bangladesh to further analyse the socioeconomic status of returnees.

With regard to the outreach services for migrants, all stakeholders, from potential, outgoing and returnee migrants to government officials and NGOs, agreed that the MRCs should be set up to provide better services to migrants, especially at the grassroots level. The majority of, both male and female, potential migrants preferred information centres such as the MRC for migration related information, compared to only a few who preferred help from dalals.

Migrants need relevant information in all phases of the migration cycle: in preparation phase, while abroad and upon return to Bangladesh. Potential migrants need information on the nature of their work and wages. Based on migrant interviews, male migrants wanted to know the details of the job contract before migrating and whether the passport and written contracts were correct. As women were mostly employed as live-in domestic workers, they were more interested about the overall living conditions, such as food and housing, as well as knowing the language for easy communication. In most cases, potential migrants were not aware of the possible risks of irregular migration. Women had limited information about working and living conditions in the destination countries.

According to interviewed government officials, returnees need information and technical support to guide them through obtaining a job or establishing their own business in their home country. At the same time, they need counselling to be reintegrated into society, their community and family. Those who are planning to re-migrate need to know about processes for regular migration.

5. *Dalals are migration brokers and/or intermediaries. They can also be family members, neighbours and/or friends. Dalals operate informally, sometimes exploiting migrants. While dalals can be sub-agents (of the formal recruitment agencies that are located in Dhaka), for the purposes of this report, sub-agents are mentioned in addition to dalals. See Munier and Nargis, 2018.*

Information from the MoEWOE revealed that there are several awareness programmes at the district level that are provided in cooperation with the local administration authorities. Pre-departure briefing sessions run by Technical Training Centres and District Employment and Manpower Offices, during which migrant workers are informed about migration, are mandatory. According to NGO responses, although they work at the national level on migration issues, they have close connections with CBOs at the grassroots level, and work in partnership with them especially in awareness raising programmes, debt mediation, and recovery of compensation money or solving other problems migrants face abroad. Media personnel emphasized that social media such as Facebook, IMO, WhatsApp are the most successful means to reach out to migrants. In urban areas, social media and television are the most effective options, while for rural areas, community awareness programmes such as interactive theatres and video shows are more effective.

It was suggested that for the MRCs to be effective in reaching migrants, they should be actively involved at the union level with the Union Parishad members and Union Digital Centres. Migrants had high expectations from the MRCs in addressing their information needs. Based on migrant needs, the MRCs could disseminate the information on the migration process such as preparing passports, checking visas, job contracts, wages, language, norms and cultures of the destination countries, contact addresses of Bangladesh embassies abroad, as well as provide technical assistance about how to go abroad legally, where to go, the cost of migration. Migrants also asked the MRC run pre-departure training, assist in choosing a reliable recruiting agency, wages and working conditions in the destination country. After returning to Bangladesh, migrants were interested in information on how to get a job, invest money or build a business.

The most relevant recommendation of the study is that the MRCs need to work closely with Union Parishad chairpersons, representatives and ward members. Union Parishad chairpersons are well placed because they have access to potential and returning migrants and are trusted by them. Union Parishad chairpersons know who is planning to go abroad and their intended destination.

In the FGDs, returnees suggested that the MRCs need to enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation of Bangladesh embassies abroad by maintaining a close relationship with them. As the MRCs are working at the grassroots level, they will be able to keep track of who is working abroad and where. Therefore, migrants would be to contact the MRCs as referral points whenever they need any support. The MRCs also need to establish a referral mechanism and compile a list of support services being provided to potential and returnee migrants so that they could readily and promptly refer migrants to these services. The MRCs need to enhance the availability of pathways for regular and safe migration. In this regard, the MRCs need to organize outreach programmes for awareness raising by a wide distribution of information, education and communication materials, organizing video shows and using social media. These should be aimed at potential migrants in their pre-decision stage, which is immensely influenced and motivated by dalals or sub-agents, as well as returnee migrants who need to be reintegrated.

6. A Union Parishad consists of a chairman and twelve members including three members exclusively reserved for women. There are nine wards of each union represented by ward members. Usually one village is designated as a ward. (Local government in Bangladesh, 2020)

2. Introduction

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is implementing the project ‘Improving Migration Management in the Silk Route Countries’ which is funded by the European Union. The project aims to maximise the development potential of migration and mobility from Bangladesh and towards major labour receiving countries, as well as to establish comprehensive national and regional responses to migration and mobility with full respect of human rights and protection of migrants.

This information needs assessment for Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in Bangladesh follows the government’s priorities to promote safe, regular and orderly migration, especially labour migration, prevent irregular migration, ensure migrants’ protection, and empower migrants/migrant workers and their families through raising awareness, educating the communities, and preparing prospective migrant workers on the living and working conditions abroad.

Two MRCs were set up in Dhaka and Cumilla to serve as information hubs for matters relevant to migration, provide counselling and advice, and interact with communities and educational institutions to raise awareness among Bangladeshis, especially youth and their families. In addition, the MRCs have links with existing governmental and non-governmental structures and guide people to the relevant services for potential, outgoing and returnee migrants provided by the government and civil society.

The information needs assessment multi-fold purposes are:

- To understand the information on migration needed at the community level, as well as the tools and means on how rural and urban communities could be better reached.
- To provide the basis for strategic interventions and activities of the MRCs, for example, developing campaigns to reach the broader public, ascertaining community-specific demographics in order to develop context-specific, sustainable and long-term activities that are driven by the needs of the communities.
- To serve as a baseline for continual operational monitoring and research, so as to enable effective measurement of the change, outcome or long-term impact of such interventions and activities.

This information needs assessment report consists of seven chapters beginning with an executive summary which contains an overview of the study findings. Chapter 2 is the introduction which describes the purpose of the study and outline of the report followed by chapter 3 on the methodology used for the information needs assessment, and the target groups and key stakeholders reached during the study. Chapter 4 is based on a literature desk review and provides an overview of regular and irregular migration in addition to challenges of migration, the needs of migrants, and the legal framework and institutional arrangements governing migration in Bangladesh.

Chapter 5 focuses on qualitative findings from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with potential, outgoing and returnee migrants, followed by chapter 6 which presents an analysis of the qualitative findings with other stakeholders such as national and local level government officials, International Organizations (IOs), International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs), Non-Government Organization (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) ⁷ and media personnel. Finally, chapter 7 presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the qualitative study.

7. *CBOs are nonprofit groups that work at a local level to improve life for the community people. The focus is to build equality across society in all streams - health care, environment, quality of education, access to technology, access to spaces and information for the disabled, to name but a few. NGOs on the other hand, are independent of government involvement founded by citizens, which include clubs and associations that provide services to their members and others.*

3. Methodology

This study on the information needs of potential migrants and returnees was guided by the following research questions:

- What is the profile of potential, outgoing and returnee migrants in Bangladesh (including the most relevant districts and union levels, gender, age group, educational background and skills qualifications)?
- What kind of information do migrants need?
- How could the MRCs reach out to potential, outgoing and returnee migrants, specifically at the community level?

A qualitative approach was selected for this study. Both primary and secondary research methods were used. Primary data was collected by using three different methods: i) semi-structured interviews with potential, outgoing and returnee migrants, ii) key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders, and iii) FGDs with migrants and CBOs. The secondary data was obtained from desk research and included both qualitative and quantitative sources.

As the interviewers' perspectives are usually subjective, efforts were made to cross-check and triangulate information with previous studies. In addition, the narrative reliability of various sources was also taken into account, such as, whether they were based on empirical research, official data set or other sources. The information gathered from the potential and returnee migrants as well as from other stakeholders was examined to ascertain whether it aligned with other, including official, data sources. Accordingly, references to previous research findings are included in the field study analysis and findings.

3.1 Desk review

A desk review and analysis was carried out of the relevant and available materials and reports (both in English and Bangla) on information needs of potential migrants in Bangladesh. The desk review included project reports, annual reports, and reports of meetings, conferences and activities of international and national organizations, news articles, statistical data, survey reports and academic publications. In addition, content analysis was performed on five years of newspaper clippings on various topics related to migration including irregular migration, the situation in destination countries and the fate of returnee migrants. Content analysis was used as a research tool to determine the presence of migration-related terms and themes within some qualitative data. By using content analysis, the study could qualify and analyse the presence, meanings and relationship of migration issues in the context of Bangladesh.

3.2 Primary data gathering

Research instruments, such as semi-structured interview guidelines were developed for each type of stakeholder both in English and Bangla. The instruments mainly focused on challenges of migrants, information needs and information channels.

The guidelines for the semi-structured interviews and FGDs, were pre-tested at Teghoria union under Keraniganj Upazila of Dhaka district with two outgoing migrants, three returnee migrants and an FGD with one CBO. The instruments were revised based on the lessons learned from the pilot interviews.

Primary data were collected through KIIs, FGDs and migrant interviews in six districts. The consent of the respondents was taken before starting the interviews. KIIs and CBOs consented to the use of the names of their organizations. The names of the potential, outgoing and returnee migrants being interviewed were documented. However, all names of individuals were kept anonymous.

The methodology annex gives an overview of all interviews with individual interview codes which have been used in this study. Throughout the study, the interviews are cited as follows: (PM-Cu-M-1), where PM is the code of the potential migrant understudy, Cu refers to the study district in Bangladesh, M indicates a respondent's gender (M for male and F for female), and 1 in the number of the interview. For example, the first interview conducted with male potential migrant in Cumilla is cited as PM-Cu-M-1 while the second interview with male potential migrant in Cumilla is cited as PM-Cu-M-2.

All direct quotes from interviews conducted in Bangla have been translated into English in this study. For interviews conducted in English, where necessary the quotes have been edited to improve comprehension while keeping the original content of the interview as far as possible.

3.2.1 Key informant interviews (KIIs)

Forty KIIs were conducted at Dhaka and 6 districts of Bangladesh. At Dhaka, 23 KIIs were conducted with officials of Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB), Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL) and Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), IOs, INGOs, NGOs, academia, training institutions, media and BAIRA.

At the 6 selected districts covered by the information needs assessment, 17 KIIs were conducted with stakeholders at the district level such as officials of DEMO, Technical Training Centres (TTCs) and Union Parishad representatives. District level stakeholders were added because the bulk of potential migrants, as well as returnee migrants, come from districts other than urban Dhaka.

3.2.2 Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Fourteen FGDs were conducted with potential, outgoing and returnee migrants and their families as well as with CBOs of the 6 selected districts.

FGD is a qualitative research method and data collection technique, "in which a selected group of people discuss a given topic or issue in-depth being facilitated by a professional or external moderator." It has many advantages which are mainly: providing a diverse set of responses based on interviewee profiles; potentially confirming insights obtained from other methodology; a cost-effective way of getting information; potentially providing time-saving opportunities; typically building upon each answer through discussion; providing anonymity for many of the participants; and when adequately moderated, all participants contributing equally to the discussion.¹⁰

In this study, FGDs were conducted to gather information from migrants from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss specific topics of interest. Separate FGDs were organized with male and female migrants so that women could freely narrate their experiences during the different phases of their migration cycle and raise gender specific challenges. Moreover, female facilitators conducted FGDs with women participants for privacy and confidentiality.

8. A Union Parishad consists of a chairman and twelve members including three members exclusively reserved for women. There are nine wards of each union represented by ward members. Usually one village is designated as a ward. (Local government in Bangladesh, 2020)

9. Eeuwijk and Angehrn, 2017

10. Miller, 2020

3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Eighty semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with potential/outgoing and returnee migrants, equitably and proportionally distributed among the six selected districts.

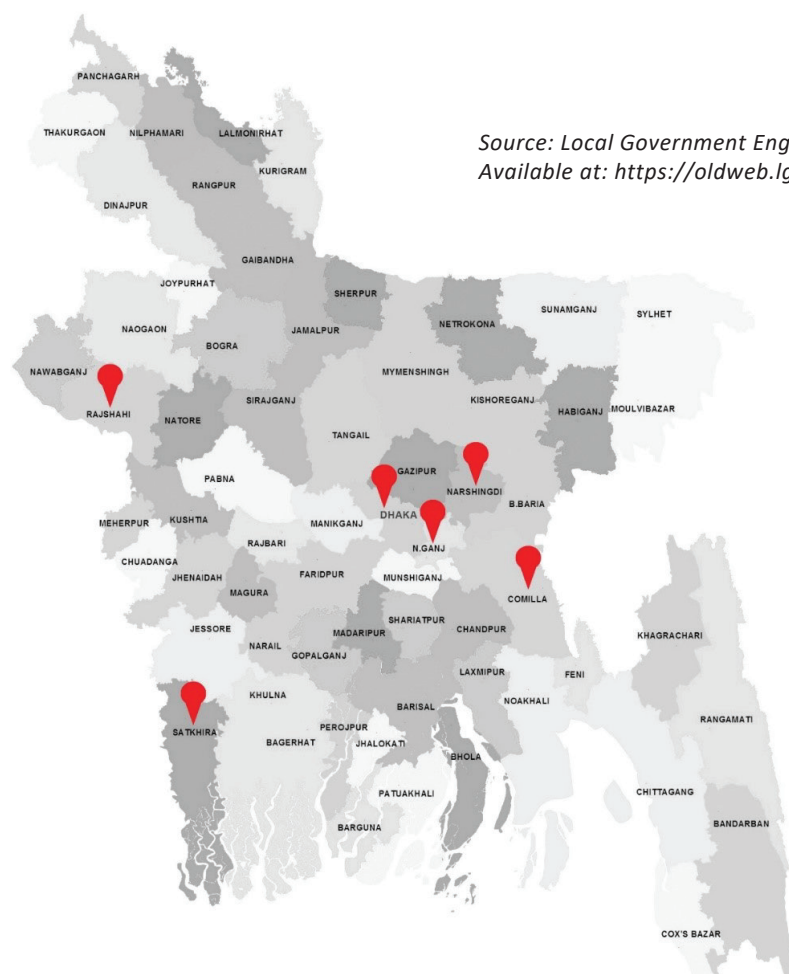
3.4 Sample

3.4.1 Districts covered

The geographic scope of this study was limited to six districts in Bangladesh. Three of those districts namely Dhaka, Narayanganj and Cumilla were selected due to the MRCs operating there. The remaining three districts, namely Rajshahi (northern district), Satkhira (southern district) and Narshingdi are not covered by the MRCs. They were selected based on the highest number of migrants leaving for employment abroad (rather than on than on the number migrant returns, due to lack of data). During the period covering 2005-2019, Cumilla had the highest number of emigrants (939,773), followed by Dhaka (397,258), Narshingdi (254,493), Narayanganj (218,912), Rajshahi (42,386) and Satkhira (39,810).¹¹

The map below depicts the six districts of Bangladesh covered by the study:

Figure 3. 1: Map of Bangladesh showing the selected study districts



Source: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), 2020.
Available at: <https://oldweb.lged.gov.bd/ViewMap.aspx>

11. BMET, 2020

3.4.2 Sampling of migrants

The target group of the information needs assessment are potential, outgoing and returnee migrants (see Definitions above). Eighty migrants were selected by using purposive sampling equitably and proportionally from union level of the six selected districts. The sample size consisted of 40 potential migrant respondents and 40 returnee respondents with near parity across the two genders. Among the 40 potential migrants, 23 were men and 17 were women migrants. Whereas, among the 40 returnee migrants, 19 were men and 21 were women. The table below provides basic information of the sample migrants:

Table 3. 1: Basic Information of sample potential and returnee Migrants

Age (in years)	Potential male	Potential female	Returnee male	Returnee female
20-25	9	5	3	1
26-30	6	5	2	6
31-35	4	-	1	4
36-40	3	5	5	8
41 & above	1	2	8	2
Total	23	17	19	21
Religion				
Islam	23	15	19	21
Hindu	-	2	-	-
Total	23	17	19	21
Level of education				
Illiterate & can only sign	2	3	2	5
Classes 1-5	2	3	4	5
Classes 6-10	11	6	8	10
Secondary School Certificate	6	2	3	1
Higher Secondary School Certificate	1	2	1	-
Graduate (University degree)	1	1	1	-
Total	23	17	19	21
Marital Status				
Single	12	3	3	-
Married	11	10	15	18
Divorced	-	3	1	3
Separated ¹²	-	1	-	-
Total	23	17	19	21
No. of family members				
1-3	4	3	4	6
4-6	18	11	13	14
7 & above	1	3	2	1
Total	23	17	19	21

Total	23	17	19	21
Occupations				
Day Labourer	1	1	3	2
Service	2	-	1	-
Unemployed	2	1	7	-
Business	7	-	4	1
Housewife	-	10	-	11
Mechanic	1	-	1	-
Domestic worker	-	2	-	2
Plumber	1	-	1	-
Student	7	2	-	-
Tailor	-	1	-	1
Farmer	2	-	-	-
Van driver	-	-	1	-
Livestock rearing	-	-	1	1
Textile worker	-	-	-	2
Cook	-	-	-	1
Total	23	17	19	21

Male potential migrants were all Muslims. Most of them were in between 20-25 years of age, completed classes 6-10, came from households with 4-6 family members, were involved in business, with some being students and were either single or married (nearly an equal number). The female potential migrants were spread out across the 20-25, 26-30 and 36-40 years age groups. Two of them were Hindus, with the remainder Muslim, most of them had completed classes 6-10, the a bit over half were married and housewives (with the remainder working across a number of occupations) and had 4-6 family members in their households.

The male returnees were mostly in the age group of 41 years and above, were Muslims, most of them had class 6-10 education level, some were still unemployed while a few had business and a few were day labourers, the majority were married and had 4-6 family members in their households. The female returnees were mostly in the age group of 36-40 years, all were Muslims, most of them had class 6-10 education level, had 4-6 family members in their households, the majority were married and housewives while others were involved as day labourers, domestic workers, and textile workers.

12. Separated means that married individuals are living in separate households without an official dissolution of the marriage.

Table 3. 2: Summary of sample distribution

80 Semi-structured interviews with migrants are as follows:

- 40 potential migrant respondents
- 40 returnee respondents

40 KIIs:

23 KIIs at Dhaka are as follows:

- **Government officials:** Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE); Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET); Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB); Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL) and Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB).
- **IOs and INGOs:** International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Women, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Care Bangladesh and Manusher Jonno Foundation
- **NGOs:** Awaj Foundation, Bangladesh Ovibashi Mohila Shramik Association (BOMSA), BRAC, Karmojibi Nari, Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP) and WARBE Development Foundation.
- **Academia, research and training institutions:** Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, Centre for Development Communications, and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit.
- **Media:** Migration News and Flims4Prace Foundation
- **Recruiting agency:** Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA)

17 KIIs at 6 selected districts are as follows:

- Government officials: 5 District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMOs)
- Instructors: 6 Technical Training Centres (TTCs)
- Local government representatives: 6 Union Parishads
- Representatives: 2 Community Based Organisations (CBOs)

14 FGDs at 6 selected unions of the districts are as follows:

- 6 FGDs with potential and outgoing migrants
- 6 FGDs with returnees and their families
- 2 FGDs with CBOs

3.5 Limitations

The information needs assessment study was conducted from May 2020 to December 2020 amid the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. There was a lockdown situation in Bangladesh and all offices were closed as per government directives from the last week of March 2020.

This crisis situation created difficulties undertaking fieldwork at the district and union levels, especially in getting access to stakeholders and migrants as many of them did not want to have in-person meetings. For this reason, 8 KIIs in Dhaka had to be conducted by mobile phone and 15 via video conference tools.

At Dhaka, 23 KIIs were conducted with government officials, BAIRA, IOs, INGOs, NGOs, research organizations and media personnel. From 1 June 2020, the lockdown was relaxed but many offices were still functioning remotely, with employees working from home. They were reluctant to have face to face meetings. It took more time than envisaged to arrange appointments and conduct the KIIs through virtual meetings such as Skype and Zoom. Sometimes, there was a disruption in the internet connection or participants that were not accustomed to online meetings. The meeting was then conducted over mobile phone.

4. Background information

International labour migration has been an integral part of Bangladesh's economic and social development. Labour migration from Bangladesh began in mid-seventies when Bangladeshis left the country as temporary migrants to work abroad. Migration has direct and multiple impacts on development prospects for migrants, their families, communities and development of both countries of origin and destination. International migration is one of the main contributions to the growth of Bangladesh's economy, with over 12 percent of the labour force employed abroad and remittances making up 7-8 percent of the GDP. Since 1976, about 13 million Bangladeshi workers migrated to 173 countries for employment.¹³

According to IOM, a “[c]omplex set of interlinking factors that influence an individual, family or population group’s decisions relating to migration, including displacement.”¹⁴ According to a 2020 IOM study, the highest migration flow from Bangladesh is to the Gulf States, with 65 percent of potential migrants specifically planning to go to Saudi Arabia. The percentage is even higher among female potential migrants, of whom 95 percent were planning to migrate to the Middle East and 73 percent to Saudi Arabia.¹⁵ Migrants are attracted by better job and livelihood opportunities, wanting to free themselves of financial problems and debts, enhance their social status, having no hope a future in Bangladesh and lack of high-quality social services including healthcare and education.¹⁶ Van Hear et al (2012) articulate that

“

[t]he most significant driver is economic inequality. There are stark differences between Bangladesh and Gulf countries in income levels, employment opportunities, and standards of living. [...] Nevertheless, Bangladesh remains one of the most densely populated states in the world, again contributing to difficulty in securing sustainable livelihoods for all its citizens, particularly those dependent on accessing land.¹⁷ ”

Other identified driving factors are disasters, such as riverbank erosion, floods, cyclones, rising sea levels and droughts. An IOM (2020b) study additionally found that potential migrants usually select a specific destination country because of the presence of social networks in that country, which includes family, friends, neighbours or the Bangladeshi diaspora, followed by the availability of jobs and a promise of better wages.¹⁸

According to the International Labour Organization, over 400,000 Bangladeshi workers migrate abroad for employment.¹⁹ Additionally, until recently, female migration from Bangladesh has been increasing. In 1994, women made up only 1 percent of migrants, rising to 18 percent in 2014. The share of female migrants decreased in 2019 to 15 percent.²⁰

According to BMET, most of the Bangladeshi short-term contract workers mainly go to the Gulf and other Arab states.²¹ Bangladeshi workers mainly undertake in short-term employment, necessitating the migrants’ return to Bangladesh at the end of their contracts. However, Bangladesh has not developed a means by which to record data on returning migrants.²²

Most of the migrant workers from Bangladesh who work in the Gulf States are unskilled or low-skilled. Male migrants are employed in the construction industry and in informal business services, such as cleaning, driving, tailoring, manufacturing, agriculture and retailing. Female migrants are employed as domestic workers in private homes or cleaners in public buildings and offices. The conditions of employment in the Gulf States for migrant workers from Bangladesh are often temporary and highly exploitative. Due to the kafala system, migrants have few rights and depend on their sponsor or kafeel.²³

The Bangladesh Government has recognized the importance of the migration sector by establishing 42 DEMO offices functioning under the BMET and 64 TTCs including six Institutes of Marine Technology and three internee training centres (see Section 4.6 for more details on the institutional arrangements in Bangladesh).²⁴ The main purposes of setting up these offices were to support the Bangladeshi migrants by providing information, preventing exploitation by dalals or sub-agents,²⁵ and conducting pre-departure training so that migrants are well equipped for employment abroad. In spite of these initiatives, irregular migration is on the rise, including taking the risky journey of crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. Irregular migration has become a serious challenge for Bangladesh.

CBOs have been playing an important role for nearly two decades by providing a wide range of services that include awareness building, pre-decision orientation, pre-departure training, encouraging migrants to submit complaints and seeking redress for such complaints, supporting cheated migrants to secure compensation, filing cases in courts against fraudulent practices of recruiting agencies, campaigning to bring stranded workers back home, providing skills development and training. As a collective, they lobby and urge policy planners to undertake policy reforms in migration governance. The government has established a National Labour Migration Forum with CBOs to work together for safe and orderly migration from Bangladesh.

4.1 Destinations of Bangladeshi migrant workers

Historically, between the years 1976 and 2020, over 90 percent of Bangladeshi migrants worked in eight countries, mainly in six Gulf States (or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)), namely, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (32.11 percent of migrant workers), United Arab Emirates (UAE) (18.09 percent), Oman (11.60 percent), Qatar (6.19 percent), Kuwait (4.81 percent) and Bahrain (3.13 percent), as well as, in Malaysia (8.06 percent) and Singapore (6.04 percent).²⁶

13. Siddiqui, 2019

14. IOM, 2019

15. *Ibid*

16. IOM, 2020a

17. Van Hear et al., 2012. p. 17

18. IOM, 2020b

19. ILO, n.d.

20. BMET, 2020; Etzold and Mallick, 2015

21. Rashid, 2020

22. *Ibid*

23. A kafeel is "a citizen of the respective Gulf State who manages the migrants' visa process, workplace recruitment as well as obtains the migrant workers' passports during the contract period". See DTDA, 2020

24. Siddiqui, 2019

25. Dalals are migration brokers and/or intermediaries. They can also be family members, neighbours and/or friends. Dalals operate informally, sometimes exploiting migrants. While dalals can be sub-agents (of the formal recruitment agencies that are located in Dhaka, for the purposes of this report, sub-agents are mentioned in addition to dalals. See Munier and Nargis, 2018

26. BMET, 2020

In the 30 years between 1980 and 2010, ten times the number of Bangladeshi labour migrants left to the Gulf States each year (from 25,000 to more than 250,000).²⁷ In recent years, significant numbers of migrants have migrated to new destination countries. In 2019, the top destination countries were Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (399,000 migrant workers), Oman (72,654), Qatar (50,292), Singapore (49,829), Jordan (20,347), Kuwait (12,299), Iraq (9,266) and Mauritius (7,576), with 10,619 bound for other destinations.²⁸

Since the UAE introduced restrictions for male labour migrants in 2012, the number of male Bangladeshi workers decreased rapidly, while the number of female labour migrants to the UAE quadrupled.²⁹ Hong Kong emerged as a new and promising market in 2013, after the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries with recruiting agencies. Female domestic workers in Hong Kong are found to have a more protected work environment. However, they have to pay BDT 150,000 (USD 1,787) and undergo a standardized selection criteria.³⁰

27. *Etzold and Mallick, 2015*

28. *BMET, 2020*

29. *Etzold and Mallick, 2015*

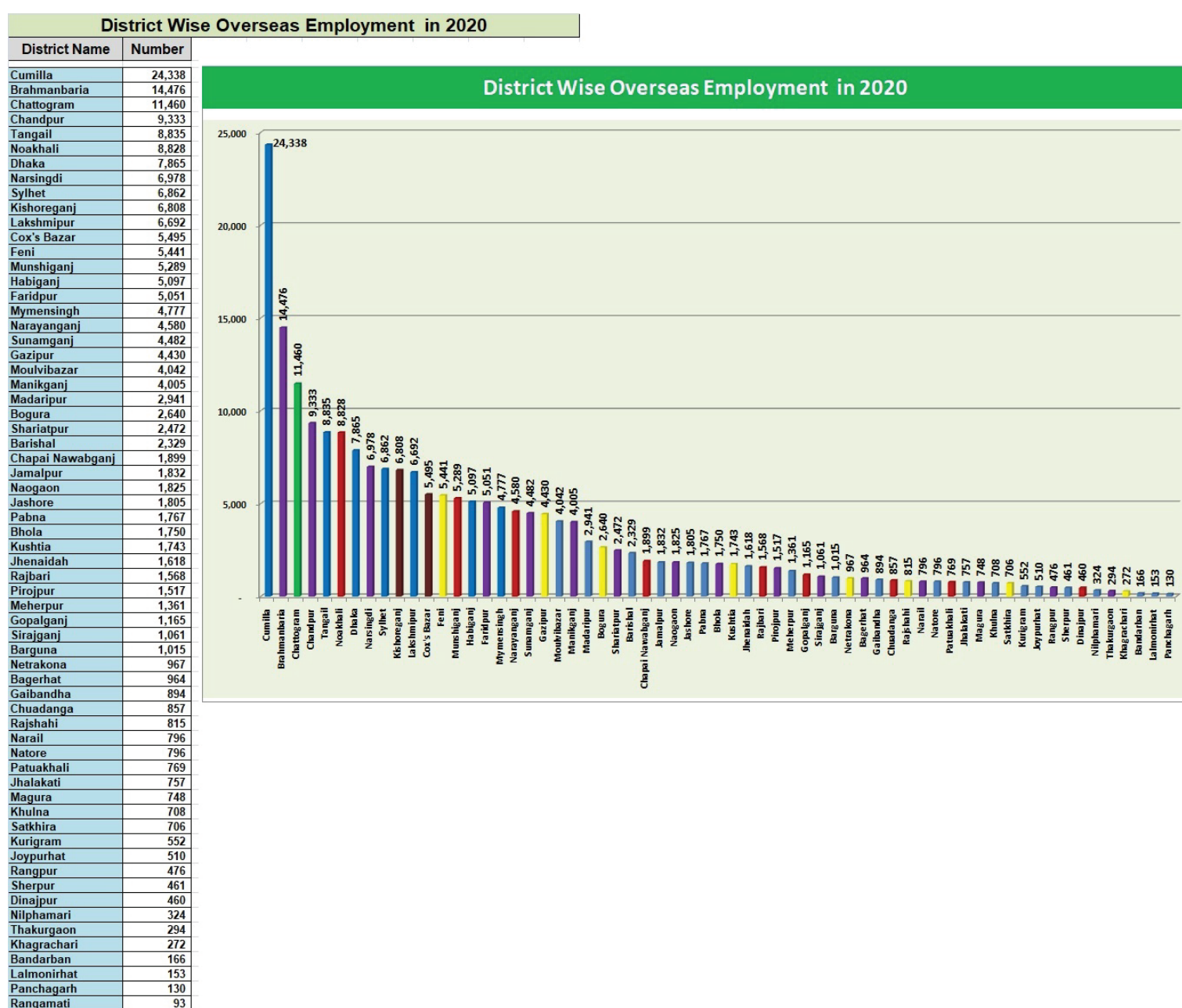
30. *Huda, 2019*

4.2 Source districts of migration

According to the Statistical Reports of BMET, during 2005-2019, Bangladeshis migrated from 63 districts with the main source district being Cumilla, with 939,773 international migrants. Chattogram ranks the second highest with 715,548 migrants and Brahmanbaria in the third place with 479,581 migrants. Cumilla, Chattogram and Brahmanbaria districts are all under the Chattogram division. ³¹

The following figure provides the BMET compiled employment abroad during 2005-2019 by district:

Figure 4.1: District-wise overseas employment (2005-2019)



Source: BMET, 2020

Cumilla is the second-largest city of eastern Bangladesh. People from Cumilla have been migrating for decades, establishing networks in the various Middle Eastern countries. This early migration has created a reliance on remittances and a network of migrants abroad that assist potential migrants and youths to continue the migration and remittance cycle. This created a boom in recruiting agencies in the district. With over 300 recruiting agencies, Cumilla has the second highest number of recruiting agencies in Bangladesh.³²

Chattogram is a major coastal city, with one of the world's oldest ports and a long history of migration by sea routes to the United Kingdom and North America. While a major financial centre in south-eastern Bangladesh and the second most significant urban centre after Dhaka, Chattogram is vulnerable to tropical cyclones. Brahmanbaria is the second-largest city after Cumilla in eastern Bangladesh and located in accessible proximity to Cumilla and Dhaka. This proximity as well as poverty and lack of job opportunities fuels migration from this district.³³

The other districts having more than 200,000 migrants in the last 15 years are also important source districts. They are Tangail (435,368), Dhaka (397,258), Chandpur (358,002), Noakhali (341,812), Narshingdi (253,493), Munshiganj (253,120), Feni (227,326), Kishoreganj (225,060), Narayanganj (218,912), Lakshmipur (216,604), Sylhet (216,175) and Gazipur (203,396). On the other hand, the Hill Tracts districts of Khagrachari and Rangamati and two northern districts Lalmonirhat and Panchagarh accounted for less than a total of 10,000 migrants flow during the same period.³⁴

4.3 Irregular migration

Irregular migration manifests itself in a number of ways, including migrant vulnerabilities combined with exploitative practices. In spite of having a legal framework for safe migration, there is a large number of irregular departures from Bangladesh, including to countries such as Saudi Arabia. Poor migration governance has contributed to irregular migration. The effects of irregular migration are different for each migrant in different destination countries. Irregular migrants are difficult to assist, as they remain outside of the formal migration and labour force structure. Irregular migrants are vulnerable to abuses at every stage of their migration process, including en route to, as well as in transit and in destination countries. At the very least they are likely to be arrested, detained or deported.³⁵

In 2017, around 8,700 Bangladeshis made their way to Europe through Italy by irregular means. An additional 2,000 were stranded in Turkey. Of the migrants, including Bangladeshi migrants, transiting through Libya, 94 percent were subjected to some form of exploitative practices. Of the migrants in Turkey, nearly 91 percent intended to migrate for personal reasons, while just over 9 percent were migrating to support their families. Among Bangladeshi migrants travelling irregularly 66.7 percent of potential migrants and 81 percent of returnees anticipated arrest, deportation or exploitation as a risk of their irregular travel.³⁶

31. *BMET, 2020*

32. *Khyum Tithila, 2020*

33. *Mia et al., 2015*

34. *BMET, 2020*

35. *Ullah, 2017*

36. *Siddiqui, 2019*

4.3.1 Smuggling of migrants and trafficking

For the Bangladeshi government, human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants, both within the country and abroad, is an increasing challenge. According to a 2015 IOM study, migrant workers, especially women, are vulnerable to abuse at all stages of the employment migration process. Accordingly, the exploitation of migrant workers begins in the home country in the form of false or deceptive information provided by the intermediaries, including overstating the monthly wage, contract substitution,³⁷ false information about the job itself, as well as about the working conditions. Some migrants end up in “debt bondage” due to the excessively high recruitment fees and interest rates charged by agencies, sub-agents and dalals.³⁸

Many Bangladeshis are turning to smugglers and traffickers to undertake dangerous journeys. The causes can be attributed to increasing demand for low-skilled migrant workers, the high recruitment costs, an inability to access regular means of migration, and incomplete awareness of the risks that migrants may face in transit and at the country of destination. The murder of migrants by Libyan traffickers in May 2020 reveals a close link between the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking in the context of mixed migration flows. During the COVID-19 pandemic, criminal networks have further exploited the temporary restriction of access to formal migratory channels.³⁹

Trafficking of persons remains a serious concern in many countries in Southern Asia, including Bangladesh, although there is a lack of data and information. A 2018 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report estimates that, in 2016, nearly 60 percent of victims of trafficking detected in Southern Asia (i.e., the four countries of Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan) were women. However, traffickers also exploit Bangladeshi men, women and children who migrate willingly but are then subjected to forced labour in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, especially in Brunei, Malaysia, and the Maldives.⁴⁰

In 2012, about 12,496 women migrated to Lebanon, which made that country the highest expected destination for female migrants from Bangladesh.⁴¹ With the increasing number of women migrating to Lebanon, authorities increasingly receive complaints of violence and humiliation from women working in Lebanon.

In 2016, a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report revealed the abuse and exploitation experienced by some of the 59 female migrant domestic workers interviewed. Some of the domestic workers interviewed had been trafficked into Oman from the UAE by either their employers or intermediaries, utilizing the border shared between the two countries.⁴²

Every year, many Bangladeshis migrate for work through illegal channels and are targeted by traffickers. In Vanuatu, authorities identified more than 100 Bangladeshi male forced labour victims at construction sites. In Brunei, officials received thousands of complaints of non-payment of wages and contract substitution from 30,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers. More than 69,000 of the 234,000 Bangladeshi workers in the Maldives are undocumented, and some reported passport retention, underpayment or non-payment of wages, and fraudulent recruitment.⁴³

37. Contract substitution is where, upon arrival at the destination country, an alternative, substituted contract written, for instance, in Arabic without a Bangla translation, is presented to the migrant for signature.

38. IOM, 2015

39. Bangladesh UN Network on Migration, 2020

40. US Department of State, 2020

41. ILO, 2014

42. HRW, 2016

43. US Department of State, 2020

In Saudi Arabia, thousands of Bangladeshi female domestic workers are trafficked into forced labour. Every month, about 200 domestic workers return to Bangladesh from Saudi Arabia, having been in an exploitative forced labour situation. There are reports of some Chinese traffickers forcing women, in particular, indigenous women from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, into arranged marriages as part of sexual and labour (domestic work) trafficking and exploitation.⁴⁴

Bangladesh hosts more than one million displaced Rohingya in refugee camps and host communities near the Burmese border. Traffickers exploit Rohingya men, women and children from these refugee camps into sex and labour trafficking both within Bangladesh and abroad.⁴⁵

4.3.2 Recruitment process through formal and informal agents

The recruitment process of migrant workers is a complex one. It involves a number of persons, institutions and agencies. They could be either governmental or private, local or foreign. The whole migration process is often administered through a host of intermediaries, some using official while others informal, channels.⁴⁶

According to Barkat et al. (2014), obtaining work permits through dalals or sub-agents results in many migrant workers being given invalid documents. Nor do dalals obtain approval to emigrate from the Bangladeshi government. Consequently, migrants are forced to use irregular channels to reach their country of destination. An IOM survey by Imam and Munier (2020) noted the difficulties associated with migrant recruitment processing using official channels. Intending migrants often apply for documents knowing little (and not provided with adequate information) about the formal migration process, often waiting in long queues as well as for the processing of their passports, visas and other documents.⁴⁷

Although the majority of migrant workers are recruited by private recruiting agencies through regular, authorized channels, they become irregular migrants after the conclusion of their employment. This is due to their visas being tied to the employment. With the visa ending at end of the employment, those that remain in the country become irregular migrants, while others become documented again at a later stage.⁴⁸

As of 2021, the MoEWOE and the BMET supervised and controlled about 1,443 international recruiting agencies who are currently in operation in Bangladesh.⁴⁹ In addition, there are an endless number of sub-agents and intermediaries (dalals) who operate throughout the country unregistered and therefore unaccountable. Some of these dalals or sub-agents were former migrants themselves, knowing the routes and processes, thereby winning the confidence of the potential migrants. They operate at the village and community level, providing an informal, but strong link between the potential migrants and the employers abroad. The sub-agents usually do not share the name of the official recruiting agencies with which they cooperate.⁵⁰

4.4 Challenges of migration

An IOM study (Imam and Munier, 2020) revealed that the complex nature of the labour migration process, together with the high costs, including recruitment costs, associated with migration, and the necessity of obtaining finances from a variety of sources, pose a serious challenge to the aspirations of potential migrants.⁵¹

44. *Ibid*

45. *Ibid*

46. *Shamim, 2011*

47. *Imam and Munier, 2020*

48. *Barkat, et al., 2014*

49. *BMET, 2020*

50. *Munier and Nargis, 2018*

51. *Imam and Munier, 2020*

According to Barkat et al. (2014), “lack of access to the formal credit system forces migrant workers to rely on informal, unregulated money lenders who charge high interest rates. This, in turn, pushes the real costs of recruitment and migration upward.”⁵² They found that about 67 percent of migrants borrow money; 24 percent sell land; and 23 percent mortgage land.⁵³

Afsar (2009) also found that the money for going abroad is raised from family and friends or through selling or mortgaging land instead of through formal lending institutions or banks. Potential migrants lack information, as they have limited contact with government institutions in terms of information and skill training. The migrants rarely know the actual amount paid by them, or the ‘official’ charge for recruitment, which is fixed by the government. The official charges are fixed for travel, documentation, insurance, recruiting agency fees, as well as other fees. However, depending on the elements, such as job offered and the country of destination the actual expenditures of migrant workers are higher than what is set by the government. Traffickers also use the recruitment stage to trap and exploit potential migrants.⁵⁴

In 2015, ILO documented key challenges for returnees such as “a lack of information on business trends, few job opportunities, little access to formal credit, and the absence of advisory services”.⁵⁵

4.4.1 Gender and migration

Migration is not gender neutral. There is a combination of reasons why women and men migrate. At the same time, women and men face different challenges, opportunities and have different and intersecting vulnerabilities. Gender influences decisions regarding who will migrate and why, throughout the migration cycle. Migration also influences and challenges gender relations, roles and power, which is embedded in gender inequalities and traditional roles.⁵⁶ Poverty and gender inequality are powerful forces influencing and driving women's migration. Women in situations of poverty face discrimination and violence, such as forced marriage, dowry demand, multiple marriages of their husbands, as well as unconditional divorce.⁵⁷

Siddiqui (2018) found that the sources of finance for migration are different for men and women. It appears that women are more dependent on moneylenders, as their access to personal and family savings and support from extended families is more restricted. Families are more willing to invest family savings in male migrants compared to female migrants.

Among female migrants, deferred payment through work at the destination country is the common practice.⁵⁸ The repayment of these debts makes workers remain in exploitative conditions in the destination country. This is primarily due to women having few alternate employment options in Bangladesh to repay their loans if they return.⁵⁹

Islam study (2019b) of female returnee workers revealed that migrants “faced gender-based violence throughout the migration cycle – from the decision making stage to the pre-departure preparation to their presence in the destination country and even upon return.”⁶⁰

52. Barkat, et al., 2014

53. *Ibid*

54. Afsar, 2009

55. Ahmed et al., 2015

56. SADC, n.d.

57. Siddiqui, 2018

58. Siddiqui et al, 2018

59. IOM, 2015

60. Islam, 2019b

Women are forced to migrate due to the prevailing gender stereotypes and often to escape violence, stigma and discrimination at home, in search of a better life or to be economically self-reliant. According to the study, almost all the female returnees reported that “sub-agents provided them with false and incomplete information regarding passports, employment contracts, medical check-ups, working conditions, salaries and benefits”.⁶¹

In Islam’s study (2019a), most of the women claimed that misleading information put them in a vulnerable situation, resulting in them becoming victims of abuse and exploitation in the destination countries. Domestic workers experienced problems such as insufficient food, inhuman working hours, no decent living space, physical and psychological abuse, sexual exploitation, non-payment and/or underpayment of wages. The study further confirmed that actions taken by governments of destination countries, local NGOs, Bangladesh Embassies, and Bangladeshi Labour Welfare Wings were insufficient to address these problems.⁶²

4.4.2 COVID-19 impact on migration

The COVID-19 pandemic, though a global health emergency, has exposed the vulnerabilities of migrant workers in developing economies like Bangladesh. Since the onset of COVID-19 and the related economic slowdown, Bangladeshi migrants have started to return to Bangladesh, in particular from the Middle East, Europe and India. According to a government estimate, more than 400,000 Bangladeshi migrants returned from 18 February to 18 March 2020.⁶³ These returnees and their families may face extra hardship, as many of them are likely to have significant debts due to high migration costs and their untimely return.⁶⁴

The public-health crisis has been exacerbated by the economic ripple effects resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic-induced challenges faced by Bangladeshis migrants working abroad, for example, large-scale job loss, wage reductions, and increase in deportations from the GCC. Migrants have lost their jobs across a range of sectors, including aviation, tourism, transportation, retail, hospitality, amusement, and street vending.

Unauthorized migrants have found their position even more vulnerable than before. According to media reports, migrant workers who have lost jobs but remained in the Gulf have been surviving by taking loans from their fellow workers and even from relatives in Bangladesh. The irregular migrants who live on small daily wages are faced with increasing distress.⁶⁵

During the pandemic, migrants faced segregation and confinement in both the destination country, where they are treated as unwanted, and when they return to Bangladesh, where they are isolated socially and ostracized by neighbours fearing that they are COVID-19 carriers. Due to superstitions and social norms, villagers often stigmatize returning migrants, even after they have completed the quarantine period. As Bangladesh has limited institutional quarantine facilities, almost all returning migrants had isolated themselves among their communities.⁶⁶

To confront the challenge created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Bangladesh allocated funds to the amount of USD 85 million to assist returnees to successfully remain in the country through training and other economic benefits, such as soft loans. While soft loans are intended to assist returnees to set up small business and other employment-generating activities, training is intended to improve the level of work that migrants could apply for abroad the pandemic is contained.⁶⁷

61. *Ibid*

62. *Islam, 2019a*

63. *United Nations Resident Coordinators Office, 2020*

64. *Ibid*

65. *Ibid*

66. *Ibid*

67. *Sorkar, 2020*

Moreover, those returnees wanting to start small businesses could take loans of up to BDT 500,000 (approximately EUR 4,855) at a 4 percent interest rate from PKB. In addition, the government has allocated BDT 200 million (approximately EUR 19,422,097) in cash incentives for Bangladeshi workers stuck abroad.⁶⁸

The United Nations has already stepped forward to assist Bangladesh to overcome some of the persisting challenges. The United Nations Development Programme launched the Probash Bondhu (which in Bangla means a friend abroad) call centre in Saudi Arabia – medical advice over the phone, for the 2.2 million Bangladeshi workers abroad.⁶⁹

The initial official death rate from COVID-19 was relatively low, which could be explained by the relatively young population and limited health-care facilities, especially in rural areas, allowing cases to go unreported.⁷⁰ However, Bangladesh has been one of the countries hit hard by the highly infectious Delta variant.⁷¹

4.5 Needs of migrants

Access to information and awareness raising

An IOM study (Imam and Munier, 2020) the level of awareness regarding the various aspects of migration among the increasing number of Bangladeshi migrants remains low. Migrants do not assess whether the information is genuine or reliable. Outgoing migrants, even those who are well-informed and aware of the risks, are nonetheless willing to take those risks to migrate.⁷²

Generally, the rural poor potential migrant workers were not aware enough to analyse what impact migration may have on them. There were attitudinal and behavioural aspects that drove migrants to go abroad. Interestingly, if someone migrated from the locality, others were likely to follow. There was rarely a desire to learn about safe migration among the potential migrants. As such migrants were unaware of a lot of important migration-related information, which paved the way for almost all other causes of their exploitation.⁷³

There were differences among potential migrants regarding their knowledge and awareness levels – those from Dhaka and nearby urban areas were better informed. They attempted to use the Internet for information, not knowing where to find it online. Potential migrants from rural areas relied on dalals or sub-agents for their information, being unaware of the existence of recruiting agencies. This greatly limited the information available to rural migrants.⁷⁴

Access to skills training IOM (Imam and Munier, 2020) classified migrant workers from Bangladesh into four groups: low-skilled; semi-skilled; skilled; and professional. The study found that the “[m]ajority of aspiring migrants from Bangladesh are only interested in being able to ‘migrate somehow,’ rather than prepare themselves to be skilled workers for overseas labour markets.”⁷⁵ Moreover, none of the potential migrants knew or understood what their job was or entailed until they reached their destination countries.⁷⁶

68. UNDP, 2020

69. *Ibid*

70. Sorkar, 2020

71. Islam, 2021

72. Imam and Munier, 2020

73. *Ibid*

74. *Ibid*

75. *Ibid*. p. 26

76. *Ibid*

In FGDs with male returnees, the IOM study found that the majority had worked as labourers, cleaners or helpers, whereas, only a few had been employed as electricians or carpenters. The few prospective migrants who had previously worked as electricians or carpenters were planning to work in similar jobs in the destination countries, while others could be employed as waiters, office runners and plumbers. However, migrants' occupations were determined before their actual migration along with their job contracts.⁷⁷

Moreover, in IOM study (Imam and Munier, 2020), FGDs with potential migrants revealed that relatives that were abroad were a pull-factor for migration as well as being a source of information, including on available job opportunities. Nonetheless, intermediaries were still used for recruitment and to obtain visas. Migrants only found out their future occupations in the destination country immediately prior to departure. Upon arrival, half discovered that they had been misled as to their work and the hazards of their working conditions.⁷⁸

A lack of skill training and/or knowledge of alternative employment options meant that (in Malaysia) male migrants obtained construction, manufacturing and plumbing jobs, while female migrants only knew of the options to work in the domestic or garment sectors.⁷⁹

Access to legal remedies

Although some organizations, both in destination countries and in Bangladesh, are trying to help migrants file cases against their abusive employers, these cases rarely result in compensation for the affected migrant workers. An OKUP study identified that this is likely due to the complexity of cases, or the absence of an institutional system to hold employers accountable.⁸⁰

There are significant obstacles faced by women who suffer from exploitation and abuse during migration, a lengthy and ineffective arbitration or court process, including inadequate compensation vis-à-vis the abuse suffered, and intimidation and threats from the dalals intending to restrict access to even this meagre justice.⁸¹

Access to support abroad

The vulnerabilities of migrants and exploitation faced by them in destination countries could be attributed the authorities' lack of ownership and responsibility over the protection of migrant workers.

The Barkat et al. study (2014) revealed that, of the Bangladeshi migrant workers who signed an employment contract prior to leaving, discovered upon arrival in the destination country, that the nature of their work (21 percent) and/or their wages (46 percent) did not accord to what was stated in the signed contract.⁸²

Visa trading, where Gulf country visas are bought and sold in bulk to intermediaries, can lead to exploitation of the workers by the dalals and recruiting agents in Bangladesh and by the kafeels or the employers in the Gulf countries. Migrant workers rarely pay dalals and recruiting agencies through formal channels and vice versa. Consequently, the governments of Bangladesh and the destination countries find it difficult to access the costs of migration, much less regulate it.⁸³

77. *Ibid*

78. *Ibid*

79. *Ibid*

80. *Islam, 2019b*

81. *Islam, 2019a*

82. *Barkat, et al., 2014*

83. *Ibid*

4.6 Legal framework and institutional arrangements governing migration in Bangladesh

The MoEWOE provides information, partnerships and facilitations for all matters related to Bangladeshis and employment abroad. There are four Departments under the MoEWOE: BMET; WEWB; BOESL; and PKB.⁸⁴

BMET provides Bangladeshi workers with smart cards, biometric registration, and immigration clearance. The Bureau explores the opportunities for Bangladeshi labour force outside the country.⁸⁵

WEWB ensures welfare services to the migrant workers and the family members at home and abroad. Major services include providing a pre-departure briefing to outgoing workers; guiding the migrants during departure and arrival through “Probashi Kallyan Help Desk” at the 3 international airports; providing legal assistance; providing smart cards; maintaining migrants’ registration database.⁸⁶ The WEWB also manages the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund (WEWF), which is a single trust fund financed by mandatory contributions from migrant workers. The main purpose of the WEWF is to ensure the welfare of migrant workers by financing various activities.

BOESL was established as a public workforce recruiting company to ensure fair and professional competition in the migration sector. Its role is to select the right person for the right job to a valued foreign employer; ensure safe and low-cost migration; and realize service charges from the selected workers.⁸⁷

PKB is a state-owned specialized financial institution that provides financial services to Bangladeshis migrants. It started with a start-up capital of BDT 1 billion. The government of Bangladesh contributed 5 percent of that amount, while 95 percent of the capital came from the WEWF.⁸⁸

84. MoEWOE, 2020

85. BMET, 2020

86. WEWB, 2020

87. Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOSEL), 2020

88. PKB, 2020

Table 4.1: Laws and institutions regulating labour migration from Bangladesh

Chronological development of migration laws and institutions regulating labour migration	
1976	Establishment of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)
1982	Replacement of the 1922 Emigration Act by the new Emigration Ordinance
1990	Establishment of Welfare Fund for Migrant Workers
1998	Signature of the United Nation's International Convention on Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (UN CRMW) (ratified in 2011)
2001	Creation of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE)
2002	Recruiting Agents Conduct and License Rules 2002 Wage Earners Welfare Fund Rules 2002 The Immigration Rules 2002
2003	Government easing of the restrictions on female labour migration
2006	Overseas Employment Policy 2006
2010	Establishment of Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) being a Migrant Welfare Bank
2011	Ratification of the UN CRMW
2011	National Skills Development Policy 2011
2013	Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013
2015	Approval of the Government of Bangladesh 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) (2016-2021)
2015	Approval of the Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy Guideline provided by High Court Division
2016	Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016
2017	Overseas Employment and Migrants Management Rules 2017
2018	Wage Earners Welfare Board Act 2018

Below are the laws and policies that have provisions for workers' safeguards both within Bangladesh and abroad; code of conduct and assistance of recruiting agencies; responsibilities of employers who employ women as domestic workers; and provisions for skills development training.

Table 4.2: Salient features of national laws and policies affecting migrant workers

The Emigration Ordinance 1982
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaborates the licensing and monitoring mechanisms of recruiting agencies. • Provides for the punishment of individuals and private recruiting agencies involved in deceitful practices. • Provides the legal framework for regulating recruitment and placement of migrant workers from Bangladesh. • Creates a welfare fund for migrant workers. The fund has been used to enhance language skills of outgoing labourers; to introduce service desks for migrants at Dhaka's international airport; to support migrant workers at their destinations through the labour attaché of the respective Bangladesh embassy; to cover the costs of repatriating the bodies of migrant workers who died abroad; and to compensate their families for their loss.
The Overseas Employment Policy 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects the rights of migrant workers. • Promotes the importance of pre-departure briefings and the need to create awareness among migrant workers. • Ensures protection in the destination countries, by signing of Memorandums of Understanding with labour receiving states. • Provides legal assistance and ensures welfare of migrants through Bangladesh missions abroad. • Ensures transparency and accountability of the recruiting agencies. • Explores new markets for Bangladeshi labour. • Increases the flow and better use of remittances as investment. • Provides social and economic reintegration of migrants upon their return to Bangladesh. • Underscores the welfare needs of long-term migrants.
The Overseas Employment and Migration Act 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes opportunities for employment abroad and the establishment of a safe and fair system of migration that ensures the rights and welfare of migrant workers and members of their families. • Makes provisions in conformity with UN CRMW and other international labour and human rights conventions and treaties ratified by the government. • Requires registration of migrant workers and protection of their interests, including female domestic workers. • Requires that recruiting agent provide an employment contract between the recruited worker and the employer that stipulates the worker's wages, accommodation facilities, duration of employment, compensation amount in the event of death or injury, cost of emigration to and return from abroad. • Stipulates the right to information, right to file a civil suit, and the right to return home. • Allows migrant workers to lodge criminal cases for deception or fraud against recruiting, visa, and travel agencies, as well as employers. • Endorses migrants and their families' rights to lodge criminal cases against deception and civil cases for seeking compensation. • Provides various penalties for sending migrant workers abroad in an unlawful manner; charging unlawful fees; using unfair means for collecting demand note; providing fraudulent visa or work permit or trading in such documents.
The Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016

Source: Benjamin Etzold, 2015, Islam, 2019b & Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, 2019.

Recently, the MoEWOE has formulated a Consolidated Action Plan. The Consolidated Action Plan is a document which builds on the government's Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy (EWOEP 2016) Action Plan and will link it with the government's other existing plans and commitments, including but not limited to the: i) 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2021); ii) Sustainable Development Goals; iii) Istanbul Program of Action for Least Developed Countries; and iv) Committee on Migrant Workers 2017 Concluding Observations.

5. Migrant needs: Interviews with migrants

5.1 Qualitative findings of potential and outgoing migrants

In the information needs assessment study, potential migrants are defined as those migrants who have decided to migrate abroad within the next 2 years and are in the pre-decision stage either as regular or irregular migrants. Whereas outgoing migrants are those who are now ready to go abroad, having completed the formalities such as pre-departure training, health check-ups, passports and visas.

Twenty-three male and 17 female potential and outgoing migrants were interviewed by using semi-structured interview guidelines on issues pertaining to pre-migration stage, migration journey, and migration-related information sources that they perceive as reliable and how the MRC could help them in this regard.

In addition, 6 FGDs were conducted with male and female potential and outgoing migrants on preferred countries of destination, reasons or drivers of migration, challenges faced by migrants in trying to migrate abroad, and what needs to be done to overcome these challenges.

This chapter is mainly focused on the kind of information migrants lack, ways to reach the migrants, reliable sources of information, preferred type of social media used, plans of using remittances back home, types of support preferred from an information centre and lastly suggestions of what services migrants expect from the MRCs.

5.1.1 Migration process

5.1.1.1 Pre-departure stage

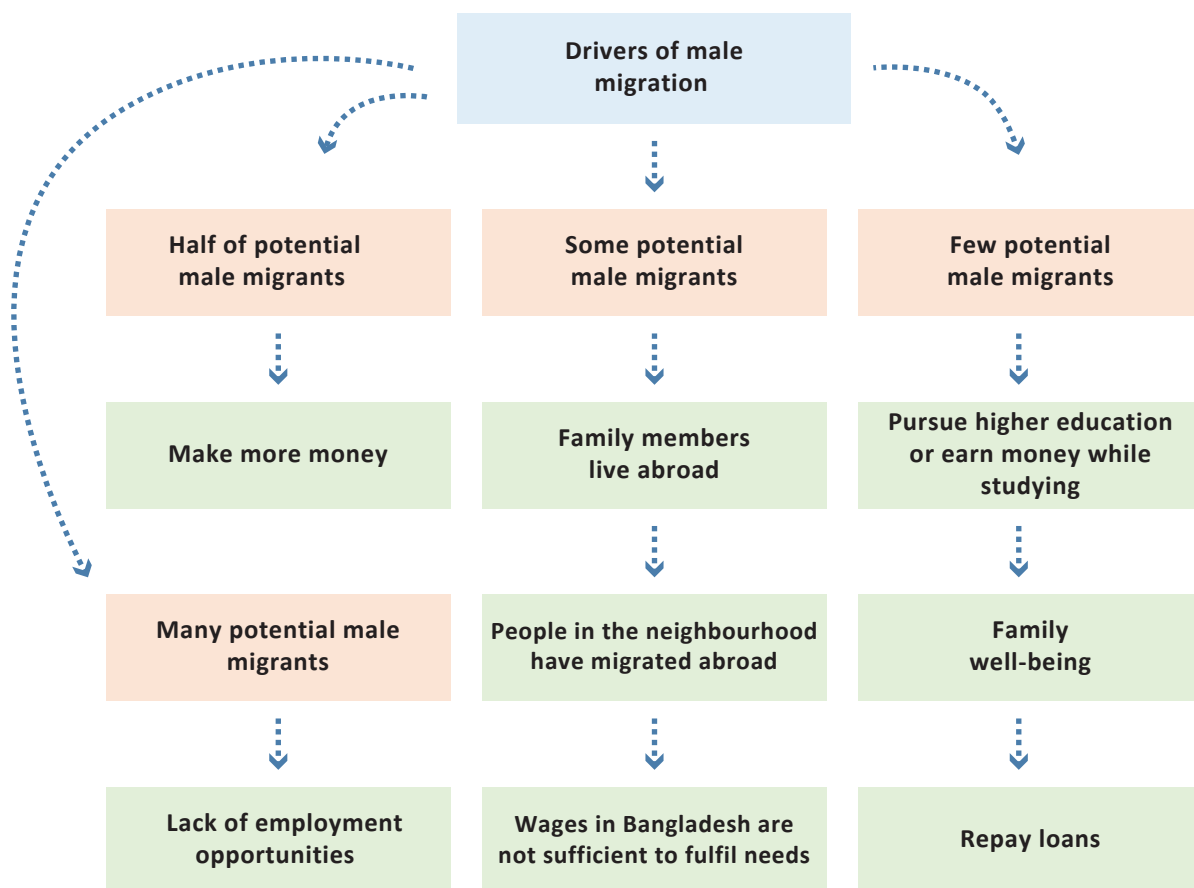
The pre-migration stage includes the urge to migrate, drivers motivating migration, decision-making, choosing the country of destination, and planning when to migrate. The various reasons for potential migrants, both men and women, planning to migrate abroad, while at times diverse for different genders, often overlap.

Based on the figure given below on information of drivers for migration, it could be concluded that traditionally, men are regarded as heads of households and the earning member of the family. Therefore, they seek financial stability. They decide to go abroad for employment when there is a lack of sustainable jobs or work opportunities at home.

Women on the other hand care for family members and do not often work. Under certain circumstances, they go abroad to earn money for the well-being of their families and children. Other reasons for migration are wedding expenses, especially dowries, which place a heavy burden on poor families, who either have to take loans or sell their assets to fulfil the dowry demand.⁸⁹

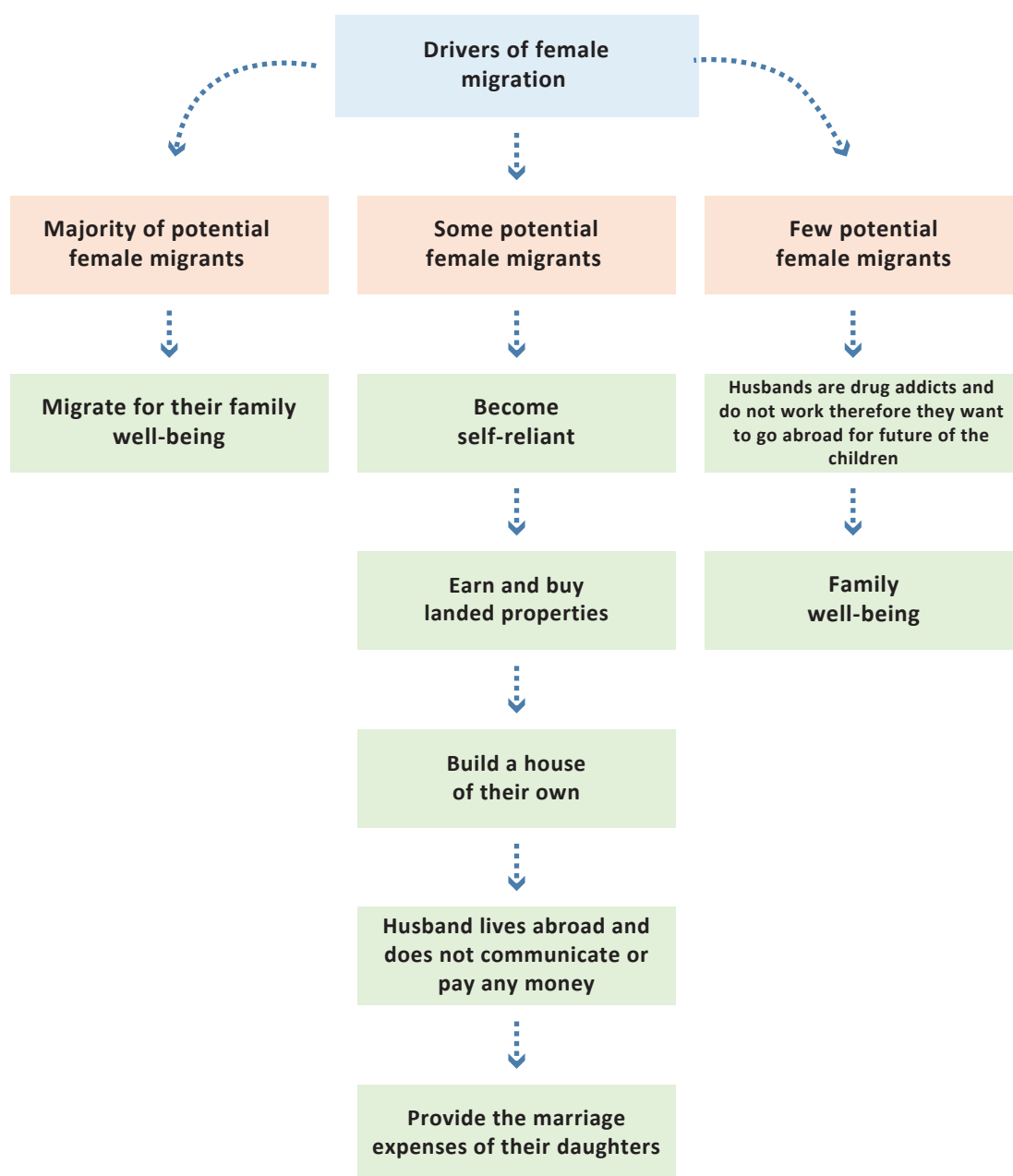
89. Jahan, 1994; Kamruzzaman and Rahman, 2009

Figure 5.1: Drivers of migration for men



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

Figure 5.2: Drivers of migration for women



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

The male potential migrants in the FGDs identified financial benefits such as higher income, more savings and job opportunities, as well as education, as the most important drivers. On the other hand, female potential migrants emphasized poor financial conditions due to lack of employment, as well as social problems such as divorce, separation and domestic violence. Therefore, they aspire to go abroad to become self-reliant, independent and earn a decent living for their family.

Those who wanted to go to Europe on a student visa have to go to India to apply for a visa because most of the European countries do not have an application system for a student visa from Bangladesh.

In the FGDs, female participants identified many challenges and obstacles faced by migrants in trying to migrate abroad such as being deceived by dalals or sub-agents as they did not have accurate information about wages, allowance, working hours and nature of their visa. Social and family barriers were also a hindrance. Women still need permission from male family members to go outside their homes, as a result, they end up giving more money to sub-agents than they planned to if they want to go abroad.

The majority of the male potential migrants were influenced in their decision-making either by family members, friends or people they know in the neighbourhood. Most of the female potential migrants were influenced by intermediaries, neighbours, family members, Union Parishad Secretaries, and relatives who already lived abroad, with potential migrants feeling secure of their relatives' support if faced with any problems abroad. Nonetheless, migrants are cautious of going abroad due to being aware of the realities of labour migration.

“

The dalals promise the company visa and sell the migrant to the employer. Employers do not pay properly. Have to work overtime (FGD-Dh-PM-M-1). ”

“

Employers do not allow communication with families at home. If migrants do not listen to their employers' wishes, they are kept under house arrest. Employers do not even let them eat (FGD-Ra-PM-F-1). ”

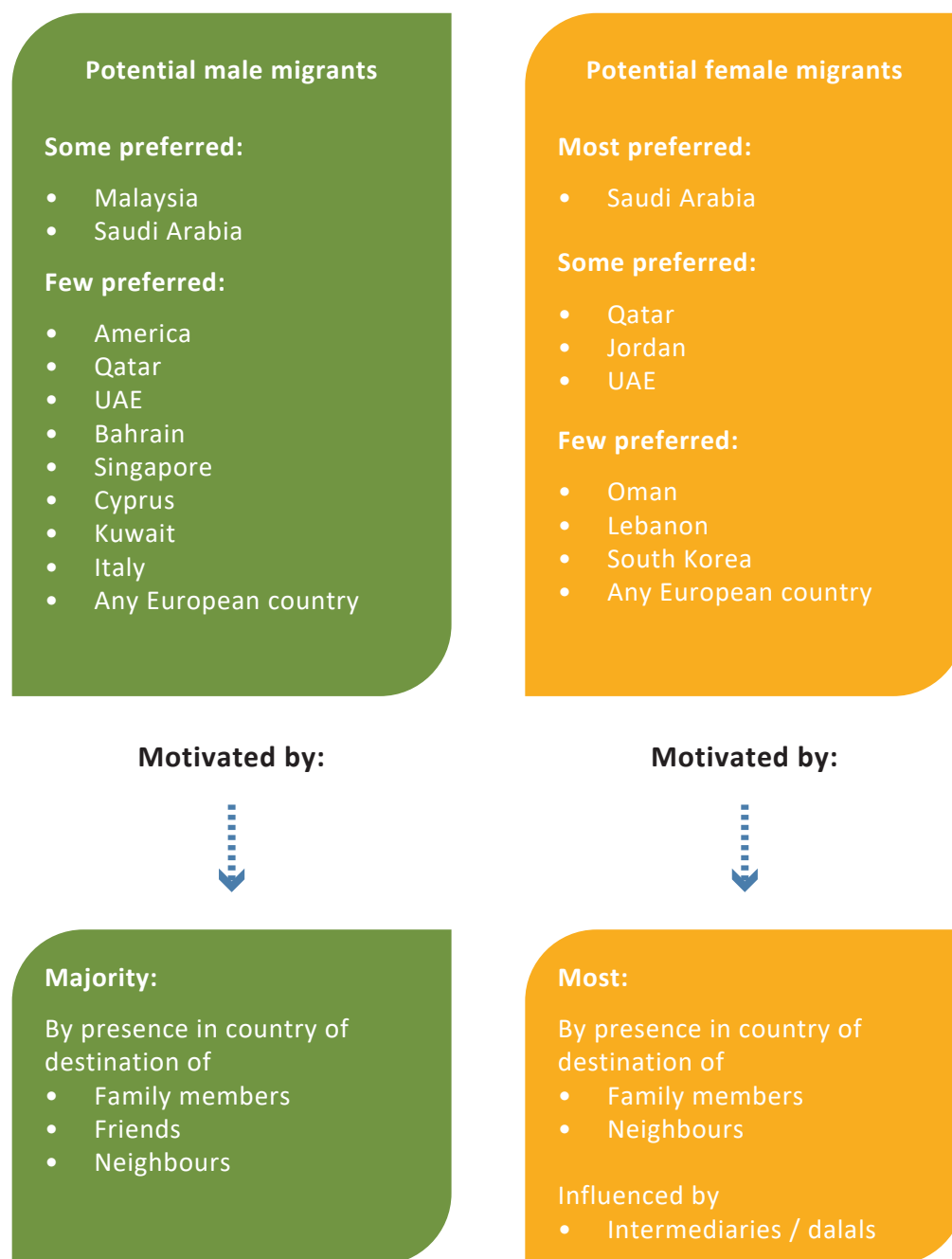
The majority of the male migrants interviewed chose the destination country or region by the presence of their family members, friends and neighbours. Most women also chose countries by the presence of their family members and neighbours. They were additionally influenced by intermediaries; most women depended on dalals. In the case of rural women, due to mobility restrictions, dalals, who are known in the village, had access to and could easily convince women to migrate for have a better future, especially those women who faced domestic violence and neglect. Once women showed interest in migrating, they became easy prey of the dalals, who exploited their lack of knowledge regarding migration.⁹⁰

With regard to the destination country, some of the men interviewed preferred Malaysia and Saudi Arabia while a few of them wanted to go to America, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Singapore, Cyprus, Kuwait, Italy, or to any European country. Most of the female potential migrants preferred to go to Saudi Arabia, followed by some who preferred to go to Qatar, Jordan, and the UAE. A few preferred Oman, Lebanon, South Korea or any European country.

Most women preferred to go to Muslim countries where they felt they could perform their religious duties. Saudi Arabia was preferred, as many others had gone there, and women could also perform Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage).

90. Siddiqui, 2001

Figure 5.3: Motivated by and country of choice of potential migrants



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

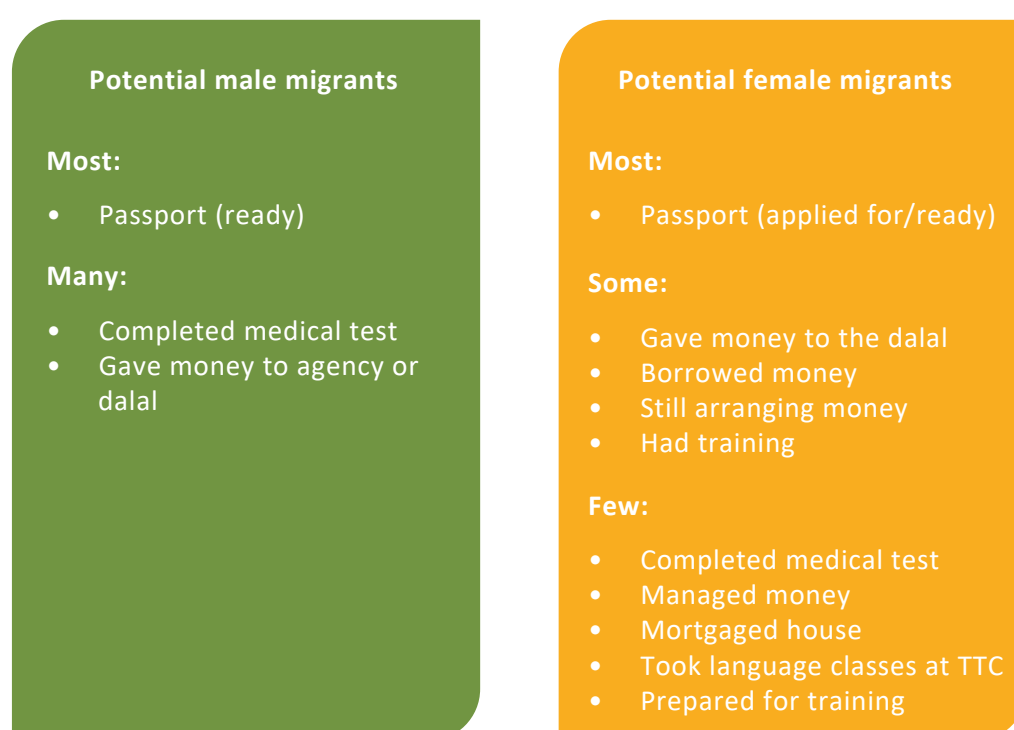
Some of the men were planning to go in the next two months or within one year, while a few wanted to leave as soon as possible, in the next 4-6 months. Most of them planned to stay for a longer period of time, for example 5-10 years. Most female potential migrants were planning to go in the next year, while some were planning to go in the next few months, if the COVID situation normalized. Most of them planned to stay for a longer period of time, for example 5-6 years, some wanted to stay abroad for 3-4 years and 2 years.

5.1.1.2 Expectations for the migration journey and remittances

The migration journey starts from the preparatory phase of the migration process, with arrangements for going abroad. According to responses, men were better prepared for their migration than women and were more self-organized and less dependent on dalals or sub-agents.

Most of the male respondents were willing to go alone, some preferred to go with other people, although almost half of the male migrants did not know the people with whom they were going. Where people knew each other, they were mostly neighbours. In the case of women, the majority were going alone, some who were going with other people, although many did not know who those people were.

Figure 5.4: Motivated by and country of choice of potential migrants



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

With regard to support with the arrangements of going abroad, some of the male migrants said that family members (father, mother, brother) support them while some said that they received help from the dalals or sub-agents (PM-Cu-M-1). One woman stated that she got help from a women's organization that is providing assistance and raising awareness about pre-departure orientation at the grassroots level and she was one of the participants in their orientation session (PM-Nj-F-2).

Private recruiting agencies are all Dhaka based and do not have village or union level offices. They carry out their recruitment activities through local dalals, who represent them at the local level.⁹¹ Most of the male potential migrants were knowledgeable about the recruitment agencies at Dhaka, compared to only one woman who had that knowledge (PM-Nj-F-2). An overwhelming majority of female migrants depended solely on the local dalals or sub-agents.

When discussing remittances in the FGDs, most of the male and female potential migrants said that they would be used for meeting the monthly expenses of the family, children's education, home repair and construction, purchase of land, the payment of mortgage and loans, saving money to run a business, arranging the wedding of children, especially daughters.

5.1.2 Information needs of potential migrants

Many of the male potential migrants felt that they had sufficient information for going abroad, in contrast to the majority of female potential migrants, who felt that they had insufficient information. However, the majority of both male and female potential migrants stated that they preferred an information centre such as the MRC for migration-related information, compared to only a few who preferred help from dalals. Men believed that if there was an information centre in their area, then, of course, they would receive the correct information, would not have to go to Dhaka to process their migration (PM-Cu-M-1; PM-Cu-M-2; PM-Cu-M-3; PM-Dh-M-1; PM-Dh-M-2; PM-Dh-M-3; PM-Dh-M-4; PM-Dh-M-5; PM-Nj-M-1; PM-Nj-M-2; PM-Nj-M-3; PM-Nj-M-4; PM-Na-M-1; PM-Na-M-2; PM-Na-M-3; PM-Ra-M-1; PM-Ra-M-2; PM-Ra-M-3; PM-Ra-M-4; PM-Sa-M-1; PM-Sa-M-2; PM-Sa-M-3; PM-Sa-M-4). Women also agreed that they will be benefitted because an MRC would reduce their dependency on dalals (PM-Cu-F-1; PM-Cu-F-2; PM-Cu-F-3; PM-Cu-F-4; PM-Dh-F-1; PM-Dh-F-2; PM-Dh-F-3; PM-Nj-F-1; PM-Nj-F-2; PM-Nj-F-3; PM-Na-F-1; PM-Na-F-2; PM-Na-F-3; PM-Ra-F-1; PM-Ra-F-2; PM-Sa-F-1; PM-Sa-F-2).

Most male and female potential migrants believed that the information provided by the MRCs would be more relevant, reliable and authentic than information provided by dalals. This expression of trust in public institutions by potential migrants suggests a change of attitude, which is likely a result of awareness-raising activities of NGOs and CBOs at the grassroots level.⁹²

While individual males responded that they preferred to gather information from the DEMO office in Dhaka because it is a government institution and reliable, others said that they preferred information from the dalals, because “He is my mentor” (PM-Nj-M-1).

A few female potential migrants opined that as they do not have a clear idea about the information centre, they rely on dalals because they feel that the dalals will help them when they will face any danger. At the same time, the majority of women confirmed that there was a possibility of being deceived and trafficked by dalals. Moreover, dalals do not give accurate information so it is better to get information from the information centre.

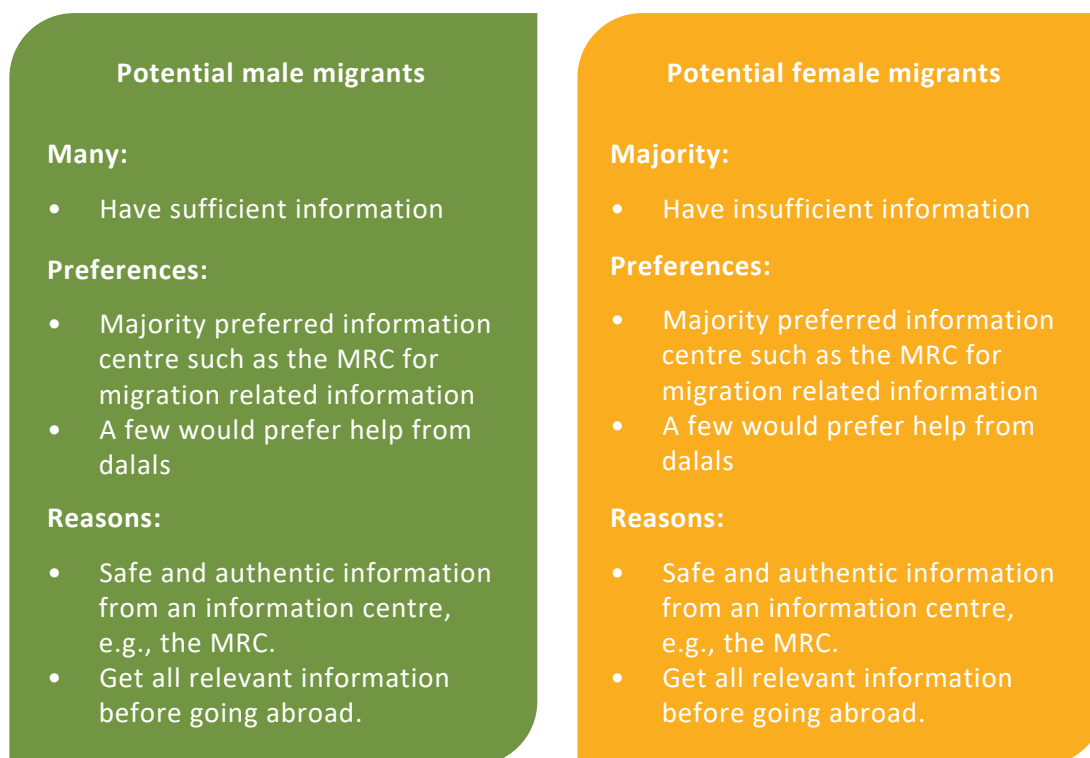
Potential male and female migrants' most needed information was the nature of work and wages. Men were interested to know the job contract before migrating and whether the passport and written contract were correct. They also wanted to know about the nature of work, working hours and wages, how to get the citizenship, learn the language and the kind of harassment they would face. Women were mostly employed as live-in domestic workers. Potential female migrants, therefore, wanted to know about the work they would have to do, food, housing and accommodation, the living conditions and how to learn the language for easy communication.

A few men wanted to know how to get a visa from European countries, information related to schools, colleges, and universities in those countries, if he could study there, and the possibility of working while studying.

91. Munier and Nargis, 2019

92. Shamim, 2011

Figure 5.5: Information for going abroad, preferences and reasons



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

Most of the male and female potential migrants knew about the destination country of which they are targeting to migrate soon. Some male potential migrant workers had been informed that they would be employed as drivers and waiters at restaurants. The majority of female potential migrants would be employed as domestic workers. An overwhelming majority of male and female potential migrants knew that they had to sign a contract before leaving for the country of destination. Some women were concerned with their safety and security and wanted to know how the employer would behave, the kind of work they would have to do and what the working hours were. A few women wanted to know whether they would be treated well or tortured and where to get assistance.

All potential migrants who participated in the FGDs agreed that a community/district-level information centre would be helpful for them, especially if it would assist them in obtaining or verifying passports, visas and contracts. Many felt that they will get information on the destination country, the proper way to go, migration cost, facilities, as well as information about a reliable agency.

Some wanted the MRC to inform about and assist with government procedures of sending people abroad, where to get loans on easy terms, the present global migration situation, arrangements for regular communication with family members in Bangladesh, assured assistance of the Bangladesh embassy. In addition, female potential migrants wanted the information centre to organize awareness meetings and conduct training on the culture of the destination country.

Most of the women who participated in the FGDs opined that they do not know the necessary information; where job training is provided; where to go to learn the language; where to go if there is a problem with the job contract abroad. Some of them admitted that they also lack information about accommodation and food, how much do these cost, what to do if they are in danger abroad, where to go, and where to get a passport.

“

In our country, a potential migrant falls into an abyss after entering the process of going abroad, because he does not know where to go, who to go to; he does not know his needs, so he does not know the solution. He does exactly what the dalal or the agency says. (FDG-Sa-PM-M-1). ”

“

When I went to check my visa to Jordan, an official said, ‘We do not check the visa to go to Jordan’. (FGD-Nj-PM-M-1). ”

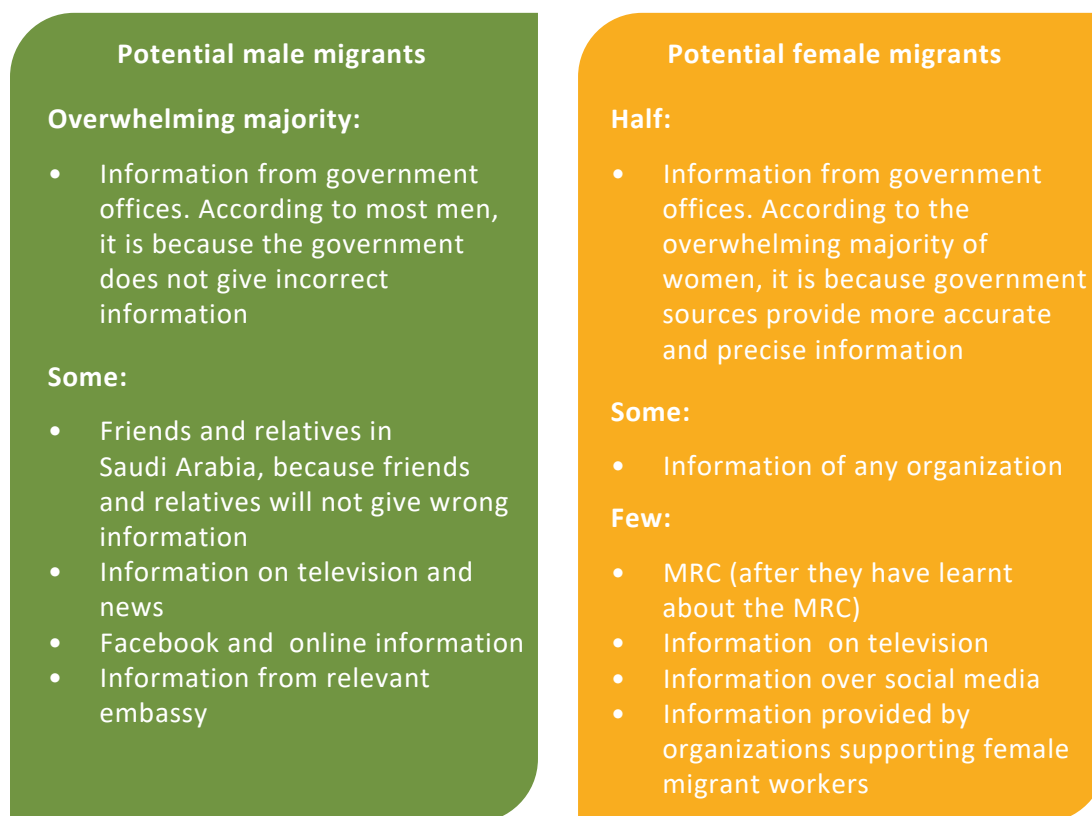
5.1.3 Information sources

When it comes to reliable information sources, an overwhelming number of male potential migrants and about half of the female potential migrants interviewed regarded information of the government office to be correct. Some men said that the information from friends and relatives in Saudi Arabia seemed more reliable, as friends and relatives will not give wrong information. Information from television, news, Facebook, online and from relevant embassies were also considered reliable. While some women thought information of other organizations could be reliable. This was followed by a few women, who found information broadcast over government television channels to be reliable, as well as social media and information provided by organizations supporting female migrant workers. They also said that they have no references other than dalals.

“

We have been believing in the information given by the dalals for a long time. It might not have taken so long to get the relevant information if we could get the right information earlier. Moreover, we believe that a known dalal would not deceive (PM-Cu-M-2). ”

Figure 5.6: Reliable sources of information with reasons



Source: Author’s own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.


Based on the above information, it could be concluded that potential migrants have more trust in government sources and migrant organizations. Moreover, they believed that relatives and friends who had been abroad to provide them with correct information about the destination country.

It was revealed that rural people do not have access to the internet and cannot read the information provided on social media. However, some, who did have access, pointed out that migration-related information obtained from Facebook, WhatsApp, may not be accurate unless they have their own verified homepage.

Participating male and female potential migrants in the FGDs believed that government offices or Union Parishads were the most reliable for migration information. Many male participants said that they generally consider the news and notifications published by the government in newspapers, radio and television to be reliable. On the other hand, migration information from social media such as Facebook and other online-based sources were mainly preferred by relatively young respondents.

At the same time, potential migrants asserted that they do not get any information other than from dalals or sub-agents. This statement echoes the reality of almost all potential migrants seeking support from dalals for migration purposes. Some female potential migrants also considered information provided by relatives and neighbours as well as from street dramas as reliable.



Social media information is not credible in most cases because through these media, a lot of wrongs and fake information are given. Often people use social media as a means of deception (FGD-Sa-PM-M-1). 

Among the potential and outgoing migrants, most male, but few female, potential migrants attended awareness-raising programmes at the village level such as courtyard meetings organized by NGOs, or drama staged about migration at the Union Parishad which depicted the dangers of going abroad illegally (PM-Na-M-1; PM-Ra-M-4; PM-Nj-M-2) and prevention human trafficking.

Additionally, in the FGDs, the majority of the female potential migrants suggested that the best ways to reach potential migrants in their region was through the chairpersons of the Union Parishad. They suggested establishing an information centres at district and Upazila levels, via leaflets, posters, signboards and billboards; organizing courtyard meetings at the village level; providing regular bulletins on television and radio; and door-to-door awareness campaigns and displaying banners. Some of them stressed the need to establish a 24-hour 7-day a week call centre.

5.1.4 Information and services expected from Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)

Potential migrants were in agreement that the MRC would benefit them immensely and the main advantage would be getting accurate information, checking required documents, and providing support whenever there are complaints.

Figure 5.7: Information and services expected by potential migrants from mrc



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

Almost all the male participants in the FGDs noted that "More information service centres such as the MRCs need to be launched. The authorities should make sure that this kind of service continues and become sustainable" (FGD-Dh-PM-M-1). Moreover, it has become a custom to pay BDT 3,000-10,000 (approx. EUR 30-100) for a police verification certificate which is an exorbitant amount of money. Participants hope that steps will be taken to stop these malpractices.

All female potential migrants attending the FGDs wanted an information centre in their area; then they would not be deceived or harassed because it would be a government office. The women also wanted to go abroad through government channels, without brokers in between, and to take measures so that they were safe and secure during their journey abroad.

Besides confirming the information and service requests of potential migrants, some of the FGD male participants suggested that if someone wants to go abroad, migrant information centres should help them with everything from the first to last step.



We also hope that we will be able to follow all the legal procedures with the support of MRCs to go abroad to avoid the illegal means to go abroad (PM-Dh-M-4). ”

5.2 Qualitative findings of returnees

Returnee migrants are defined as those who stayed abroad at least six months and returned to Bangladesh within the last five years and who had either a regular or irregular work and/or residence status in the destination country. Nineteen male and 21 female returnees were interviewed by using semi-structured interview guidelines on broad issues pertaining to the migration process, employment abroad in destination countries, return back home and information needs of migrants. In addition, six FGD were conducted with male and female returnee migrants on the type of support preferred and suggestions of what services they expect from the MRCs.

5.2.1 Migration process

5.2.1.1 Pre-departure stage

There were various reasons that prompted migrants to migrate from Bangladesh. The majority of migrants, both men and women, went abroad for the financial solvency of their families, while some wanted to be self-reliant. There were a handful of men who went abroad due to lack of employment opportunities in the country compared to some women who planned to go abroad to save money to buy assets like land.

Several studies have documented that in rural areas, the land is a symbol of honour and status. However, women can rarely claim their property rights either of their parental property or of their husband's property. Although it is a legal right, women face discrimination when they are abandoned, divorced or are widowed. They are sometimes driven out of the house to fend for themselves. Therefore, female potential migrants aspire to buy land, especially homestead land, in their own name for social security so they cannot not be driven out of it.⁹³

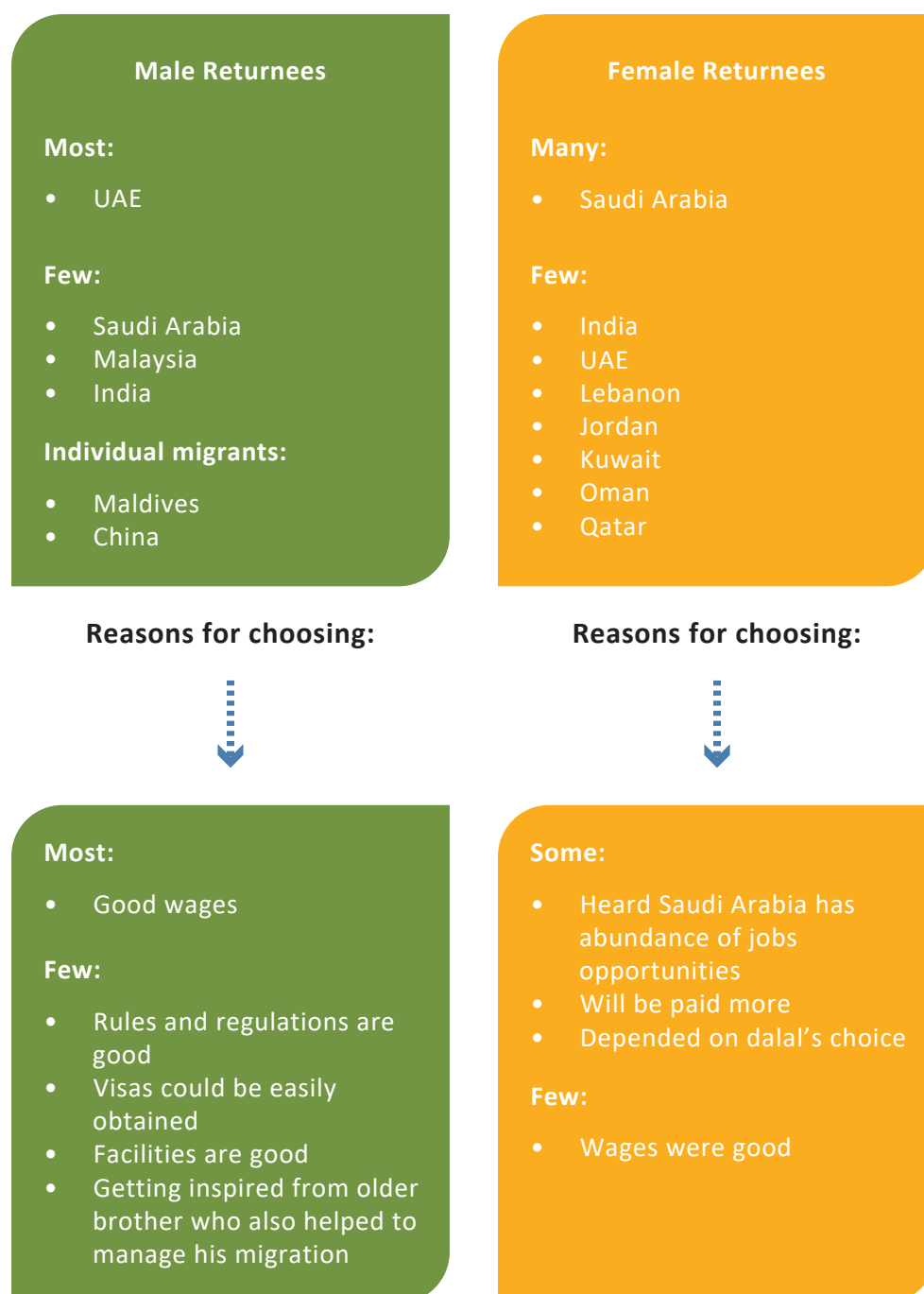
With regard to organizations that supported migrants throughout their migration process, the most frequent answer was dalals in the area. Some male and female migrants were helped by their family members; men were helped with money, and women were assisted generally. Only one woman organized her migration process by herself, without the help of dalals (RM-Nj-F-2).

With regard to the money spent on migration, some male migrants paid between BDT 200,000 and 400,000 (approximately EUR 1,942-3,884), compared to many female migrants, who paid between BDT 6,000 and 50,000 (approximately EUR 58 and 485). For women, the costs are lower because most female migrants were unskilled and worked as domestic workers abroad, earning lower wages compared to men who were employed in higher-income jobs.

With regard to the countries they migrated to, most of the male migrants travelled to the UAE, followed by a few who went to Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and India, with individual migrants who went to the Maldives and China. Some male migrants worked in more than one country, first travelling to Malaysia then to Saudi Arabia, first to Bahrain and then to Oman, first to Lebanon and later to Saudi Arabia. The same was true of female returnees who first migrated to Saudi Arabia followed by a few who went to India, UAE, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar.

93. Hartmann and Boyce, 1983; Jinnah, 2013

Figure 5.8: Returnees by destination country with reasons



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

For some male migrants, the reasons for choosing the above destination countries were good wages. A few male migrants chose countries based on easier migration rules, regulations and facilities, together with visas being easier to obtain. Female migrants preferred Saudi Arabia mainly because the country had better prospects, many job opportunities and well-paid salaries. Moreover, it is a Muslim country with shared religious values and norms and strictly adhered to purdah or veiling practices.

5.2.1.2 Expectations of migrants

Migrants expected employment abroad to bring changes in their and their families' lives. Unfortunately, many of them were disappointed.

“

Employment abroad has not brought much change for the migrants and their families. Contrarily, they had to go abroad and return home with loans. After all, financial development is far from a certainty. Some people are living in more financial crisis than ever before (FGD-Cu-RM-M-1). ”

“

Overseas employment has given women migrants financial well-being and respect, made them self-reliant, but in many cases, they have become destitute, have lost respect and dignity just by going abroad (FGD-Cu-RM-F-1). ”

During the FGDs, men agreed that their economic situation had improved. They could repay their loans, renovate their homes and support all the members of the family. But in the case of women, they did not have much money for family expenses, as they did not get the job or the wages that they were promised or returned to their country due to hardship and exploitation at the workplace.

5.2.1.3 Challenges and employment conditions abroad

Migrants faced various challenges such as language barriers, not being paid properly, no payment for extra working hours, bad living conditions and insufficient food.

During the FGDs, male returnees narrated that there were inconsistencies in various clauses of their contracts such as wages, allowance, working hours, accommodation and medical facilities; employers seized their passport, thereby restricting their freedom of movement. Some of them were abused and exploited. The biggest problem was being promised one job but getting another.

One respondent went to China on a student visa. He expected the courses to be taught in English, but the teaching medium was Chinese. He was also not provided the promised scholarship. Ultimately, he had to return.

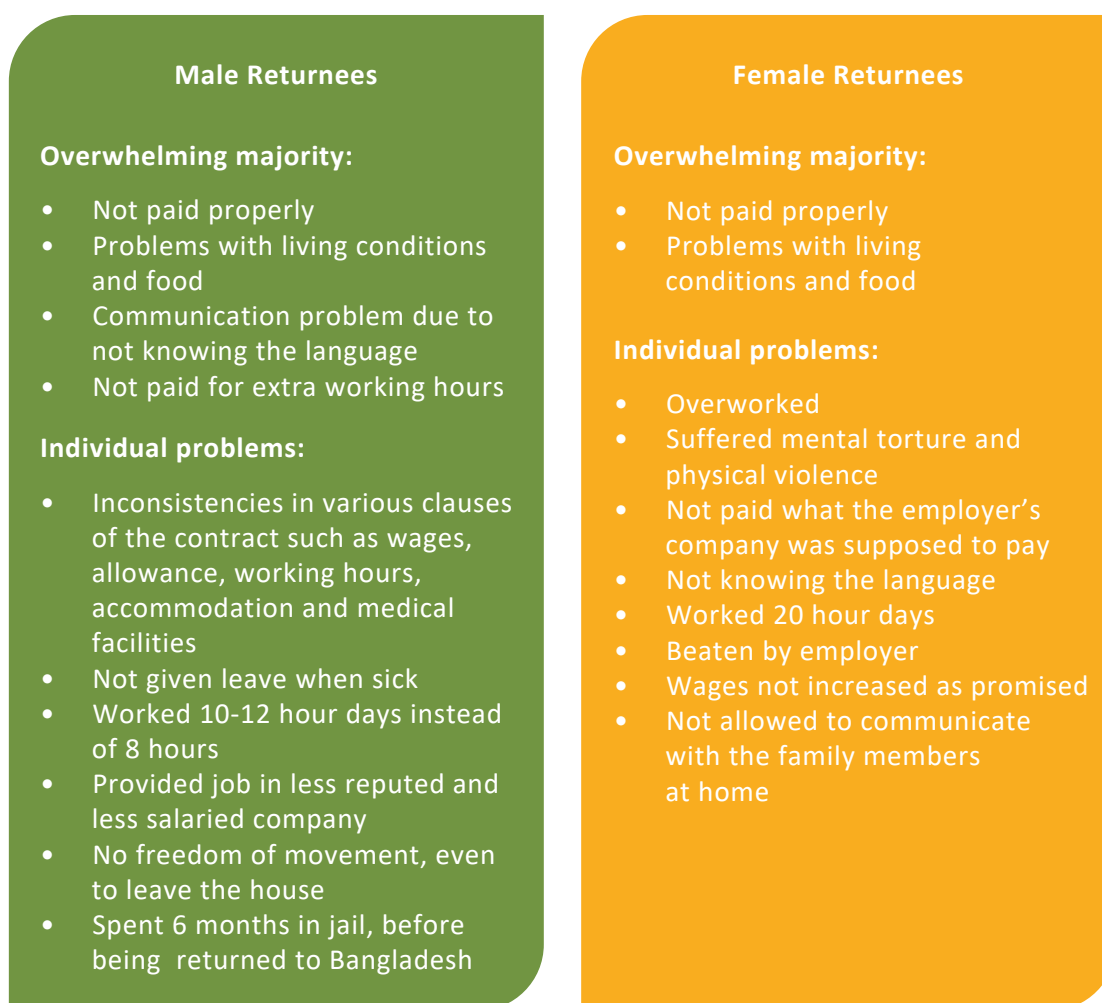
In the FGDs, female returnees said that they had no rights and no freedom. Even talking to someone outside the employer's house was a punishable offense, especially if it was a Bangladeshi. They were also physically and mentally abused and exploited (FGD-Dh-RM-F-1).

An overwhelming majority of male migrants said that they were exploited, for example, most were deprived of fair wages, allowance or medical treatment. With regards to individual returnees interviewed, while men were exploited, most female migrants were exploited as well as sexually and physically abused, including being beaten by the employer; being victims of sexual harassment; not being paid properly for several consecutive months leaving them without money and no other option than to borrow money from other Bangladeshis. A few women said that they were not treated humanely, were not provided sufficient food and were locked inside the house.

“

My employer confiscated the documents without paying for several months in a row. Then in the pursuit of life and livelihood I ran away from the employer's house and started living as an illegal migrant. During that time, other Bangladeshi migrants helped me in various ways (FGD-Nj-RM-F-1). ”

Figure 5.9: Challenges faced by migrants in destination country



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

Most migrants were not helped to resolve the challenges they faced abroad. Migrants had to find ways to resolve their problems, either by themselves, with the help of other Bangladeshis, or with the help of their families back home.

Figure 5.10: Ways migrants resolved challenges in destination country

Ways returnee migrants resolved challenges

- A few men were supported by Bangladeshis, including acquaintances, living abroad
- Some migrants borrowed money from various people, mostly Bangladeshis
- Medical treatment was sought at the migrants' own expense, with family in Bangladesh needing to send money
- A well-known Bangladeshi bought medicines for migrants
- Brought food items on credit
- Bangladeshis in the country of destination helped each other to learn the language
- Female domestic workers left the employer's house and informed the police who took them either to the police station or to the Bangladesh embassy
- Returned home after family members sent money

Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

According to the majority of migrants, Bangladesh embassies did little to assist, only helping migrants to renew their passports. However, one of the male returnees said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the embassy provided advice and assisted him to return to Bangladesh (RM-Cu-M-2; RM-Cu-M-4; RM-Dh-M-2; RM-Nj-M-3; RM-Na-M-1; RM-Na-M-2; RM-Na-M-3; RM-Na-M-4; RM-Ra-M-1; RM-Sa-M-1; RM-Nj-M-1; RM-Nj-M-2).

Female migrants said that they had limited opportunity to communicate with the embassy. Additionally, the embassy did not assist them. A few female migrants did state that the embassy personnel did inquire about their working situation and well-being over the phone, and in certain cases did follow up, for instance, making all arrangements for one female migrant to return to Bangladesh (RM-Nj-F-2; RM-Na-F-3; RM-Ra-F-1).

5.2.1.4 Return to Bangladesh: Reasons for and manner of return

With regard to their decision to return to Bangladesh, a few male returnees decided to return to Bangladesh after being caught by the police and imprisoned; the spread of COVID-19 pandemic; they were forcibly sent back by the company and because their passports were kept by the employers.

Male migrants also came back for individual reasons, including losing their jobs as the company's financial viability deteriorated; returning home for holidays just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; for some time not receiving proper wages or any wages at all.

Some female migrants left due to illness. A few left because the employer decided not to pay them and their visa had expired. Two of the women returned to Bangladesh due to family problems, and one woman returned due to mental health issues (RM-Cu-F-2; RM-Dh-F-3; RM-Dh-F-4; RM-Nj-F-2; RM-Nj-F-3; RM-Na-F-1; RM-Na-F-2; RM-Na-F-3; RM-Ra-F-2).

According to the FGDs, male migrants decided to return to Bangladesh mainly because of low salaries and allowances, with many having to borrow money in order to return. Others left due to illness; inadequate medical facilities; cost of visa renewal; being sent back by companies undergoing budget cuts; COVID-19 pandemic; and old age.

According to the FGDs, women decided to return to Bangladesh due to physical and mental illness; insufficient food; not being allowed sufficient time off to sleep; non-stop work without any rest periods. Many returned to escape being detained; due to physical abuse in the agency's office for wanting to return; COVID-19 pandemic; expiration of work contract; and low salaries and allowances.

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, both regular and irregular migrants were sent back to Bangladesh by the destination countries, especially the Gulf States, as there was a lockdown and many establishments were closed down. Many migrants were discharged and were forced to leave. Some migrants returned after having lost their job, being unable to obtain food and medicines, and no money for basic survival.

For many migrants, their company made all the arrangements to return to Bangladesh. A few migrants returned to Bangladesh with the help of their colleagues or through the Bangladesh embassy. “Police assisted one of the migrants to return by taking him through the jungle late at night; after being released, he returned to Bangladesh through a dalal.” (RM-Cu-M-2).

“

I was working in Oman. But I was unable to renew the legal documents, so those became invalid. Therefore, I was caught by the Oman police. After spending four months in jail, I bought a ticket by receiving money from the family back home (RM-Cu-M-1). ”

For most female migrants, the employer organized their return ticket. A few came back through the dalals. Only two women were assisted by family members (RM-Na-F-2). Based on the analysis, female migrants were not imprisoned, but assisted with their return by the police through the Bangladesh embassy (RM-Nj-F-2; RM-Ra-F-4; RM-Sa-F-4). Male returnees were either knowledgeable about how to return or received the information or assistance from the Bangladesh embassy; their employer; the police; a well-known Bangladeshi living in that country; a friend; or from a teacher.

In most cases, female migrants said that the employer had made all the arrangements. A few were assisted by the police, after escaping from their employer; informed by a dalal; or after contacting someone in Bangladesh.

During the FGDs, male returnees pointed out that the MoEWOE and the Bangladesh embassies in destination countries have a role to play in inquiring who wants to return. Some of them suggested to provide the necessary government funds to bring illegal migrants back to the country; those who are in foreign jails have to be released with legal assistance and work has to be arranged in that country, otherwise, arrangements have to be made to bring them back to Bangladesh.

During their FGDs, female returnees urged the Bangladesh government to have an agreement with the governments of the destination countries that dictate that information (about, for instance, jobs, housing, wages, working hours, and holidays) would be transparent and accurate. Bangladesh embassies must be made more accountable, responsive to migrants, enterprising and strong; and every legal migrant working in the destination country should be in constant touch with the embassy. Similarly, the embassy staff also need to be cooperative in their attitude towards Bangladeshi migrants and efficient in fulfilling their responsibilities.

5.2.1.5 In Bangladesh: Employment, remittances and challenges

Upon returning to Bangladesh, only a few male returnees interviewed were employed. Those few were involved in the transportation business, loan business, working as a sales representative in a private company, managing a grocery store and also working as a carpenter, driving a power tiller, driving a van and working as a labourer. During the FGDs, male returnees said they were involved in business: some bought cars and ran a rent-a-car business. Many female returnees invested money in businesses by engaging their sons; some paid out mortgaged land; and arranged the marriage of their daughters (FGD-Nj-RM-F-1; FGD-Sa-RM-F-1).

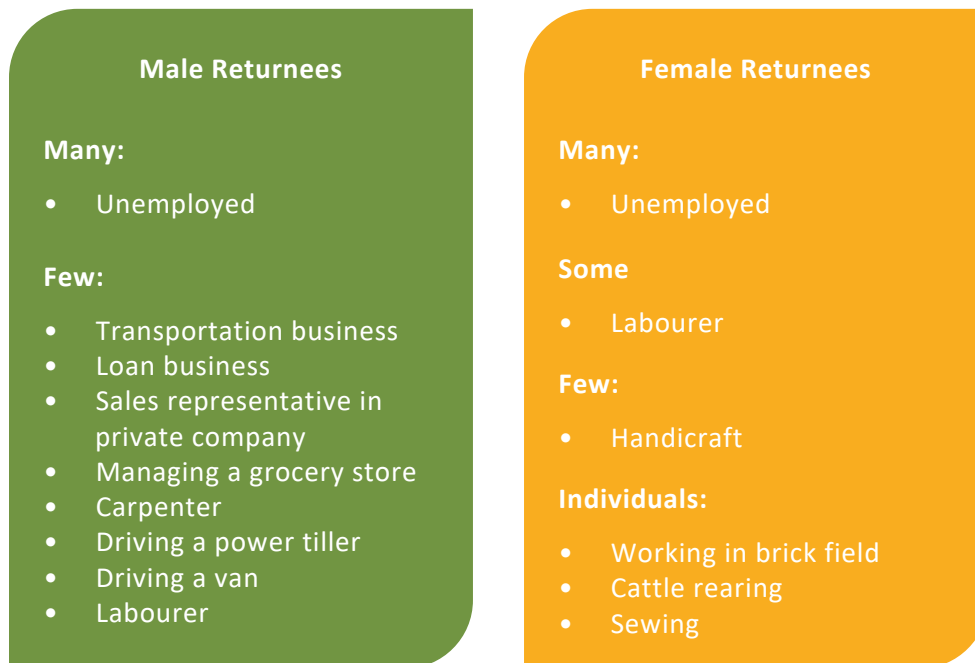
“

We had plans to do something back in the country, but we could not do anything as planned (FGD-Cu-RM-M-1). ”

“

When I was in danger abroad, it seemed that once I could return to the country, I would not even mention the name of the foreign country again! I will rather starve to death if that is my destiny and if it is necessary (FGD-Nj-RM-F-1). ”

Figure 5.11: Returnees' employment after return

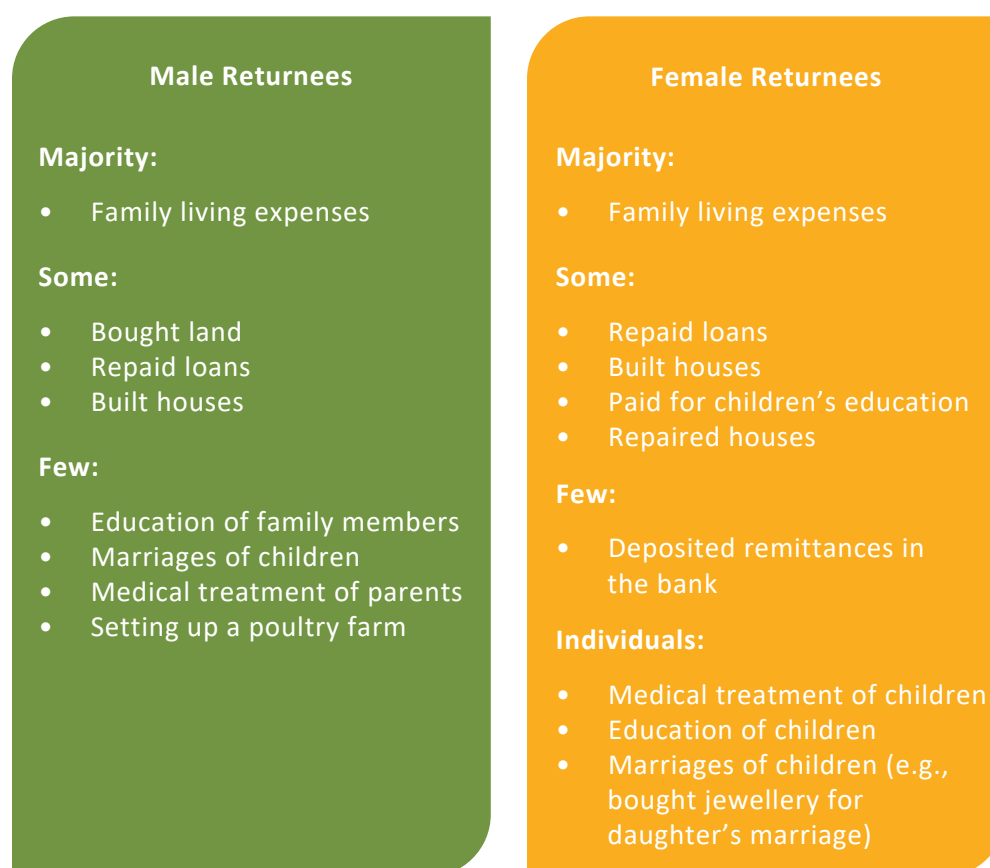


Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

With regards to remittances, only a few of the male returnees spent them supporting family members, such as paying for the cost of education, marriages, parents' medical treatment, or setting up a poultry farm. However, a few could not send any money.

In addition to buying, building and repairing their homes, female migrants' remittances were used for supporting family members. A few families of female migrants deposited the remittances in the bank (RM-Dh-F-3; RM-Na-F-1; RM-Ra-F-1). Some female migrants' remittances were used to pay for the cost of medical treatment, education and marriages of their children (RM-Cu-F-3; RM-Nj-F-2; RM-Nj-F-3; RM-Cu-F-3; RM-Na-F-2). One female respondent stated that she built a house (RM-Nj-F-3).

Figure 5.12: Use of remittances by migrants' families



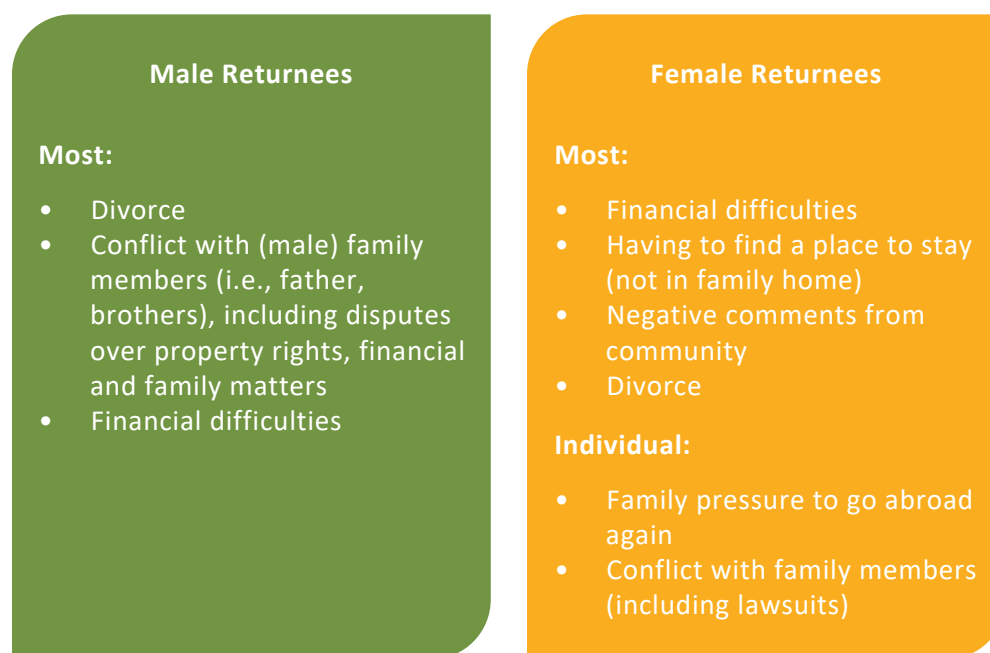
Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

While some returnees claimed that they did not take any loans for their migration, most of the male returnees faced problems paying off loans taken out for the migration journey. Most of the female migrants had no problems paying off the loans. Some of those who did, stated that they paid off the loans by working after returning to Bangladesh (RM-Dh-F-2; RM-Sa-F-3; Rm-Sa-F-2); with the help of family and friends; and selling off assets (i.e., cattle) (RM-Ra-F-2). One female returnee has not repaid her loan (RM-Sa-F-1).

An overwhelming majority of the female returnees did not receive financial support after their return, compared to the majority of the male migrants. A few women got financial assistance of BDT 8,500 (equivalent to EUR 85) from selected NGOs including the Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS), who is running a project aimed at providing support to returnee migrants.

While breaking up of the joint family system was common to both men and women returnee migrants, there are gender differences in the problems faced due to long absence from home.

Figure 5.13: Problems faced by families due to long absence



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

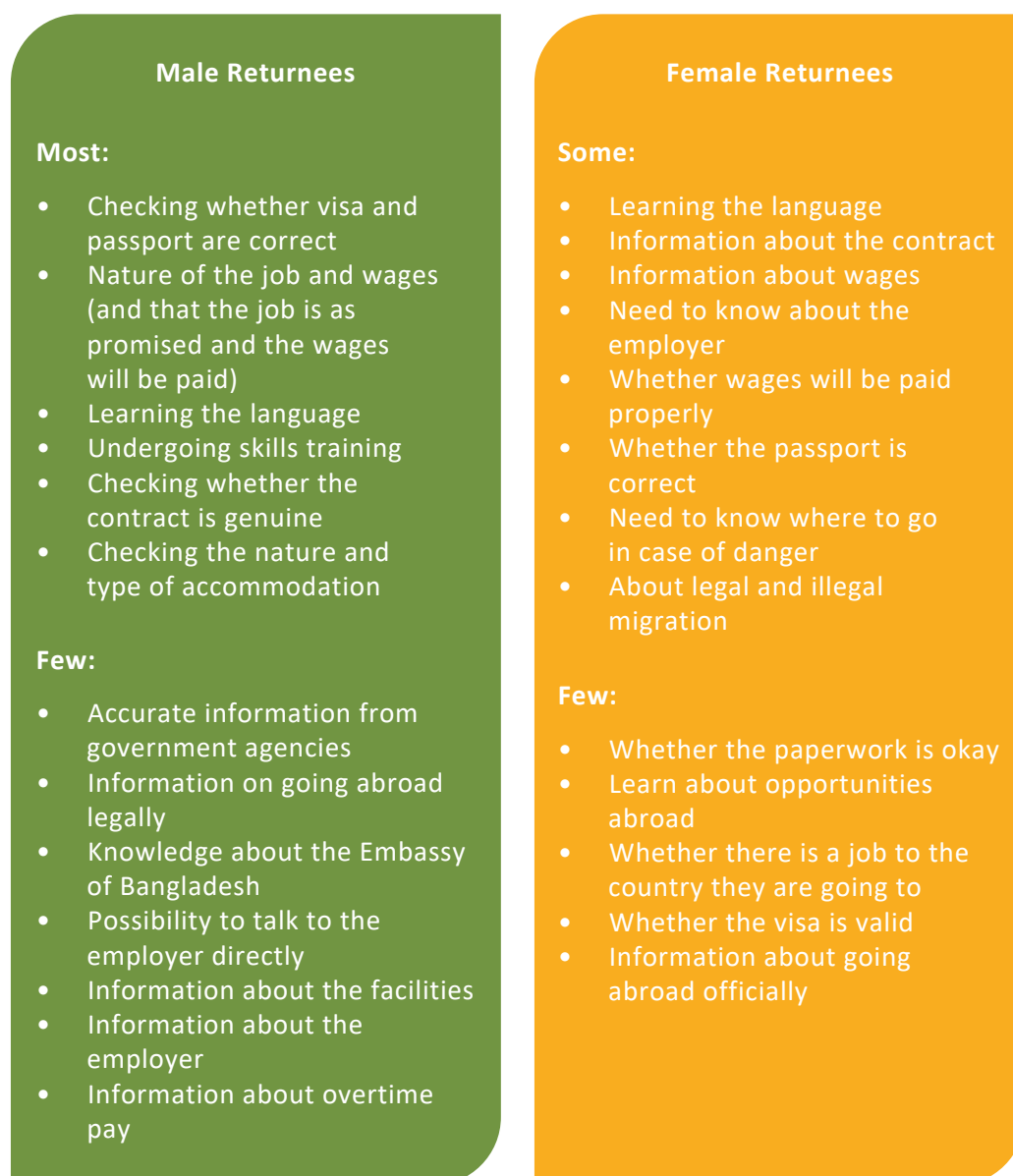
Male returnees' problems centred on disputes with other male family members, mainly regarding property rights. Some examples include a brother buying land with the migrants' remittances; a younger brother registering the father's property in his own name; an elder brother depriving the migrant of his share of the house (RM-Na-M-1; RM-Na-M-3; RM-Cu-M-4). In addition to financial problems and divorce, female returnees faced problems finding a place to live; and stigma from their community for migrating.

5.2.2 Information needs of returnees

Almost all participants in the FGDs, both men and women, agreed that they migrated without sufficient information. "Before we left Bangladesh, we lacked information, but we did not realize it while staying in the country. We went abroad and realized that we did not have enough information and preparation to go abroad. But then it was too late" (FGD-Cu-RM-M-1).

Based on the interviews with migrants, their information needs before going abroad were mostly regarding migration processes such as passports, visas, nature of employment abroad, including wages, extra pay for overtime. In addition to language and skills training, migrants needed information regarding government support services so that they could receive relevant and accurate information. Prior to deciding to migrate, migrants also need accurate information about the destination such as the working condition, wages, and about migrating legally. When these information needs are not properly met, migrants are more likely to face problems in the destination countries.

Figure 5.14: Information needs of returnees before going abroad



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

With regard to the information needs of migrants after their return, male migrants gave priority to information about how to get a small and medium enterprise loan. While the majority did not mention the information needed after their return, some female returnees needed information about where to get financial support and loans; and potential job opportunities, if any. A few female returnees wanted information on where to get legal assistance.

5.2.3 Information sources

All the FGD participants indicated they prefer to receive information from any government institution or agency; Union Parishad; and/or social media. The latter was considered the easiest and fastest way to receive information. However, most participants did not find the information from these sources acceptable and said, "These are not credible. Lots of wrongs and false information are given through these channels" (FGD-Nj-PM-M-1).

Men, in particular, felt more comfortable getting information about migration from social media platforms, such as Facebook. Women preferred various government initiatives, such as leaflet distribution, courtyard meetings. Some female FGD participants, however, stated that they did not know about social media platforms, information fairs, workshops, or seminars on migration-related information (FGD-Nj-RM-F-1). However, they opined that they would benefit more from using social media platforms, if they could be trained on how to access and use these platforms (FGD-Dh-RM-F-1).

5.2.4 Information and services expected from Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)

The majority of returnees agreed that a resource centre could support them in difficult situations abroad. The majority of male migrants felt that if there was a resource centre, it could solve their problems by coordinating with the Bangladesh embassies in destination countries. A few male migrants felt that, as the embassies are indifferent to Bangladeshi migrants, a resource centre would be able to solve their various problems while abroad, as well as provide them with information and advice on legal issues.

Female migrants felt that a resource centre could provide them with information about their employer and, if they had a problem, they could contact the government for help, while abroad or upon return. A few female migrants said that a resource centre could provide information regarding wages; conduct training of various work activities; organize awareness-raising meetings, such as courtyard meetings, and distribute leaflets with key messages.



As there was no resource centre, migrants did not know where to get compensation. One migrant did not get 30,000 dirhams as compensation for his finger being cut, but if there was an information centre, he thinks it would have provided assistance in this regard (RM-Cu-M-2).

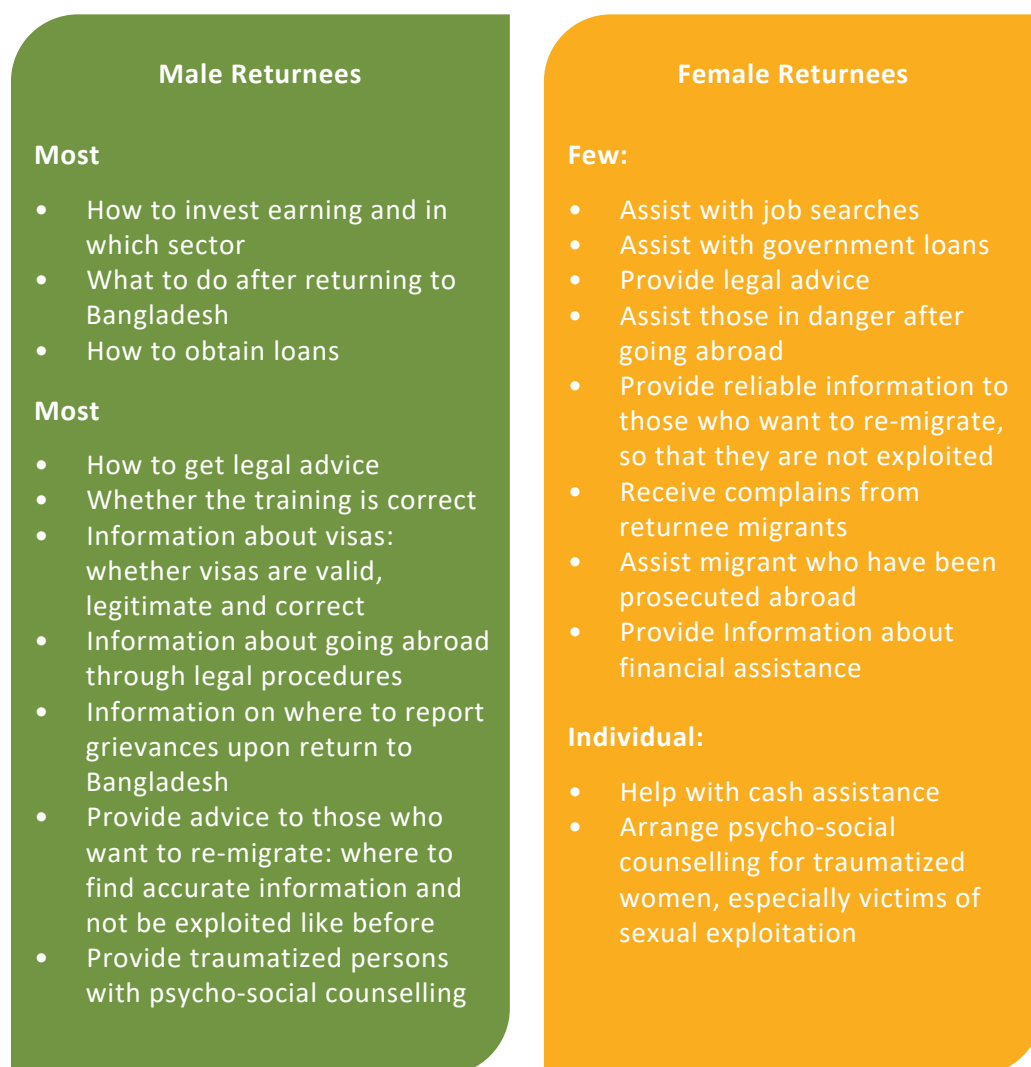


Returnee migrants who participated in the FGDs felt that resource centres such as the MRCs could also provide relevant information about the destination countries, such as whether the visa is correct; whether the company is legitimate; which agency is better; how and where migrants could learn the language of the destination country; and who could provide accurate information regarding problems with salaries, allowances, housing, working hours, leave, medical facilities and job contracts. Many felt that the MRCs could verify the information of the recruiting agencies; organize pre-departure orientation courses that could help in the overall preparation for going abroad; and ensure legal and regular migration by providing adequate and necessary information before going abroad and launching a hotline in this regard.

Most of the male returnees wanted the MRC to assist with what to do upon returning to Bangladesh; how to invest the earned money and in which sector; and how to get a loan, if returned without enough money. A few wanted to know how to get legal assistance; whether the training and visas were okay; information about the validity of their visas; information about going abroad through legal procedures; when migrants return, where they could report their grievances; if migrants want to go abroad again, where to receive the information and advice so that they are not exploited again; and traumatized persons could be provided with psycho-social counselling for their well-being.

A few female returnees were also interested in receiving legal advice; being able to file complaints; and information regarding re-migrating safely and not being exploited. Female returnees were also interested in finding employment; obtaining government loans; and financial assistance.

Figure 5.15: : Information and services expected by returnees from mrc



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

In the FGDs, returnees pointed out that the government should provide full cooperation to female workers while they are in the destination country. Exploited and abused female migrant workers must be compensated and dalals must stop trafficking and be punished if they do not. Some of their recommendations are as follows:

- A separate section should be opened in the embassy for female workers
- Loans should be arranged from PKB on favourable terms
- The government should bear the costs in the many cases, where women need legal assistance
- Bangladesh Embassies need to be more helpful, serious, and proactive
- The Bangladesh Government needs to be stricter in preventing human trafficking
- The Bangladesh Government needs to be more proactive and serious in protecting the human rights of the female workers to save them from all forms of abuse and exploitation and instruct Bangladesh Missions abroad accordingly
- Embassies need to set up an information service centre

5.2.5 Suggestions for potential migrants

While looking back to their migration process, returnees provided many suggestions for potential migrants. Returnees emphasized pre-departure training, the need to be well informed about the destination country and nature of work with special attention in learning the language for easy communication. In addition, potential migrants should always try to go legally by avoiding their dependency on dalals or sub-agents. Therefore, potential migrants should verify their passports, visas, and job contracts with reliable government agencies before migrating abroad.

Figure 5.16: Suggestions for potential migrants by returnees



Source: Author's own figure based on fieldwork data from migrant interviews and FGDs, 2020.

6. Migrants needs: Interviews with other stakeholders

6.1 Profile of migrants

Each year, the workforce of Bangladesh increases by between 2 and 2.2 million people. Only 500 to 600 thousand can get jobs, while others remain unemployed (KII-Dh-BM-1). Among the large number of the unemployed population are potential migrants.

“

“We have seen that while a large number of people wants to go abroad. Only a few of them possess the skills that the companies abroad and state-oriented employers require. More than half of the aspirant migrants do not have the least reading and writing ability” (KII-Dh-BM-1). ”

Historically, there has been less migration from the northern parts. People are less interested in international migration because they are less familiar with moving abroad for work. There are a few exceptions, such as the northern district of Sylhet, which has been a high migration district for several decades, because of their strong kinship ties. Whereas in the southern parts of Bangladesh, especially from Chattogram division, Tangail, Cumilla and Brahmanbaria, a large portion of the population migrate to different countries every year, including to the European Union and the Middle East. For instance, potential migrants from Madaripur, Shariatpur and Faridpur have a tendency to go to Italy, as there are many migrants from these districts already residing in Italy (KII-Dh-BM-1; KII-Dh-BR-1).

Table 6.1: Profile of migrants, including returnees

Criteria	Description
Geographical areas	<p>Generally potential migrants are from all over the country. However, the ratio of migrants from all 64 districts of Bangladesh is not the same. Most migrants are from 10-15 districts such as Cumilla, Chattagram, Dhaka, Brahmanbaria, Tangail and Chandpur.</p> <p>Most of the potential migrants are from the poverty stricken areas, areas prone to natural disasters (for example, river erosion), coastal areas and historically high migration areas.</p>
Destination countries	<p>The major destination countries of Bangladeshi migrants are Middle Eastern countries, followed by Asian and European countries. Of the Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia is preferred for labour migration by both men and women. This is followed by Jordan, Oman and Lebanon. Other countries are Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, Sub-Saharan countries and European countries. According to the interview findings, women are more interested than men in going to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries.</p> <p>Currently, Jordan and Ethiopia are preferred for female labour migration due to the scope of employment in Ready Made Garment sector.</p> <p>Those who have acquired some level of education are more interested in going to European and North American countries.</p>
Age groups	<p>According to Bangladesh government regulations, the age limits for migrants to be granted permission to leave the country for employment abroad are 18-45 years for men and 25-45 years for women.</p> <p>Most migrants, especially male youths, are between 20 and 35 years of age. The age range of female migrants is between 20-30 years. Despite the age limits, women aged 50 years and over are taking housekeeping training at TTCs. In many cases, 16-17-year-old girls, using false passports, migrate for work. Some have migrated as young as 14 years of age.</p> <p><i>Dalals</i> change the age of girls from 14 years to 18 years so that they will be counted as adults and get it certified by the Union Parishad chairpersons (KII-Dh-BO-1). Conversely, the age of those over 45 is lowered by changing their birth certificate.</p> <p>The age range of returnees is between 35 and 40 years old. Migrants who return voluntarily are around 45 years old. Most male returnees return at the age of 50 years or older. While no data exists on female returnees, they are believed to return at a much younger age than men.</p>
Gender	<p>In recent years, female migration has been on the increase. Especially, after opening up of the labour market in Saudi Arabia for female migrants. Despite the increasing numbers, female migrants make up less than 10 percent of the total migrants from Bangladesh.</p> <p>In recent years, female migrants aim for destination countries to work in the garment industry and domestic work. Men mostly migrate for physical labour.</p>

Source: KII reports of government officials, Union Parishad representatives, IOs, INGOs, NGOs and BAIRA, 2020 (KII-Dh-ME-1; KII-Dh-WE-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-PK-1; KII-Dh-BM-1; KII-Dh-KU-1; KII-Nj-DU-1; KII-Sa-KU-1; KII-Cu-JU-1; KII-Na-CU-1; KII-Ra-MU-1; KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1; KII-Dh-MN-1; KII-Dh-FP-1).

Data on potential migrants is collected by BMET, due to the need of potential migrants to obtain permission to migrate abroad. However, there is no recording system of collecting and accumulating the information of returnees. The government, with the help of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is trying to establish such a system. BMET has already involved two substantially trained officers in each district of Bangladesh to gather information about returnee migrants. The process is ongoing (KII-Dh-BM-1).

6.1.1 Drivers of migration

As mentioned above, potential migrants migrate for financial, environmental, historical or familial reasons. The major pull factors are economic, higher income and employment arrangements, and it is easier to save money by working abroad. Other people are attracted by obtaining higher education abroad or, for those with money, fulfilling the desire to travel abroad.

Although the primary drivers of migration from Bangladesh are poverty and a lack of employment opportunities, there are other, less dominant reasons that contribute to a person's motivation to migrate. These vary from place to place, and depend on how potential migrants perceive themselves, as well as their knowledge and skill. For instance, presently, no money is required to migrate to Saudi Arabia, this is part of the reason most women migrate to Saudi Arabia.

Table 6.2: Migration drivers of potential migrants

Criteria	Drivers
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Unemployment • Opportunity for more income • Contribution to family income • Low financial and lower social status in the family • Desire to earn enough to have savings • Social security and better living standards
Familial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenced by family members • Victims of exploitation (i.e., want to migrate to leave the local community) • Gender based violence • Domestic violence • Women are forced by husbands to become the family's breadwinner • Desire to emulate family members or relatives that have gone abroad and were financially successful
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wish for a better standard of living • Increase of social status by living in a foreign country (this only applies to men) • Unequal treatment in society • Influenced by village networks, neighbours, former migrants, sub-agents of recruiting agencies and <i>dalals</i> (the latter, especially rural women who are poor and vulnerable and can easily be motivated) • Low level of education • Encouraged or motivated by observing other migrants in their surrounding areas who have migrated abroad and have been successful in bringing solvency to their households.
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected by climate change and natural disasters (e.g., threat of riverbank erosion)

Source: Fieldwork data from IOs, INGOs and NGOs, 2020 (KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1; KII-Dh-MN-1; KII-Dh-FP-1).

6.1.2 Choice of destination country

Most people do not know which destination country to choose, how to migrate there or what skills are needed. Government sector interviewees pointed out that potential migrants do not choose the destination country in which they want to work. The decision is solely dependent on the recruiting agencies who are sending them (KII-Dh-ME-1; KII-Dh-PK-1). The recruiting agencies determine where there is an opportunity for a specific applicant and, if their skillset is matched for that destination country, they send that person to that country (KII-Dh-BM-1).

In rural areas, the entire process is controlled by dalals or sub-agents. Potential migrants pay dalals and leave them to decide the destination country. The sub-agents decide on the destination country based on collected information regarding which market is open and looking for people. The disadvantage of depending on dalals or sub-agents is that they often base their decisions on their connections with recruiting agencies in Bangladesh and sometimes in the destination countries. They therefore send potential migrants to a country based on opportunities or offers they get. This leaves no chance for the potential migrant to choose a country of destination.⁹⁴

There are also observed trends of potential migrants from certain districts going to specific destination countries. Potential migrants usually prefer to go to the destination countries where they know people, who are from the same region or district. For example, from the districts of Madaripur and Shariatpur, most of the potential migrants want to go to Italy as many of their family members are there; people from Feni and Noakhali try to migrate to South Africa; while most of the potential migrants from the Chittagong region are willing to migrate to Middle Eastern countries, such as Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Jordan (KII-Dh-BR-1). However, some migrants follow labour demand. For instance, female migrants, whose background is in the ready-made garment sector, prefer to go to Jordan, Mauritius, Lebanon and North Korea (KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1).

6.2 Challenges of migrants

There are many problems and challenges that potential migrants face before departure, after going to the destination country, and even after returning to Bangladesh.

The table below provides the various challenges faced by potential migrants during pre-departure stage under broad heads of information, awareness, decision-making and institutional mechanisms.

“

Potential migrants want to migrate but do not know how, with whom they will be in contact, do not know the amount they will need. They are confused! Then there are the malpractices of sub-agents and some recruiting agencies (KII-Dh-RU-1). ”

94. Shamim, 2011

Table 6.3: Challenges faced by potential migrants in the pre-departure phase

Criteria	Types of challenges
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the preparation phase, potential migrants lack reliable information and accessibility to information • Potential migrants make incorrect assumptions about destination countries • Potential migrants dependence on <i>dalals</i> for information about the migration process and destination countries, its social and environmental situation, norms and culture, without verifying this information with more reputable sources • Migrants collect unreliable information from relatives and <i>dalals</i> or sub-agents • Migrants only have access to sub-agents, without access to the recruiting agencies in Dhaka • Migrants lack of proper information about recruiting channel • Migrants depend highly on the local middlemen who sent migrants to destination countries on tourist visas for work purposes • Limited knowledge about the places to obtain reliable information
Awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrants are not aware of the migration process • Migrants have limited education and unable to assimilate all the messages/information during awareness raising meetings • Migrants lack awareness regarding signing and checking job contracts, e.g., how many hours they are going to work or how much money they will be paid • Migrants lack awareness of the possible risks of irregular migration • Migrants lack awareness of who to contact or how to solve their problems if they have been cheated by <i>dalals</i> or sub-agents
Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions are taken based on information provided by <i>dalals</i> or sub-agents without taking note of its reliability, authenticity, accountability or financial benefits • In most cases, migrants rely on <i>dalals</i> or sub-agents and cannot make their own decision • Migrants cannot find alternatives to using <i>dalals</i> or sub-agents
Institutional mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 42 DEMOs, but all DEMOs do not issue smart cards • Government agents are not always migrant-friendly • There is a lack of effective service mechanisms • Existing structure and negotiation of government migration service points are not conducive to women • Some recruiting agencies conduct unfair activities and with bad reputation.
Skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of soft skills and communication • Problems of receiving proper and enough time-bound training.

Source: KII reports of government, Union Parishad representatives, IOs, INGOs, NGOs and BAIRA, 2020 (KII-Dh-ME-1; KII-Dh-WE-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-PK-1; KII-Dh-BM-1; KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1; KII-Dh-MN-1; KII-Dh-FP-1; KII-Dh-RA-1).

According to various stakeholders, the cost of migration forces potential migrants to borrow money or sell family assets. Potential migrants are often not assured employment upon their arrival in the destination countries. Once abroad, migrant workers face numerous challenges, including low, unpaid or underpaid wages, discrimination and exploitation, partly due to not having well-negotiated contracts.

According to Union Parishad representatives, only some potential migrants are able to migrate by following the instructions of the dalals and end up working abroad for 2-3 years. Most potential migrants are cheated. Many people do not end up going abroad and want to get back the money they paid. However, the dalals refuse to return the money or delay returning the money. There are many agencies that deceive and defraud potential migrants (KII-Nj-DU-1).

Because dalals determine the destination country for potential migrants, some of the migrants do not get the job they were expecting, which creates frustration and difficulties in adjusting. Those who go to the Middle East or Gulf countries, usually return to Bangladesh after being exploited and tortured. In Italy or other European countries, torture is not common (KII-Nj-DU-1).

Table 6.4: Challenges faced by potential migrants in the pre-departure phase

Various challenges are:

- Mismatch of expectations before and after migration
- Language barrier and communication problems
- Wages not paid as per contract, wages are lower or unpaid
- Long working hours
- Working place may not be fully according to safety standards
- Additional duties, which were not agreed upon
- Forced exploitative labour which the migrant cannot cope with
- Different food habits and food supplies
- Lack of assistance from Bangladesh embassy
- Lack of knowledge regarding Bangladesh's support services abroad
- Lack of mechanism to solve migrants' complaints in the destination countries

Source: KII reports of government officials and BAIRA, 2020 (KII-Dh-ME-1; KII-Dh-WE-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-PK-1; KII-Dh-BM-1; KII-Dh-RA-1).

The recruiting agencies that are members of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) have Migrant Service Centres to assist migrants in every destination country migrants are sent by them. At present, BAIRA is working on a sophisticated migrants' database and providing smartcards to all migrants so that they could provide emergency support to them (KII-Dh-RA-1).

However, recruiting agencies face challenges in responding fully and in a timely manner to the needs of migrants. These challenges include institutional rules and regulations, for example, government bureaucratic bottlenecks, which delay sending migrants on time. In addition, some recruiting agencies did not have the capacity to address the immediate needs of migrants (KII-Dh-RA-1).

Migrants return when they can no longer cope with the adverse working environment abroad or when they do not get their desired job and/or wages. PKB has encountered some cases where the returnees were deceived by the dalals and sometimes even by their family members. The majority of the migrant's income (sent as remittances) were spent on supporting their family, resulting in zero savings. After returning to Bangladesh, most returnees face difficulties in starting their own business due to their low level of education. In many cases, PKB provides advice to the returnees in developing their projects and businesses, because they lack knowledge about the banking system (KII-Dh-PK-1).

6.3 Information needs of migrants

6.3.1 Information needs of potential migrants

The cost of migration in Bangladesh is highest in the world. At the same time Bangladeshi migrants earn the lowest amount in the world. As many Bangladeshi migrants are irregular migrants, they are paid less and end up living in inhuman and degrading situations. “The migrants actually live in a dreamland and think that if they could somehow go abroad, all their problems will be solved, which is the ground reality and the main reason behind most migration” (KII-Dh-BR-1). According to BMET and BRAC representatives, for those migrants who go abroad without having accurate information about the destination countries, migration often ends in failure, as they cannot earn what they spent on the migration itself.

National and local government stakeholders

Government officials of different departments have identified various information needs of potential migrants and returnees, according to their focus area of work with migration issues.

TCC officials strongly agreed that every intending or outgoing migrant should be adequately informed, trained, and equipped in the migration process with necessary information and training before departure. On the other hand, all TTC officials said that unfortunately existing services do not effectively reach the intended target groups, nor are they adequately informed because of a lack of coordination between the government institutions and the private sector. In addition, there is a kind of reluctance among the people to receive these services (KII-Cu-TT-1; KII-Dh-TT-1; KII-Na-TT-1; KII-Ra-TT-1; KII-Sa-TT-1).

According to a BMET official, most of the potential migrants cannot even complete the necessary paperwork regarding their work and immigration formalities (KII-Dh-BM-1). Potential migrants need information and the best way to prepare prospective migrants is skills development. BMET officials stressed that "skills" should be the foremost priority. Skill denotes that orientation, training, gradual development, and finally a fruitful application of that skill-set for the destination country and the job a migrant is looking for. These aspects are always significant in nurturing and preparing a migrant, who is willing to earn a better life than before leaving abroad (KII-Dh-BM-1). BOESL officials also opined that the best way to prepare prospective migrants was skill training, lower migration cost, and proper coordination with key stakeholders (KII-Dh-BO-1).

Government officials also stated that migrants need three types of information prior to their departure: where they are going to work; what type of work they will do at the destination country; and for whom they are going to work. Government officials affirmed that potential migrants could access this needed information from their recruiting agency, and the MoEWOE website and help desk. However, they opined that the delivery and content of the information on legal migration channels could be improved by more publicity and awareness-raising initiatives. They again emphasized that in order to best prepare prospective migrants, proper, objective-focused and well-timed training should be ensured.

Most of the Union Parishad representatives opined that, in the preparation phase, migrants need verification of their visa and contract. Some stated that the destination country should be determined according to the migrants' qualifications. Other needs, in particular, were providing accurate information about the type of work and wages, assisting in acquiring skills in the work that migrants were going to perform, learning the language of the destination country, acquiring an idea about the rules and laws of the destination country, and awareness-raising of information about dalals or recruiting agencies.

“

Migrants need relevant information in all phases of the migration cycle: in preparation phase, while abroad and upon return to Bangladesh (KII-Nj-DU-1). ”

“

Dalals or sub-agents cannot be blindly believed as there is a saying dalal is not halal, and potential migrants should always keep that in mind (KII-Na-CU-1). ”

Other stakeholders

Potential migrants need information from the time they are planning to go abroad – they need information about passports, visas, medical check-ups, tickets, recruiting agencies, smart cards, fingerprinting, airport formalities and immigration cards. Most of the potential migrants do not understand information manipulation and they blindly believe the words of the dalals, who do not have the correct information. Since potential migrants do not have any information, they believe the promises made by the sub-agents. Potential migrants need access to reliable information. In order to reduce the malpractices of the sub-agents, there is no other option but to ensure the flow of reliable information. Potential migrants could collect information from various sources such as DEMOs, CBOs, TTCs, BMET, and Union Parishad, the hotline number of IOM and government offices as well as information from returnee migrants.



Dalals usually use a notable quote: "Allah is above, and I am below." Therefore, no one should know that you are going abroad. If anyone comes to know, there will be many others who will come forward and you will not be able to go abroad (KII-Dh-MJ-1). ”

Table 6.5: Information needs of potential migrants

Needs of potential migrants

- Potential migrants need more comprehensive information that is relevant to them.
- Information about how many jobs are available in the destination country in the next three months.
- How to apply for those job, and this information should be made available through the concerned ministry or recruiting agencies.
- Information which could be useful to migrants should be regularly updated in various media.
- Women need proper and sufficient information about the migration journey from reliable sources and not to be dependent on dalals which are misleading.
- TTC needs to have more intensive programmes on pre-departure issues.
- IOM is developing a pre-employment orientation manual with cost-benefit analysis, whom to contact for reliable information – all the steps that migrants need when they think they will migrate.

Information considered the most reliable

- 86 percent rely on their relatives or dalals (KII with WARBE Development Foundation guideline code no. 8).
- A few potential migrants may rely on the government offices and recruiting agencies.
- Some rely on NGOs and CBOs who provide door to door information.
- Various government institutions such as DEMOs.

Source: KII reports of IOs, INGOs and NGOs, 2020 (KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1).

The CBOs have learnt many lessons from the awareness and pre-decision-making programmes related mostly to pre-departure decisions and activities of potential migrants. The table below outlines what are the most important information needs of migrants. According to CBOs, information needs of potential migrants regarding the migration procedures are mainly:

- To know how to go abroad
- To know which country to go to
- To know the type of visa and whether the visa is valid or not
- To find and know good recruiting agents (rather than having to use dalals) and to know who the employers are
- How and where to get training before going abroad, as well as where to obtain a minimum knowledge of the language of destination country
- To know the migration cost and to verify whether it costs more than necessary to go abroad
- To know how to raise money for migration and how to bring earned money back to Bangladesh
- To know the rules and regulations of the destination country in advance
- To find out which government office will provide reliable information on which migrants could depend
- To know whether the migration they are undertaking is safe migration or not

In order to migrate safely and legally, CBOs have learnt that migrants first and foremost need to know where to go exactly to understand about the migration-related documents – they have to understand these documents themselves and then make a decision.

The BAIRA representative confirmed that all types of correct and reliable information related to the migration process are needed, prior to the migrants' departure, while abroad and upon return.

Migrants could get information from the information service points established by MoEWOE and BAIRA, which they could find in almost every district of Bangladesh. Still, there are knowledge gaps of potential migrants, as they are not educated enough to fully understand what the information is all about.

More improvement and digitalization could be done to be more effective in reaching potential migrants. It should be noted that BAIRA arranges short-term foreign language courses and briefing sessions before allowing the selected workers to migrate.

Media personnel asserted that potential migrants need all the relevant information on the total migration process. Potential migrants do not have sufficient information about their migration journey.

Until now, there has not been a reliable recruiting agency to whom the government could refer potential migrants and verify that if migrants go through this agency, they will stay 100 percent safe. There is no rating for agencies. As a result, it is not clear which agencies are fraudulent and which are authentic. Migrants need information from the government-approved list of safe recruiting agencies. To accomplish this, rating or evaluation of recruiting agencies should be established. Recruiting agencies conducting fraudulent activities despite being authorized must be identified.

Media personnel opined that currently the information circulated by the government, NGOs, media and recruiting agencies is ineffective and in some cases inaccurate. Moreover, the services provided are not on par with present necessities and requirements of migrants. Therefore, immediate improvement of services and service providers are needed. In particular, DEMO and BMET should also be more organized. The training currently provided is insufficient and cannot be properly used by migrants abroad as it is impractical and needs updating.

“

Specific and well-defined information is needed on a recruiting agency approved by the government where the agency will ensure wages, safety and well-being of the migrant workers (KII-Dh-FP-1).

”

6.3.2 Information needs on risks and dangers of exploitation abroad

National and local government stakeholders

Potential migrants are mostly not aware of the possible risks of migrating abroad, as they do not receive the information from a reliable source, such as government institutions. Moreover, even if they receive the exact and correct information regarding migration, migrants rarely believe it. Despite migrant responses that they trust government information above other sources, government officials claim that migrants do not heed government information. Instead, they seek the information about potential risks from their peer group. According to a BMET official, rural people believe the people around them, rather than formal government sources (KII-Dh-BM-1).

It can be noted that there are many dalals or middlemen within the country who are responsible for sending less educated migrants to different countries, most of whom migrate irregularly.

The government has ongoing programmes providing information to potential and outgoing migrants, including information on possible risks of migration. Information is available through government service points, help desk, and the MoEWOE's website and Facebook page. Officials urged that government-approved agencies should be used for migrants' information needs. Moreover, they also suggested preparing a central database and hotline service, as well as cooperation between both sending and destination countries to be better aware of any risks or dangers that migrants are facing abroad and find solutions to resolve these.

A BMET official stated that in the last couple of years, BMET has been arranging a short briefing session to inform migrants about the potential risks they would face in migrating abroad. Likewise, in the training sessions, which female potential migrants receive for 30 days and male potential migrants receive for 3 days, BMET provides the required information about potential risks they might encounter.

In the case of irregular migration, dalals generally choose the sea route. To prevent the irregular migration and trafficking of people, law enforcement agencies should be more vigilant. Patrolling of seaports and seas should be intensified (KII-Cu-DE-1). DEMOs have not yet received any allegations of irregular migration and human trafficking. Therefore, most DEMO officials are unaware of the extent of irregular migration and trafficking in their areas. One of the DEMO officials stated that all areas in Bangladesh face the problem of irregular migration and human trafficking, and pointed out that the problem is more in the Narshingdi district (KII-Na-DE-1). It should be noted that the law enforcement agencies, such as the police and border guards are vigilant to prevent human trafficking and report to the Monitoring Cell at Police Headquarters.⁹⁵

Many of the TTC officials stated that they do not have any information about irregular migrants. However, BMET's number for complaints or grievances is provided during training. Nearly all the TTC officials urged the government to make everyone aware of the danger of irregular migration and human trafficking. Migrants should be encouraged to get a valid passport, and the Bangladesh government must stop the illegal activities of human traffickers and dalals. Half of the TTC officials suggested that a list of dalals in every area should be prepared. Dalals should be trained to prevent them from sending people abroad illegally. If necessary, dalals need to be brought under the legal framework. TTC officials also felt the need to increase the knowledge of going abroad legally. They suggested that billboards be displayed on the roadside and in front of the TTCs to be easily visible to everyone in the locality (KII-Na-TT-1).

Other stakeholders

Most of the migrants are going abroad using 'free visa'⁹⁶ and the information conveyed by the sub-agents regarding free visa is that you are free to do anything, you can earn a lot of money and stay there. But the actual meaning of free visa is that you can be arrested even on the same day of your arrival. Most migrants do not know anything about the real scenario. Some do not know that (KII-Dh-BR-1).

95. Public Security Division, 2018

96. An "unofficial category of visas [that] allows a potential migrant to enter a GCC country for work under the kafala system, but the sponsor-employer (kafeel) who officially sponsors the migrant does not offer paid work. A migrant on "free visa" is free to find his own job in any sector of the economy although it is illegal to work in other sectors or with a sponsor-employer other than one's own ... In other words, a "free visa" is legal but, paradoxically, when a free-visa holder starts working for others, he becomes illegal by law and vulnerable to deportation."

According to media personnel, potential migrants know about the risks of migration. A story is related of a youth who chose to migrate irregularly, despite personally knowing someone who had died at sea on the journey (KII-Dh-FP-1).

6.3.3 Information needs of returnees

National and local government stakeholders

After returning to Bangladesh, there is a widespread tendency among returnees to resettle by finding employment or setting up a business. There are some entrepreneurs who invest the money they earned while living abroad. However, the returnees' skillset, which was acquired abroad, is not certified or recognized. As such, they face enormous problems applying that skillset in Bangladesh (KII-Dh-BM-1). According to BMET, if someone cannot settle in Bangladesh after returning from abroad, they often decide to re-migrate. The government is establishing a course aimed at returnee migrants who have acquired a skillset abroad, to allow them to be certified, promote their settlement in Bangladesh and lower re-migration (KII-Dh-BM-1).

A BMET official narrated that they are aware of cases, where female returnees, especially those who returned from the Middle Eastern countries, being stigmatized by their communities (peers, neighbours, and family members). This occurs irrespective of whether a woman had been a victim of sexual exploitation, although the stigmatization is aimed at those victims (KII-Dh-BM-1).

According to BMET, a needs assessment should be conducted to give a clear idea about the individual needs of migrants depending on their geographical area, age, gender, level of education and marital status. The needs of returnees start from the point of their safe return, which should include receiving all their salaries and benefits before the migrants' departure from the destination countries. Labour Attaché/Wing officials located in the Bangladesh embassies could play an important role in overseeing that migrants do not have any grievances before their departure (KII-Dh-BM-1).

According to an MoEWOE official, access of information is important for returnees and it should be available without any cost at the grassroots level where mostly the migrants return. Referral services are also necessary for returnees. For returnees who return as a result of abuse (women in particular face social stigma) or sustaining an injury or disability due to an accident, psycho-social counselling needs to be provided. CBOs, NGOs and different government bodies could provide this support.

Migrants need to be socially and economically reintegrated. For migrants interested in getting a job, their skill needs to be evaluated to get a suitable and matching job. In that case, recognition of prior learning is an important tool and certification could be introduced at low cost at the grassroots level. A mechanism for skill matching with the available job openings could also be introduced.

For migrants interested in setting up a business, capacity building of entrepreneurship development is an important service, as migrants often lack entrepreneurial knowledge. Loans for setting up businesses and monitoring are also important services to be made available for migrants.

Table 6.6: Challenges faced by potential migrants in the pre-departure phase

Needs of returning migrants in terms of reintegration:

- Psycho-social counselling
- Information desk for returning migrants at district level
- Capacity building for entrepreneurship development and financial management
- Information desk for possible job opening

Improvement of services to assist returning migrants in their reintegration:

- Establishing and forming a database for returnees
- Well-designed planning to various reintegration mechanism for returnees.
- Proper funding allocation for programmes regarding returnees
- Rehabilitation loan from PKB
- Strengthening technical skills and experience to get the loan from PKB
- Making scope to work within the country for them.
- Services needing to be decentralized
- NGOs/CBOs undertaking mass campaign about the available services
- Training service providers to realize the needs of the returnees
- Regular monitoring mechanism needing to be introduced for every service for returnees

Source: KII reports of government officials, 2020 (KII-Dh-ME-1; KII-Dh-WE-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-PK-1; KII-Dh-BM-1).

According to WEWB official, welfare services to the migrant workers and their family members at home and abroad should be ensured. Objective oriented welfare service programmes should be initiated, the programmes should be focused, and welfare schemes should be increased (KII-Dh-WE-1).

WEWB provides services and information that assist Bangladeshi migrants while abroad through the embassy and its 24 hours 7 days a week call centres. To address the information needs of potential migrants, WEWB regularly update their website. They also provide required and up-to-date information through their help desk, call centres as well as through the MoEWOE's Facebook page. The help desk could guide migrants during their departure and arrival both in the country and abroad, at the airports and in embassies. However, there are some gaps, which should be addressed, developed and improved and a migrant- friendly environment established (KII-Dh-WE-1).

According to Union Parishad representatives, migrants should be given various types of information and advice on what to do after returning to Bangladesh. Jobs should be created for the returning migrants. Special benefits could be provided to returnees who want invest their money in, for example, business. Migrants returning from abroad due to abuse or irregularity need psycho-social counselling (KII-Nj-DU-1). Returnees could receive financial support from the government and loans could be provided on favourable terms to the victims of exploitation and abuse (KII-Nj-DU-1; KII-Cu-JU-1).

Other stakeholders

According to IOs, INGOs and NGOs, there is not enough information on returnees in Bangladesh. It is important to keep a record of returnees. Those who are returning through the airport, could be provided with a form to be filled out, to know about their acquired skills, their overall condition and other necessary information. These skills could be further used in the country's mega projects so that the returning migrants could be Bangladesh's assets. On the other hand, those who want to re-migrate could be assessed and assisted utilising the information they provided.

Many returnee migrants need an integrated approach and in this regard, IOM has developed a Module on Integrated Approach to Reintegration (KII-Dh-IO-1).

To improve the services to the returnee migrants, there is a need to set up returnee migration centres, especially in the airports, to collect data and to identify the needs and problems of returnees. There is a need to focus on building a comprehensive system that would comprise of counselling, training on entrepreneurship, re-skilling or recognition of prior learning and provision of certification, so that it becomes easier for returnees to re-enter the workforce and society as productive members. Moreover, family members of returnees should be also part of the counselling sessions in the re-integration programmes. A specialized agency may be helpful in the counselling process. The table below provides an overview of the needs of returnee migrants:

Table 6.7: Information needs of returnees, according to other stakeholders

Needs of returnee migrants

- Information about what to do, how to get a job or establish their own business in Bangladesh
- Migrants who are planning to re-migrate need to know what services are available for them
- Guidance for a better living after returning to Bangladesh
- Government service points to be made available for an integrated approach to sustainable reintegration
- Returnees need counselling to be reintegrated in family, community and society
- Migrants need orientation on Bangladesh's financial system

Source: KII reports of IOs, INGOs and NGOs, 2020 (KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1).

The major needs of returnees are social integration, economic integration, and psycho-social integration. The skills of returnees should be utilized quickly, before they are forgotten. To support returnees, business advisory support could be provided. A UN Women representative stressed ensuring gender responsive support services for female returnees. A complete package should be developed to ensure reintegration support (KII-Dh-UN-1).



Returnees should get direct support. Providing loans is not the only solution. Before providing loans, it is important to know what they want, how much money they need, how they want to utilize the money, what skill they have, what opportunity they have in their locality. These issues need to be considered when we help them to get a loan (KII-Dh-OK-1). ”

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation representative shared that in many cases, most of the returnees, especially women, are traumatized. They need proper counselling services based on their exploitation. They have also been victimized financially, for example returning with without finances. They need special reintegration services that is needs-based with an updated framework (KII-Dh-SD-1).

6.3.4 Information sources and training

Outreach to migrants through TTCs

TTCs promote their services to potential migrants through miking⁹⁷, poster distribution and social media such as Facebook, and websites. TTCs run different courses. To be admitted into the diploma courses, potential migrants need to check the circular issued by the Technical Education Board. The 6-month and 2-year courses are advertised in local newspapers, through banners, distributed leaflets, and social media.

The recruitment notice for the training is published in the local newspapers. Training is conducted, examinations are held and certificates are issued with the assistance of the DEMO office. Interested persons also use communication services at the DEMO office (KII-Cu-TT-1; KK-Dh-TT-1; KII-Na-TT-1; KII-Nj-TT-1; KII-Ra-TT-1; KII-Sa-TT-1).

TTCs also hold meetings at the Upazila level, attended by Upazila officials or dignitaries, to reach potential migrants through seminars, fairs, meetings and various activities as per government guidelines.

A representative of BMET argued that the current pre-departure programme cannot be recognised as a training programme. The primary reason was the duration of the course, being three days for male potential migrants (85 percent of those undertaking the pre-departure training) and 30 days for female potential migrants (15 percent of those undertaking the pre-departure training). The difficulty in the shortness of the course lies in the migrants' abilities to understand and assimilate the information, despite the low level of education of many of the potential migrants as well as not all migrants speaking the national language fluently. According to the BMET representative, it would be possible to institutionalize a pre-departure and post-arrival orientation or seminars through a circular/instruction/order from the MoEWOE. However, a detailed and thorough assessment would need to be conducted before such endeavours are considered.

According to Union Parishad representatives, migrants typically get their information mainly from local dalals and sub-agents. Although some representatives opined that migrants obtain information from DEMO, television, newspapers, magazines, neighbours, relatives, colleagues and employers. They argued that the best ways to provide relevant information to migrants is through DEMO; Union Parishad; extensive publicity through radio, television, newspapers and social media, recruiting agencies, and the establishment of information centres and complaint centres both at home and abroad.

6.4 Information sources and awareness raising

6.4.1 National and local government stakeholders

The MoEWOE has several awareness programmes, such as organizing awareness workshop at the district level in cooperation with the local administration authorities. Besides this, migrant workers are being sensitized during the pre-departure briefing sessions.

According to the BMET official, there are other Ministries, departments, institutions and organizations that implement awareness programmes and activities that relate to migration. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs are all working on the issue of migration based on different frameworks and institutional structures. However, there is no framework for coordination between these government institutions. As a result, there is an overlap of some activities.

For instance, the MoEWOE has developed a web-based awareness system entitled Jene bujhe bidesh jai in Bangla meaning "Be properly informed before going abroad" to assist migrants who are working abroad. It could be uploaded to a mobile set which has information related to safe migration. However, labour attachés also provide services by arranging awareness workshops at destination countries (KII-Dh-ME-1). The different departments under the MoEWOE also have different terms of references for working in the migration sector. For example, BOESL works with migrants who are going abroad through government-to-government agreements and their focus is on performance indicators such as education and skills, so they are aware of only a small portion of the potential migrants who are capable of applying for those specific jobs. They provide training pros and cons of the migration process to change behaviour and motivation of potential migrants. WEWB mainly works on welfare programmes and spreads awareness to migrants through their website about the various benefits to both potential and returnee migrants. On the other hand, BMET is the most important institution of the MoEWOE, which works directly with all outgoing migrants who are going abroad legally and especially to those returnees who lodged complaints against their recruiting agencies.

95. *Miking is one method in information campaigns where a vehicle (e.g. tricycle or tuktuk) roves or travels around the community with a sound system (a microphone or megaphone) and an announcement/song is continuously played. The vehicle is also adorned with posters, stickers or banners with relevant messages.*

Table 6.8: Awareness-raising programmes and activities of bmet on migration

- BMET uses electronic (websites and social media platforms, such as Facebook) and print media to spread the information potential migrants need to know before they decide to migrate
- Engages local government, as well as Union Parishad to spread awareness, especially on the pros and cons of migration
- Works simultaneously on legislation issues about migration that migrants face from the preparation phase until return
- Tries to make people aware of the laws and regulations that the Bangladesh government has endorsed, through which the illegal intermediaries could be punished and
- Conducts pre-departure training to make migrants more skilful and efficient through technical learning, before they depart for the destination country
- Tries to build the capacity of the trainers by providing them TOTs
- Works on the recognition and certification of the skills Bangladeshi migrants acquired internationally

Source: KII report of BMET official, 2020 (KII-Dh-BM-1).

There are also many challenges faced by the different departments working under the MoEWOE. Below are the challenges of PKB in providing services to returnees and strategies to overcome these:

Table 6.9: Challenges faced by pkb in supporting returnees

- No proper database of returnees.
- Lack of knowledge about setting up projects or businesses. This is a problem for both migrants and PKB because the projects have to be sustainable and migrants need to have sufficient managerial knowledge to run these projects. At the same time PKB needs to visit the project sites, monitor, and accordingly provide suggestions.
- Lack of skills training.
- Mismatch of personal information given in the National Identity card and passport.
- Unwillingness to open bank accounts, process trade license and TIN (to open an account for business purpose, a tax identification number is needed as per the Bangladesh Bank circular)
- Confusion about what business migrants are going to undertake and fail to develop business projects that match their acquired experience.
- Mismatch between the projects being developed and the experience of migrants.

Source: KII report of PKB official, 2020 (KII-Dh-PK-1).

There are also awareness-raising activities on migration on the local government level, at some of the unions. During monthly meetings held at the Union Parishad, the issue of people living abroad are discussed. Who came and who went are compiled in a book. Representatives usually carry out their work activities as per government notification or circular. There are awareness-raising meetings on human trafficking. One representative had warned the brokers in the area not to cheat potential migrants. The representative observed that, consequently, many of the dalals and brokers reduced their fraudulent activities in the union (KII-Na-CU-1).

Migrants come to the representatives for help when they have been deceived by the dalals or sub-agents, for instance, if no arrangement for the migrant’s travel abroad was made or their money was not returned. The representatives settle such disputes through village level arbitration. In most cases, these issues remain unresolved; sometimes the dalal tries to reach a compromise with the intending migrant by giving them some money as compensation. The representative stated that “Since we have nothing to do but arbitrate, we do not deal with any migration-related problems. The main problem is that the union council does not know much about the situation of migrants” (KII-Nj-DU-1).

There are some activities on migration-related issues where Union Parishad members conduct awareness programmes jointly with NGOs, such as seminars, courtyard meetings and distribution of posters and banners. NGOs organize discussion sessions with influential persons of the union to reach the migrants and listen to their voices.

6.4.2 Other Stakeholders

According to representatives of IOs, INGOs and NGOs, the sources of information for potential migrants are outlined in the table below.

Table 6.10: Sources of information of potential migrants

Category	Sources of information
Family members & neighbours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously migrated (i.e.,) family members, neighbours, known persons (i.e., experienced people that potential migrants know personally)
Dalals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are considered mostly reliable by potential migrants. Most of the <i>dalals</i> are personally known to and, therefore, believed by potential migrants.
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government service point such as Union Parishad Union Parishad chairpersons, members and officials Government-approved service points Government offices that serve migration related tasks Since 2012, BMET is working to support the female potential migrants. A Female Migrant Information Cell was established in BMET.
Social workers & CBOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known social workers Women’s organizations who disseminate migration-related information during awareness-raising meetings.

Source: KII reports of IOs, INGOs and NGOs, 2020 (KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1).

Many of the migrants do not return to Bangladesh voluntarily. Either they were living undocumented, or were arrested or deported. Some migrants return after they reached the ages of 35-40 years old. In most cases, these returnee migrants do not have any information about their return. Some returnees from Europe are given some explanation and reasoning, but as in most cases the returnees are from the Gulf countries and are not given any reliable information. Returnees are in a negligible and unaccountable situation in Bangladesh. The government is not appropriately concerned about them. Most of the female returnees face the same financial problems as they did prior to migrating abroad.

While returnees obtained knowledge and experience of migration, there is no government service point available for their reintegration support. This is something that the government is currently considering. If returnees need any information, they go to authentic sources such as government organizations and CBOs. The table below gives an overview of the various sources of information for returnee migrants.

Table 6.11: Sources of information of returnees

Category	Sources of information
Family members & neighbours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate family members. • Experienced neighbours. • Suggestions and advice of their own members because these members motivate them to invest their money in specific sectors.
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union Parishad chairpersons, members and officials. • Government offices that served migration-related tasks.
Community Based-Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBOs who work with migration issues at grassroots level. • Women’s organizations who work with migration-related issues. • Persons and organizations through whom returnees had migrated and had a good experience.

Source: KII reports of IOs, INGOs and NGOs, 2020 (KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1).

CBOs are also implementing awareness-raising programmes on migration, especially against illegal recruitment. The main aim is to create awareness among the community people about how to go abroad legally with the right paperwork. Moreover, the CBOs inform migrants that when they plan or decide to go abroad, they should come to the CBOs for the required information so that they are not deceived. Likewise, CBOs have formed committees at the grassroots level so that people in those areas become more or less aware of going abroad legally.

CBOs organize regular courtyard meetings to create awareness as well as distribute various leaflets and public awareness posters provided by NGOs.

It should be highlighted here that many NGOs working at national level on migration issues cooperate closely with CBOs at the grassroots level and work in partnership with, them especially in awareness-raising programmes, debt mediation, recovery of compensation money, and solving problems migrants face abroad.

Despite the work being done, differences in awareness of information and its sources remain. In urban areas, there are more people who are living a comfortable lifestyle and are job holders. The majority of migrants usually come from rural areas. As infrastructure and opportunities are limited in rural areas, migrants do not have much information. So, they mostly get their information from sub-agents.

Sometimes male potential migrants could obtain their information from different sources. However, the case of female migration, they are mostly targeted by intermediaries. The table below outlines the use of different information channels by migrants.

Table 6.12: Differences in approach to sources of information by migrants

Criteria	Use of information channels
Urban and rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of information by media is more in urban areas than rural. • Government service points are more readily available in rural areas than urban because rural people know the staff who are working there, who are from the same community.
Age groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the youths are not concerned about the regular migration process of going abroad and travel irregularly. • The people, who are intending to migrate consider government service points, government announcements, previous migrants and sub-agents of recruiting agencies as information channels.
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information channels differ between men and women. In particular, rural women have to maintain <i>purdah</i> and are restricted in their movement outside of their village.
Qualification and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without government recruitment, most of the labour migrants are unskilled. There are regulations stating that “persons who have passed class eight can attend the training conducted at TTCs.”
Type of migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sources differ by destination countries, nature of work, wages, type of contract and length of employment abroad.

Source: KII reports of IOs, INGOs and NGOs, 2020 (KII-Dh-CB-1; KII-Dh-IL-1; KII-Dh-IO-1; KII-Dh-MJ-1; KII-Dh-SD-1; KII-Dh-UN-1; KII-Dh-AF-1; KII-Dh-BO-1; KII-Dh-BR-1; KII-Dh-KN-1; KII-Dh-OK-1; KII-Dh-WA-1; KII-Dh-BI-1; KII-Dh-DE-1; KII-Dh-RM-1).

In order to attract more applicant migrant workers and circumvent the services of dalals, BAIRA undertakes capacity building strategies, including training sub-agents or dalals; strengthening the announcement and campaign procedure and process; establishing a faithful relationship with migrant applicants; and ensuring efficient support services for migrants both within the country and abroad. However, according to BAIRA, the following challenges and proposals need to be considered (KII-Dh-RA-1):

- Access to information in rural and urban areas is not the same.
- Every district is not prioritized the same way in the context of migration.
- Every information channel should be equally equipped with information to address the different age groups.
- In the context of the destination country, special and extra care support services or desks should be established.
- Because training is arranged by the government and BAIRA, they do not discuss topics on risks of migration as it could affect their work activities and business.

Interviews with media personnel identified that there are mainly three types of media: i) social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, webpages), where people interact virtually; ii) television; and iii) community media, where people are reached in the community. Media personnel stressed that on social media, such as Facebook, IMO and WhatsApp, to be successful, means to reach out to migrants. Most people are using social media platforms which provide easy access by removing time zone barriers, requirement fees for TV channels or newspaper subscriptions.

Social media and television are the most effective option in urban areas because they live in isolation and their community interactions are not very strong. In rural areas the community bonds are strong, and people know each other. Community awareness programmes, such as interactive theatres and video film shows are, therefore, very effective. Social media mainly reaches people at the 18-30-year age range, while television usually reaches older age group audience (KII-Dh-FP-1).

Two examples of TV programmes on migration were mentioned. From 2010, to the present time, Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Television World aired programmes that created awareness and provided information to potential migrants and returnees in Bangladesh. The title of one of those programmes is Ovibashi in Bangla (meaning migrants). The target population are Bangladeshi migrants, their families and policymakers. The main objective has been raising awareness by sharing information on skills training, safe migration and reintegration of returnees (KII-Dh-FP-1).

Starting from the COVID-19 lockdown, till the present time, a programme entitled Probashi Adda in Bangla (meaning migrants' gossip) is broadcast on social media. The target audience are migrants and policymakers. The main objective of the programme was to create communication between migrants. It reached an audience of 2 million in the first 24 hours where 90 percent were migrants (KII-Dh-FP-1).

Video shows at the community level were also produced to create awareness among potential migrants about legal ways to migrate safely. Print media also have a positive role in raising awareness among migrants by covering up-to-date information of government policies, story-based news and general articles on migration issues. Online electronic media is more successful than print media to reach the target audience.

6.5 MRCs and outreach to migrants

6.5.1 National and local government stakeholders

Presently, the MoEWOE does not have a communication plan or awareness-raising strategy that could be used as the overarching framework for MRC activities. However, IOM is currently working on this. On the other hand, the other departments such as WEWB and PKB still do not know about the MRCs.

Government officials suggested that MRCs should reach out to the interested potential migrants seeking jobs abroad at an early stage to make them aware regarding the migration process. The MRC could further support BOESL's mandate by a bilateral discussion on target activities and add more districts to their programmes.

The BMET official stated that the MRCs have only just started their journey and have a long way to go to make a significant impact on Bangladeshi migrants. Some issues to consider by the MRC from the government side are, first of all, reaching out to the target groups of migrants throughout Bangladesh. The MRCs have not focused on all the target groups, rather they have targeted a stratified 10 to 20 thousand potential migrants and returnees, while others have been excluded (KII-Dh-BM-1).

To make a substantial impact on the information being provided to potential migrants, the mechanism of the MRCs should be clear and specific and make their services specified for different groups. In this regard, their activities should be based on cluster-wise technical plan be developed as soon as possible. According to the BMET official, the MRC will get as much support as needed to conduct their activities, based on their mutual interest with BMET (KII-Dh-BM-1).

With regard to information centres such as the MRC which could improve its services to migrants and their family members at the union level, most of the Union Parishad representatives opined that an information centre could be set up on their premises, along with door-to-door information dissemination through the village police. The MRCs could be set up to provide full-time service and at the same time, extensive publicity is required in coordination with the Union Parishad.

Moreover, the MRCs could support the Union Parishads in providing better services to migrants. Most of the representatives opined that if MRC and Union Parishad work together, it would be easier to provide better services to the migrants of each union. Information centres such as the MRC could inform the Union Parishad what information is needed according to the needs of the people of the area, and the Union Parishad could provide services for the migrants by disseminating information through meetings with the community or through the distribution of posters and leaflets.

The MRC could create a database of migrants in the union. Religious leaders could be motivated to create awareness on safe and regular migration, especially after the Friday prayers. If Imam Saheb⁹⁸ talks about migration issues, public awareness will increase (KII-Cu-JU-1; KII-Nj-DU-1; KII-Sa-KU-1).

The best way for resource centres such as the MRC to reach out to the migrants at union level is by actively involving Union Parishad members and village police to reach out to migrants in the union, organize information campaigns, miking, distributing posters and leaflets. At the same time, the government should promote the operation of legal recruiting agencies.

The information source regarded as the most reliable by migrants at the union level is mainly Union Parishad and the dalals. The latter are heavily criticized, but no one can go abroad without their help. Migrants perceive Union Parishad as the most reliable source of information because it represents the local government. The Union Parishad representatives opined that the quality and speed of services would increase if the MRC worked jointly or in coordination with the Union Digital Centre (KII-Nj-DU-1).

“

Usually migrants listen to the brokers or dalals. Although they know that the broker's statements are not entirely true or correct, they still resort to the broker without having any other source of information at hand (KII-Nj-DU-1). ”

The MRCs could work through the Union Digital Centre to provide information to the potential migrants. MRC officials could use the Union Parishad office for providing services to the local potential, outgoing and returnee migrants. The secretary of the union council and the entrepreneur of the digital centre could be given training on migration issues, especially on the need for information about safe migration as well as relevant information could be given on the Facebook page of the Union Parishad (KII-Cu-JU-1; KII-Ra-MU-1).

6.5.2 Other stakeholders

The international and national level organizations emphasized that the location of the MRCs would play a vital role. The MRCs would have a greater impact if they were established in the rural areas of the 10-15 prime migration districts. As the DEMO offices are in main district towns, migrants cannot always reach these offices. Therefore, information centres should be set up at union level so that they could be easily accessible to potential migrants with relevant information and training facilities.

The information centres should try to create mass awareness. Simultaneously, they should campaign by going door-to-door like the dalals. Moreover, collaboration with CBOs to provide doorstep services or having mobile service points for easy access, is the best way to reach out to potential migrants, especially rural women. Using volunteers is always a good option to reach the community at the grassroots level. However, it is important to maintain an effective training programme and incentive system for the volunteers.

ILO is implementing a programme of training sub-agents to making them more efficient and authentic, so that they could provide realistic and reliable information to potential migrants. Previous migrants are being invited as resources in these training sessions (KII-Dh-IL-1).

Manusher Jonno Foundation suggested that union-based digital centres in every Union Parishad in Bangladesh may be the best medium to disseminate information to the migrants at the grassroots level. More such hubs could be set up where information centres could operate, thereby bridging the gap between recruiting agents and those who want to go abroad (KII-Dh-MJ-1).

98. Muslim religious priest of the mosque.

The CBOs opined that the MRCs could contribute to the migration sector by working at the field level through the Union Parishad office and other government offices. Moreover, they could come close to the people by organizing courtyard meetings and distributing posters, leaflets and other awareness-raising materials.

The MRCs could also contribute the technical assistance needed in the migration sector. Migrants need to be trained. The MRC has to disseminate the information that one cannot and should not go through a dalal and that people have to go through a government-approved recruiting agency. The MRC should inform people about the destination countries, so that they do not face any problems while abroad. Moreover, information must also be provided through social media platforms.

According to BAIRA, the MRCs could reach out to potential migrants by strengthening their own information channels; developing the capacity of sub-agents; and using digital media to reach out to potential migrants at the grass-roots level.

Intermediaries are reaching out to potential migrants; they are the primary contact persons and connect potential migrants to the recruiting agencies. However, many intermediaries are not known to the recruiting agencies but they are working as sub-agents.

BAIRA is aware of the MRCs and that these centres are working in the MoEWOE's Dhaka and Cumilla TTCs. According to BAIRA, to make the MRCs' outreach to migrants more effective, they should work with accountability, transparency and professionalism (KII-Dh-RA-1).

According to media personnel, the MRC needs to place greater importance to promoting and raising the awareness of migrants. The most successful means to reach out to migrants are by mapping the high migration areas; identifying the potential migrants; organizing campaigns; and approaching migrants at the grassroots level. At the same time, organizing dialogues with government agencies is also of importance, as they are the policymakers and future of migration governance depends on their decision making.

Media personnel suggested that the MRC could work with media need to create regular and continuous programmes that will follow the pattern of career counselling and consist of migrants sharing their experiences in different countries, such as the migration process they followed, challenges they faced, and the knowledge that helped them at their work. (KII-Dh-FP-1).

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

In the past few decades, Bangladesh has been a major country of origin for migrant workers. Migration has been a crucial contributor to the growth of Bangladesh's GDP. According to the BMET, about 13 million workers have migrated from Bangladesh to different countries in pursuit of employment within the last 45 years.⁹⁹ However, the procedure involved in migration labour recruitment still has gaps and limitations. The malpractices involved in the recruitment process, are one of the major challenges hindering positive change among the migrant workers abroad and their families in Bangladesh.

There is a wide range of stakeholders who are actively involved in the recruitment process. However, the benefits go to intermediaries known as dalals or sub-agents and other recruitment practitioners both in the countries of origin and destination.¹⁰⁰

The majority male potential migrants in the study chose the destination country by the presence of their family and social network within that country. Female migrants were also influenced by the decisions of family members, neighbours and dalals or sub-agents.

Potential migrants and returnees repeatedly pointed out that they do not have easy access to reliable information. Many potential migrants fell victim to unscrupulous dalals or sub-agents. In rural areas, female potential migrants had less mobility, meaning they lacked information related to migration. Because dalals or sub-agents were people in the community known to female migrants, the majority of women interviewed stated that they depended heavily on information provided by those dalals or sub-agents. At the same time, women were aware of the possibility of being deceived or trafficked. Therefore, they were in favour of an information or resource centre to provide them with all relevant information by the government.

Respondents have categorically stated that the best ways to reach potential migrants with the needed information was by organizing awareness-raising programmes at the grassroots level. Many female potential migrants said that they have attended courtyard meetings at the village level organized by NGOs where they have learned about the process of safe migration.

The fieldwork revealed that migrants who were educated and had access to the internet, could easily get migration related information from websites, Facebook, and by connecting with the people who had migrated to the particular destination countries prior to their departure abroad.

Potential migrants participating in the FGDs opined that government offices or Union Parishads were the most reliable source of migration information. Many male participants said that they generally consider the news and notifications published by the government in newspapers, radio, and on television to be reliable. Presently, migrants who were willing to go abroad were receiving more services from the DEMO than in the past. On the other hand, migration information from social media such as Facebook and other online-based information sources were mainly preferred by relatively young students as almost all young people interviewed used the Internet.

99. BMET, 2020

100. IOM, 2020a

It was found in the study that the most needed information by potential migrants was the nature of work they were undertaking and their wages. Men were interested in knowing their work contract before migrating and whether the passport and written contract were correct, while women wanted to know about food, housing, the overall living conditions and how to learn the language of the destination country.

The majority of the female potential migrants who were participants at the FGDs further said that the best ways to reach potential migrants in their region was through the chairpersons of the Union Parishad by: i) the establishment of information centres at district and Upazila levels, via leaflets, posters, signboards and billboards; ii) organizing courtyard meetings at village level; iii) providing regular bulletins on television and radio; and iv) door-to-door awareness campaigns and displaying banners. Some of them stressed the need to establish a 24-hour 7-day a week call centre.

CBOs have taken initiatives to work with the chairpersons of different Union Parishads so that potential migrants at the union level were informed about what to do and where to get the correct information. The priority of the CBOs is the pre-decision making stage of migration, when potential migrants are considering going abroad but have not yet decided to go. They identified that the pre-decision stage is crucial to migrants making an informed decision, rather than relying solely on dalals, relatives or neighbours.

Media personnel stressed interactive community awareness programmes or social media-based campaigns as potentially having a greater impact. These campaigns could potentially build up the community as a self-serving entity, and initiate adequate change in building trust in government agencies for reliable information.

The majority of potential migrants preferred receiving information from centres such as the MRC for migration related information, compared to only a few who preferred receiving help from dalals.

Most migrants opined that the needed information from an information centre such as the MRC would be reliable and authentic and that they were confident that they could receive all the relevant information there before going abroad. The change of attitude testifies to the fact that potential migrants have trust in public institutions. This change was likely due to the awareness-raising activities of NGOs and CBOs at the grassroots level, which convinced people in the community to rely on government institutions and organizations.

The role of the MRCs is vital towards this end. The MRCs could offer accurate information on the legal migration procedures and documentation required by potential and outgoing migrants, access to services and protection mechanisms throughout the migration process, risks of irregular migration, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling, as well as rights and responsibilities both in the origin and destination countries. The MRCs could also create links with technical training institutes and language courses in Bangladesh as well as the local job markets and those abroad, as well as educational opportunities.

It could be concluded that to ensure safe and regular migration, concerted efforts of all stakeholders – government, private sector, political parties, NGOs, media, and communities are needed so that migrants are able to make informed plans and decisions before migrating abroad.

7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the information needs assessment study with migrants and key stakeholders.

Mapping exercise and cooperation

- The MRCs need to undertake a mapping exercise of who is doing what and where on awareness-raising, pre-departure orientation, skills development training, reintegration of returnee migrants, operating helplines, departure and arrival services at airports, psycho-social counselling, income-generating activities and job placement.
- Based on the findings, the MRCs could focus on the issues that are most pertinent. Accordingly, the MRCs could network with relevant organizations working on those issues and work in partnership with them.

Mapping exercise and cooperation

- The MRCs need to undertake a mapping exercise of who is doing what and where on awareness-raising, pre-departure orientation, skills development training, reintegration of returnee migrants, operating helplines, departure and arrival services at airports, psycho-social counselling, income-generating activities and job placement.
- Based on the findings, the MRCs could focus on the issues that are most pertinent. Accordingly, the MRCs could network with relevant organizations working on those issues and work in partnership with them.

Data compilation

- The MRCs need to maintain a sex-disaggregated database of both the outgoing and returnee migrants within their geographic area of responsibility, with the cooperation of DEMOs, Union Parishad representatives and Ward members, as well as the CBOs who work on migration-related issues.

Target groups

- The MRCs need to focus on reaching out to all the target groups of migrants, throughout Bangladesh beyond the current small number being assisted currently.

Capacity building

- The MRCs need to work on more capacity building of Union Parishad members, so that they could gain knowledge on the situation of migrants and could subsequently deal with migration-related problems.
- The MRCs need to involve previous migrants as resources in their training sessions.
- The MRCs need to have clear mechanisms to provide specific services for different migrant groups to make a substantial impact on the information being provided to the migrants.
- The MRCs' activities and services need to be based on cluster-wise technical planning, which needs to be developed as early as possible. The needed support could be provided by BMET, as there is common mutual interest between BMET and the MRC.

Awareness-raising for potential migrants

Pre-departure

- The MRCs need to enhance the availability of pathways for regular and safe migration. In this regard, extensive awareness-raising could be undertaken through a wide distribution of illustrative information, education and communication materials, organizing video shows and using social media to inform the potential migrants before their pre-decision stage which is immensely influenced by dalals or sub-agents.
- The MRCs need to organize outreach programmes such as courtyard meetings, stage folksongs and door-to-door campaigns, especially targeted at potential female migrants, who have less mobility and fewer networks to disseminate the messages and relevant information on safe migration, and to lessen their dependency on dalals or sub-agents.

Protection of migrant workers

Pre-departure

- The MRCs need to provide adequate and timely information to potential and outgoing migrants. To accomplish this, the MRCs should work closely with Union Parishad representatives and ward members as they have oversight regarding who is planning to go abroad and where.
- The MRCs need to provide the needed information on the migration process. This includes, prior to a migrant's departure, preparing passports, checking visas, checking work contracts, wages, advising on language, norms and culture of the destination countries and providing contact addresses of Bangladesh embassies abroad.

While abroad

- The MRCs need to enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation of Bangladesh embassies abroad by maintaining a close relationship with them. As the MRCs will be working at the grassroots level and are keeping track of who is working abroad and in which destination countries, migrants will be able to contact the MRCs as referral points whenever they need any support while abroad.
- The MRCs need to establish a referral mechanism and compile a list of what support services could be provided and by whom to those migrants who come to the MRCs for support services and migrants could be readily referred to the available services.
- The MRCs need to establish hotline numbers open 24 hours 7 days a week, so that potential and outgoing migrants, migrants residing abroad and returnees could contact the MRCs at any time, whenever they need information or support services. In this regard, hotline cards could be designed, printed and widely disseminated with hotline numbers and relevant contact addresses.

Return and reintegration

- The MRCs need to provide psycho-social counselling to female returnees who were victims of physical and sexual exploitation.
- The MRCs need to provide healthcare awareness to returnee migrants who have returned during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The MRCs should facilitate sustainable return and reintegration of returnee migrants by providing information of where they could get the support services according to their need and demand, for example, advice on financial matters, low interest rate loans, setting up businesses and how to use the remittances in a profitable way.

Bibliography

Afsar, R., 2009. Unravelling the Vicious Cycle of Recruitment: Labour Migration from Bangladesh to the Gulf States, ISBN Reference No. 978-92-2-122356-6. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_106536/lang--en/index.htm

Ahmed, M., Akond, A., Hossain, J., Bidisha, S.H., and Akter, A., 2015. The homecoming: profiling the returning migrant workers of Bangladesh. Dhaka: International Labour Organization (ILO). [online] Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_407961/lang--en/index.htm

Anthias, P., 2008. Student Migration From Bangladesh To The UK. [ebook] Dhaka: Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237407834_Student_Migration_from_Bangladesh_to_the_UK

Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOSEL), 2020. বাংলাদেশ ওভারসিজ এমপ্লয়মেন্ট অ্যান্ড সাভিসেস লিঃ (বোয়েসেল)| Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOSEL). [online] Available at: <http://www.boesl.gov.bd/>

Bangladesh UN Network on Migration, 2020. Human Trafficking: Together, we can stop the scourge. 11 June 2020. ILO. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Informationresources/Publicinformation/Pressreleases/WCMS_749570/lang--en/index.htm

Barkat, A. and Ahsan, M., 2014. Gender and Migration from Bangladesh: Mainstreaming Migration into the National Development Plans from A Gender Perspective. [online] Dhaka: International Labour Organization, ILO Country Office for Bangladesh. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_310411/lang--en/index.htm

Barkat, A., Hossain, M. and Hoque, E., 2014. Causes and Potential Redress for High Recruitment and Migration Costs In Bangladesh. [online] Dhaka, Bangladesh: International Labour Organization; ILO Country Office for Bangladesh. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_303633/lang--en/index.htm

Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), 2020. Statistical Reports. [online] Dhaka: BMET. Available at: <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>

Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA), 2020. Labour Market Profile Bangladesh – 2020. Available at: <https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/LMP-Bangladesh-2020-Final-version-1.pdf>
Dudovskiy, J., n.d. Purposive Sampling. [online] Research-Methodology. Available at: <https://research-methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-collection/purposive-sampling/>

Eeuwijk, P. and Angehrn, Z., 2017. How To... Conduct A Focus Group Discussion (FGD). [ebook] Basel: Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute/Swiss TPH. Available at: https://www.swisstph.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/SwissTPH/Topics/Society_and_Health/Focus_Group_Discussion_Manual_van_Eeuwijk_Angehrn_Swiss_TPH_2017.pdf

Etzold, B. and Mallick, B., 2015. International Migration from Bangladesh. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BPB). [online] Available at: <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/laenderprofile/216104/international-migration-from-bangladesh>

Etzold, B., 2015. Migration Policies - Country Profile Bangladesh. [online] bpb.de. Available at: <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/laenderprofile/216106/migration-policies>

Hartmann, B. and Boyce, J., 1983. *A Quiet Violence: View from a Bangladesh Village*. London: Zed Books.
Huda, S., 2019. *Consequences in Desecration of Migrants Rights: An in-depth analysis on 30 cases of Women Migrant Workers*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Ovibashi Mohila Sramik Association.

Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2016. "I Was Sold" - Abuse and Exploitation of Migrant Domestic Workers in Oman. [online] United States of America: Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/13/i-was-sold/abuse-and-exploitation-migrant-domestic-workers-oman>

Imam, H., and Munier, A., 2020. *Mapping of Labour Migration Recruitment Practices in Bangladesh*. [online] Dhaka: International Organization for Migration (IOM) Bangladesh. Available at: <https://crest.iom.int/iom-2020-mapping-labour-migration-recruitment-practices-bangladesh>

International Labour Organization (ILO), 2014. *Promoting cooperation for safe migration and decent work*, Dhaka: ILO. [online] Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---pro-trav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_248857.pdf

International Labour Organization (ILO), n.d. *Labour Migration in Bangladesh*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>

International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2005. *World Migration Report 2005: Costs and Benefits Of International Migration*. [online] Geneva: International Organization for Migration (IOM). Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2005-costs-and-benefits-international-migration?language=en>

International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2015. *The Other Migrant Crisis - Protecting Migrant Workers against Exploitation in the Middle East and North Africa*. [online] Geneva: IOM. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/other-migrant-crisis-protecting-migrant-workers-against-exploitation-middle-east-and-north>

International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2019. *International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration*. Available at: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020a. *World Migration Report 2020*. [online] Geneva: IOM. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020>

International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020b. *Bangladesh: Survey on Drivers of Migration and Migrants' Profile*. [online] Dhaka: International Organization for Migration (IOM). Available at: https://bangladesh.iom.int/sites/bangladesh/files/publication/SDM_BGDFINAL_gov.pdf

Islam, A., 2021. *Bangladesh struggling to rein in COVID delta variant*. 5 July 2021. [online] DW. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/bangladesh-covid-surge/a-58166527>

Islam, S., 2019a. *Access to Justice for Bangladeshi Migrant Workers: Opportunities and Challenges*. [ebook] Dhaka: Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP). Available at: https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/50452/636829/version/1/file/Access_Justice_Report_2019-1.pdf

Islam, S., 2019b. *A Feminist Participatory Action Research: Safe and Fair Migration of Bangladeshi Women Migrant Workers*. [online] Dhaka: Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP). Available at: http://okup.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FPAR_Safe-and-Fair-Migration_OKUP_2019.pdf

Jahan, R., 1994. *Hidden Danger: Women and Family Violence in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Women for Women.

Jinnah, S., 2013. *Land and Property Rights of Rural Women In Bangladesh*. [ebook] Dhaka: Community Development Association (CDA). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/hrbodies/cedaw/ruralwomen/cda-bangladesh.pdf>

Kamruzzaman, M., & Rahman, A.M., 2009. "Dowry related violence against women in Bangladesh" in *Empowerment*. Dhaka: Journal of Women for Women.

Khyum Tithila, K., 2020. Why Does Comilla have the Highest Number of Expats?. [online] Dhaka Tribune. Available at: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2020/08/27/co-milla-takes-the-lion-s-share-in-sending-workers-abroad-but-why>

Mia, Md A., Nasrina, S., Zhang, M., and Rasiaha, R. 2015. City profile Chittagong, Bangladesh. Cities vol. 48, Nov 2015, pp. 31-41 [online] Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264275115000785?via%3Dihub>

Miller, B., 2020. 17 Advantages and Disadvantages of A Focus Group. [online] Green Garage. Available at: <https://greengarageblog.org/17-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-a-focus-group>
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), 2020. প্রবাসী কল্যাণ ও বৈদেশিক কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয় . [online] Available at: <https://probashi.gov.bd/>

Munier, A. and Nargis, D., 2018. Caught in the Middle: Women's Migration through Sub Agents. Dhaka: Bangladesh Ovibashi Mohila Sramik Association.

Munier, A. and Nargis, D., , 2019. Migrant Workers' Rights and Access to Justice. [online] Dhaka: Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP). Available at: http://okup.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Lessons_Learned_OKUP_EC-Project.pdf

Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB), 2020. প্রবাসী কল্যাণ ব্যাংক . [online] Available at: <http://pkb.gov.bd/>

Public Security Division, 2018. Bangladesh Country Report, 2018: Combating Human Trafficking. Dhaka: Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Qayum, N., 2017. Chasing the Dubai Dream in Italy: Bangladeshi Migration to Europe. The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute, [online] Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chasing-dubai-dream-italy-bangladeshi-migration-europe>

Rahman, M.M., 2011. Recruitment of Labour Migrants for the Gulf States: The Bangladeshi Case. ISAS Working Paper No. 132. [online] Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1938176

Rashid, S., 2020. Livelihood and Market Assessment Report for Prottasha Project. IOM. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/livelihood-market-assessment.pdf>

Shamim, I. and Holliday, J., 2018. Country Overview: Women and Migration in Bangladesh. [ebook] Dhaka: UN Women. Available at: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/03/women-and-migration-in-bangladesh>

Shamim, I., 2011. Role of Recruiting Agencies in the Recruitment Process to Ensure Safe Migration in Order to Prevent Human Trafficking. Dhaka: Winrock International.

Shamim, I., 2017. Training Module for TTC Instructors on Housekeeping for Potential Migrant Domestic Workers. Dhaka: Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS).

Siddiqui, T, 2019. Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2019: Achievements and Challenges. Dhaka: Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit. [online] Available at: <http://www.rmmru.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/TR-2019.pdf>

Siddiqui, T., 2001. Transcending Boundaries. Dhaka: University Press Limited

Siddiqui, T., 2003. Short-term Labour Migration of Women and Gender Relationship: The Bangladesh Case. Working Paper Series no. 1. Dhaka: Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit

Siddiqui, T., Neelim, A., Shabab, C. and Hasan, M., 2018. Impact of Migration on Poverty and Growth in Bangladesh. Dhaka: Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit. [online] Available at: <http://www.rm-mru.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Impact-of-Migration-on-Poverty-and-Growth-in-Bangladesh.pdf>

Sorkar, M., 2020. COVID-19 Pandemic Profoundly Affects Bangladeshi Workers Overseas with Consequences for Origin Communities. [online] migrationpolicy.org. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/covid-19-pandemic-profoundly-affects-bangladeshi-workers-abroad-consequences-origin>

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), n.d. Gender and Migration and Development. [online] Available at: https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Migration/Documents/Gender%20and%20Migration_final.pdf

Ullah, A. AKM., 2017. Irregular Migration from Bangladesh to the Gulf: Is Combatting It a Governance Challenge?, in Fargues, P. and Shah, N. M. (eds), 2017. Skilful Survivals: Irregular Migration to the Gulf (Gulf Research Centre, EUI). Available at: <https://gulfmigration.org/media/pubs/book/BookChapters/GLM-M%20-%20IM%20Volume%20-%20Chapter%20XI%20-%20Extract%20-%202017-05-19.pdf>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2020. Covid-19: An Uncertain Homecoming for Bangladeshi Migrant Workers, UNDP in Bangladesh. [online] Available at: <https://www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/stories/2020/covid-19--an-uncertain-homecoming-for-bangladeshi-migrant-worker.html>

US Department of State, 2020. 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh. In: 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, 20th ed. [online] United States of America. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/>

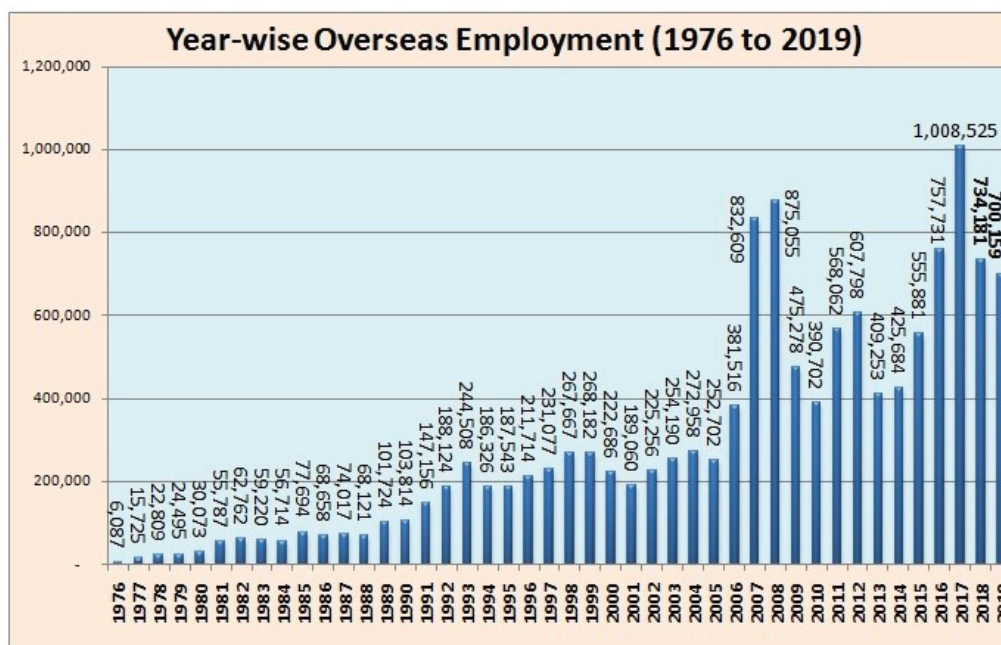
Van Hear, N., Bakewell, O. and Long, K., 2012. Drivers of Migration. [online] Brighton: Migrating out of Poverty, University of Sussex, Arts B. [online] Available at: <http://www.migratingoutofpoverty.org/files/-file.php?name=wp1-drivers-of-migration.pdf&site=354>

Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB), 2020. ওয়েজ আর্নার্স কল্যাণ বোর্ড | Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB). [online] Available at: <http://www.wewb.gov.bd/>

World Bank, 2007. Bangladesh: Strategy for Sustained Growth, Volume 1. Summary Report. [online] Washington, DC: World Bank. [online] Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2007/06/7959186/bangladesh-strategy-sustained-growth-vol-1-2-summary-report>

Annex

Figure 1: Year-wise overseas employment from bangladesh (1976 to 2019)



Source: BMET, 2020

Figure 2: Country-wise overseas employment (1976 to 2019)

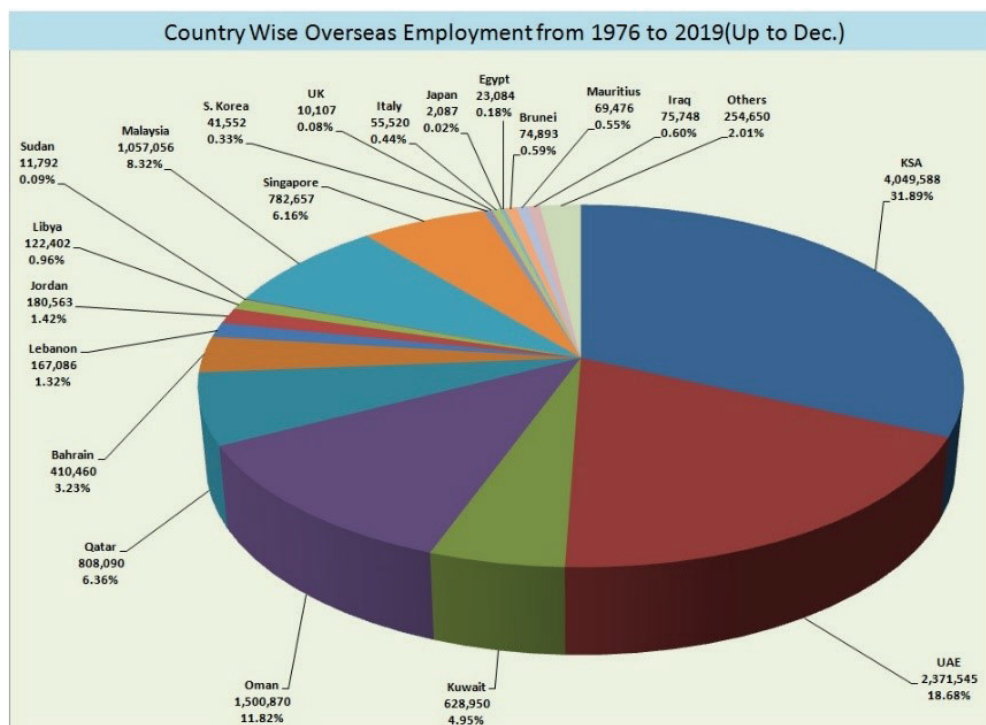
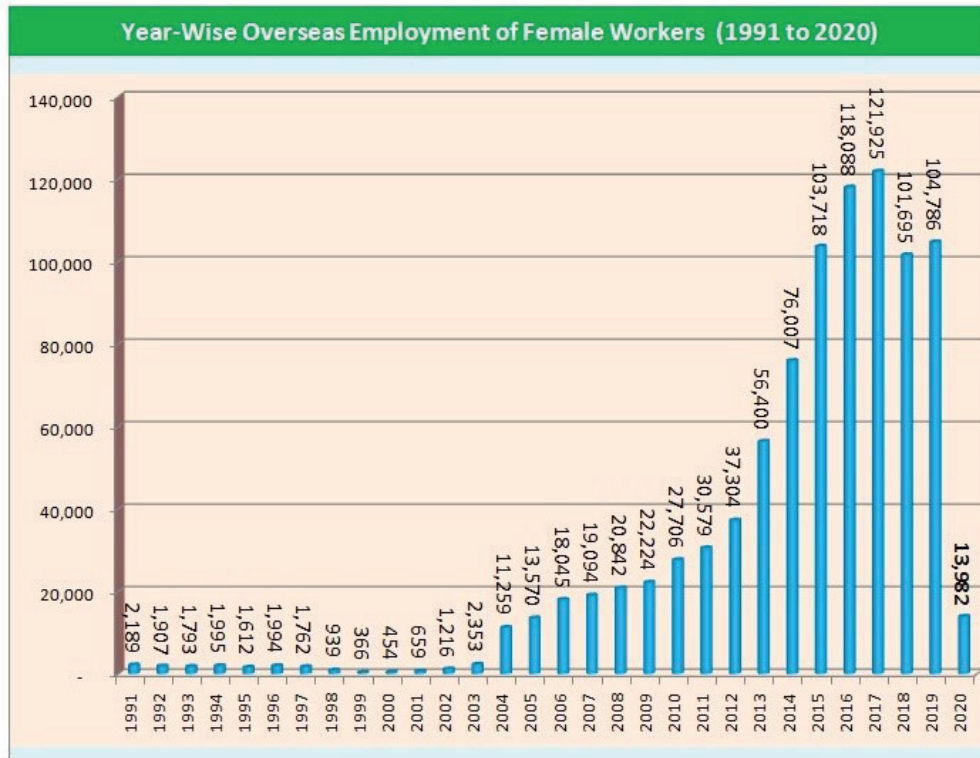
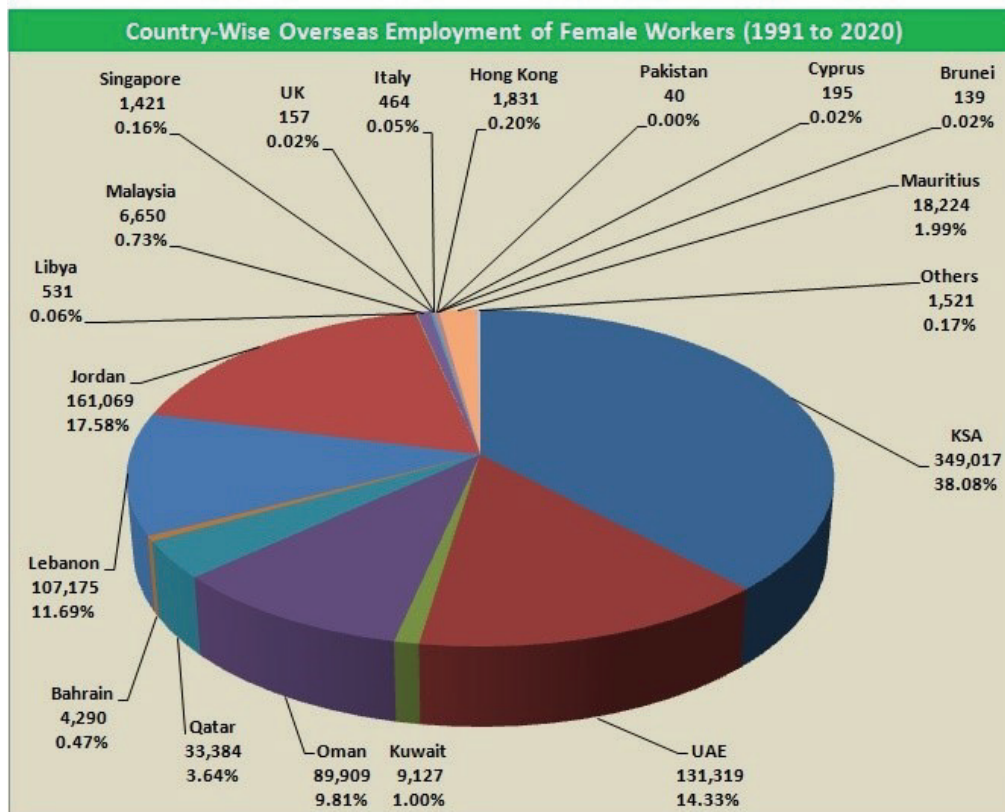


Figure 3: Year-wise overseas employment of female workers (1991 to feb 2020)



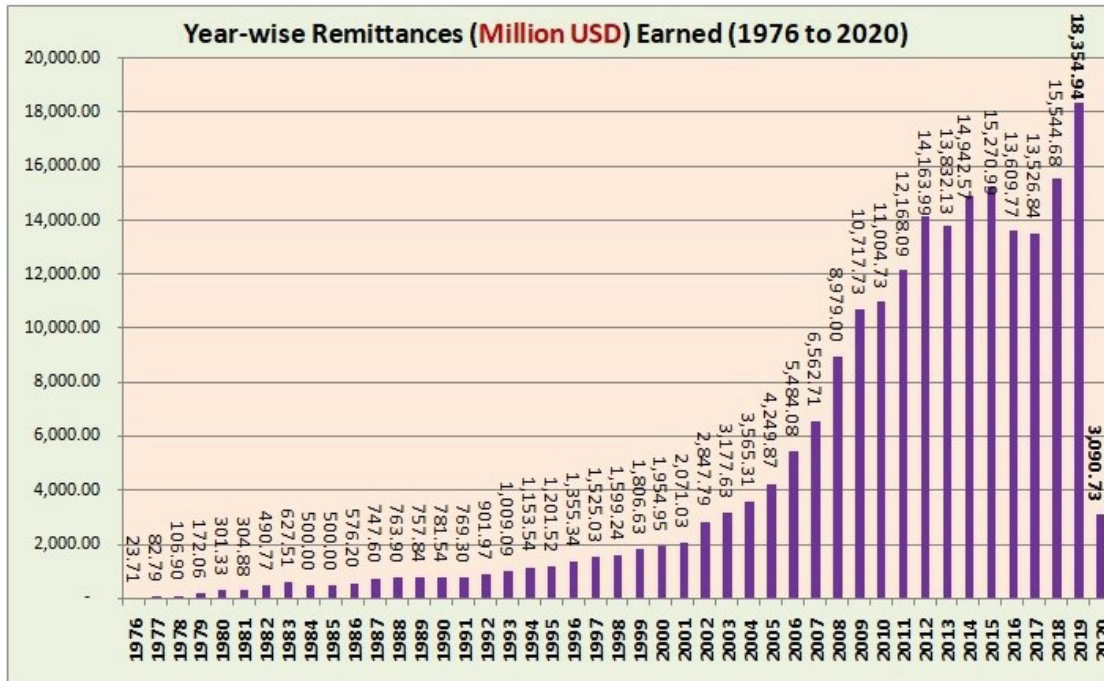
Source: BMET, 2020

Figure 4: Country-wise overseas employment of female workers (1991 to feb 2020)



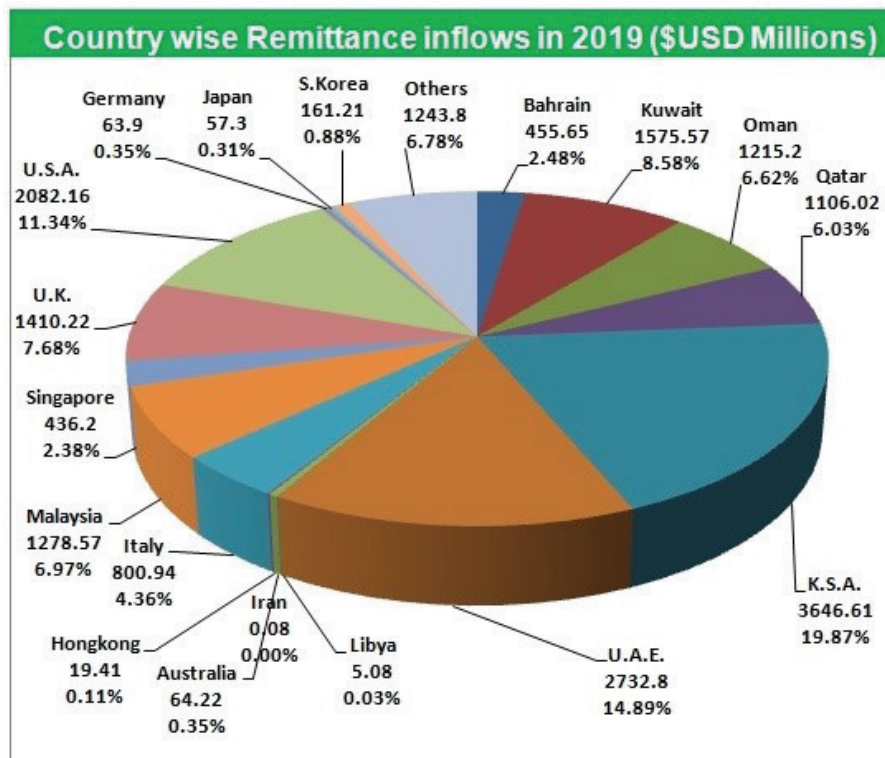
Source: BMET, 2020

Figure 5: Year-wise remittances earned in million usd from (1976 to feb 2020)



Source: BMET, 2020

Figure 6: Country-wise remittance inflows (2019)



Source: BMET, 2020

Methodological Annex

A. Potential migrant interviews

Interview code	Profile	Date	Location
PM-Cu-M-1	28-year-old male potential migrant	16.9.2020	Cumilla
PM-Cu-M-2	22-year-old male potential migrant	17.9.2020	Cumilla
PM-Cu-M-3	26-year-old male potential migrant	18.9.2020	Cumilla
PM-Cu-F-1	20-year-old female potential migrant	20.9.2020	Cumilla
PM-Cu-F-2	42-year-old female potential migrant	21.9.2020	Cumilla
PM-Cu-F-3	21-year-old female potential migrant	22.9.2020	Cumilla
PM-Cu-F-4	25-year-old female potential migrant	22.9.2020	Cumilla
PM-Dh-M-1	46-year-old male potential migrant	16.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Dh-M-2	20-year-old male potential migrant	17.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Dh-M-3	20-year-old male potential migrant	18.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Dh-M-4	20-year-old male potential migrant	19.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Dh-M-5	20-year-old male potential migrant	19.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Dh-F-1	30-year-old female potential migrant	20.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Dh-F-2	38-year-old female potential migrant	21.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Dh-F-3	40-year-old female potential migrant	22.9.2020	Dhaka
PM-Nj-M-1	26-year-old male potential migrant	16.9.2020	Narayanganj
PM-Nj-M-2	21-year-old male potential migrant	17.9.2020	Narayanganj
PM-Nj-M-3	33-year-old male potential migrant	18.9.2020	Narayanganj
PM-Nj-M-4	28-year-old male potential migrant	19.9.2020	Narayanganj
PM-Nj-F-1	28-year-old female potential migrant	20.9.2020	Narayanganj
PM-Nj-F-2	28-year-old female potential migrant	21.9.2020	Narayanganj
PM-Nj-F-3	25-year-old female potential migrant	22.9.2020	Narayanganj
PM-Na-M-1	29-year-old male potential migrant	16.9.2020	Narsingdi
PM-Na-M-2	20-year-old male potential migrant	17.9.2020	Narsingdi
PM-Na-M-3	32-year-old male potential migrant	19.9.2020	Narsingdi
PM-Na-F-1	26-year-old female potential migrant	20.9.2020	Narsingdi
PM-Na-F-2	28-year-old female potential migrant	21.9.2020	Narsingdi
PM-Na-F-3	20-year-old female potential migrant	22.9.2020	Narsingdi
PM-Ra-M-1	37-year-old male potential migrant	16.9.2020	Rajshahi
PM-Ra-M-2	38-year-old male potential migrant	17.9.2020	Rajshahi

B. Returnee Migrant interviews

Interview code	Profile	Date	Location
RM-Cu-M-1	22-year-old male returnee	23.9.2020	Cumilla
RM-Cu-M-2	41-year-old male returnee	23.9.2020	Cumilla
RM-Cu-M-3	38-year-old male returnee	24.9.2020	Cumilla
RM-Cu-M-4	43-year-old male returnee	25.9.2020	Cumilla
RM-Cu-F-1	40-year-old female returnee	26.9.2020	Cumilla
RM-Cu-F-2	40-year-old female returnee	27.9.2020	Cumilla
RM-Cu-F-3	30-year-old female returnee	28.9.2020	Cumilla
RM-Dh-M-1	29-year-old male returnee	23.9.2020	Dhaka
RM-Dh-M-2	42-year-old male returnee	24.9.2020	Dhaka
RM-Dh-F-1	35-year-old female returnee	26.9.2020	Dhaka
RM-Dh-F-2	38-year-old female returnee	27.9.2020	Dhaka
RM-Dh-F-3	45-year-old female returnee	28.9.2020	Dhaka
RM-Dh-F-4	30-year-old female returnee	28.9.2020	Dhaka
RM-Nj-M-1	35-year-old male returnee	23.9.2020	Narayanganj
RM-Nj-M-2	37-year-old male returnee	24.9.2020	Narayanganj
RM-Nj-M-3	50-year-old male returnee	25.9.2020	Narayanganj
RM-Nj-F-1	50-year-old female returnee	26.9.2020	Narayanganj
RM-Nj-F-2	40-year-old female returnee	27.9.2020	Narayanganj
RM-Nj-F-3	40-year-old female returnee	27.9.2020	Narayanganj
RM-Na-M-1	41-year-old male returnee	23.9.2020	Narsingdi
RM-Na-M-2	44-year-old male returnee	24.9.2020	Narsingdi
RM-Na-M-3	23-year-old male returnee	25.9.2020	Narsingdi
RM-Na-M-4	38-year-old male returnee	25.9.2020	Narsingdi
RM-Na-F-1	30-year-old female returnee	26.9.2020	Narsingdi
RM-Na-F-2	40-year-old female returnee	27.9.2020	Narsingdi
RM-Na-F-3	32-year-old female returnee	28.9.2020	Narsingdi
RM-Ra-M-1	37-year-old male returnee	23.9.2020	Rajshahi
RM-Ra-M-2	56-year-old male returnee	24.9.2020	Rajshahi
RM-Ra-M-3	40-year-old male returnee	25.9.2020	Rajshahi
RM-Ra-F-1	35-year-old female returnee	26.9.2020	Rajshahi

C. FGDs with potential migrants, returnee migrants and their families

Interview code	Status of migrants	Date	Location	Number of participants
FGD-Cu-RM-M-1	Returnee male migrants	19.9.2020	Cumilla	6 people
FGD-Cu-PM-F-1	Female potential migrants	20.9.2020	Cumilla	5 women and their family members
FGD-Dh-PM-M-1	Potential male migrants	21.9.2020	Dhaka	6 men
FGD-Dh-RM-F-1	Returnee female migrants	19.9.2020	Dhaka	8 women and their family members
FGD-Nj-PM-M-1	Potential male migrants	20.9.2020	Narayanganj	7 men
FGD-Nj-RM-F-1	Returnee female migrants	20.9.2020	Narayanganj	7 women
FGD-Na-PM-F-1	Potential female migrants	18.9.2020	Narsingdi	7 women
FGD-Na-RM-M-1	Returnee male migrants	19.9.2020	Narsingdi	7 men
FGD-Ra-PM-F-1	Female potential migrants	19.9.2020	Rajshahi	5 women
FGD-Ra-RM-M-1	Returnee male migrants	18.9.2020	Rajshahi	6 men
FGD-Sa-PM-M-1	Potential male migrants	23.9.2020	Satkhira	7 men
FGD-Sa-RM-F-1	Returnee female migrants	22.9.2020	Satkhira	7 women

D. FGDs with CBOs

Interview code	Name & organization	Date	Location	Comments
FGD-Cu-CBO-1	Cumilla City Corporation, Ovibasi Shromjibi, Poribar Kallyan Smobay Somiti	18.9.2020	Cumilla	Focus group with 6 people
FGD-Na-CBO-1	Ovibasi Nari Kormi Songstha, Narsingdi	28.9.2020	Narsingdi	Focus group with 6 people

E. KIIs with stakeholders

Interview code	Organization	Date	Location	Interview method
KII-Dh-ME-1	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment	22.10.2020	Dhaka	Phone
KII-Dh-WE-1	Wage Earners' Welfare Board	11.10.2020	Dhaka	Phone
KII-Dh-BO-1	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited	18.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-PK-1	Probashi Kallyan Bank	18.10.2020	Dhaka	Mobile phone
KII-Dh-BM-1	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training	24.9.2020	Dhaka	Phone
KII-Dh-CB-1	Care Bangladesh	4.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-IL-1	International Labour Organization	19.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-IO-1	International Organization for Migration	7.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-MJ-1	Manusher Jonno Foundation	27-9.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-SD-1	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	8.10.2020	Dhaka	Zoom
KII-Dh-UN-1	UN Women	15.10.2020	Dhaka	Mobile phone
KII-Dh-AW-1	Awaj Foundation	8.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-BO-1	Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association	4.10.2020	Dhaka	Mobile phone
KII-Dh-BR-1	BRAC	7.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-KN-1	Karmojibi Nari	21.10.2020	Dhaka	Phone
KII-Dh-OK-1	Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program	3.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype
KII-Dh-WA-1	WARBE Development Foundation	7.10.2020	Dhaka	Skype



CWYS

অভিবাসী
তথ্য
কেন্দ্র



MIGRANT
RESOURCE
CENTRE



Funded by the European Union

Implemented by



IMPROVING MIGRATION
MANAGEMENT IN THE SILK ROUTES



ICMPD
International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

International Centre for
Migration Policy Development