



 Policy Forum on
**Fairer Labour
Migration**

Event Report **Comilla**

July 2017

Are you ok ? Calling service for **women migrants**



The Event

IID Policy Forum on Fairer Labour Migration was held on 30th July, 2017 in Comilla. The forum was organised by Institute of Informatics and Development (IID) in partnership with WARBE Development Foundation as part of IID's policy advocacy initiative to promote fairer labour migration.



The Discussion

The speakers and participants of the Policy Forum discussed many aspects of labour migration emphasising mainly on the challenges and potential solutions to the challenges of migration process. Issues like fees and expenses, government services, language barrier, and ways to deal with them were discussed throughout the forum.

Very frequent **abuse and exploitations of women migrant domestic workers** is often attributed to their solitary working environment, where they remain disconnected from other workers. Male migrants often work and live in groups around construction or industry sites, while female workers

live in isolated households and are disconnected from other migrant workers. Sometimes the local recruiting agencies fail to keep contact with the workers after certain period of time or when they get transferred to different employment agency. This became a major discussion point among the discussants during the policy forum.

As shared, **expenses during migration** remains one of the biggest difficulties for potential migrants. Many of the migrants are unaware of reduced fees by government for certain countries and rely completely on the middlemen, hence falling victim of their scams. Not only had the workers, even students are being harassed by corrupted and informal migration agents.

Some participants complained against the apathy of government officers in Bangladesh and abroad. Public servants working at consulates are not helpful and not friendly towards the migrants, some participants remarked.

Not knowing the **local language of destination country** creates a huge communication gap between the employer and migrant worker. It also creates trouble in their life at foreign country. Participants and experts both agreed that **proper language training** should be mandatory before



Visa translation

Language of the visa is a major source of migration harassment. Most visas are in foreign language which is not understandable to the aspirant migrants to understand. In addition to existing online visa checking system, initiative to translate the visa paper needs to be explored.



Middlemen under law

Middlemen still remain the main connecting and communicating point between recruiting agencies and aspirant migrants. Any unfair business by individuals or agencies throughout the process of migration is a punishable act. Which means, even individuals and middlemen also fall under the Overseas Employment and Migration Act, (2013). Thus legal actions must be taken against anyone who is not following the rule.



Introduction to the culture

Awareness related to destination country's law and culture should be mandatory for the potential migrants. Migrant workers who go abroad for the first time receive cultural shock resulting inappropriate behaviour in front of public eyes.



Monitoring over corruption

Government services such as passport often cause harassment for potential migrant workers. The accusation of being unsupportive and promoting/tempting for scam via middlemen (by authorised officers) has been a part of this heated discussion. Strong monitoring over corruption and unnecessary harassment was suggested.



IID Policy Forum- also known as 'AncholikAlapon' in Bangla, is a discussion series that brings grassroots voice to national policy process. Typically organized at the local level, the series follows an innovative and adaptive format to conduct policy discussions involving multi stakeholder from local communities. There is no designated Chairperson or special guests in the forums where participants get engaged as equals. A specific set of groundwork and pre-event activities ensure a non-hierarchical active involvement by different stakeholders.



IID's policy advocacy for Fairer Labour Migration (FLM) is part of the PROKAS (Promoting Knowledge for Accountable Systems) project. PROKAS is funded by the UK's Department for International Development and implemented by a consortium led by the British Council, supported by Palladium and WISE Development.

The issues

While the migratory workers contribute to the huge remittance base, they have to deal with various problems before and after reaching destination countries. These problems ensue because the migration process is devoid of transparency, accountability and access to information, giving rise to informal mechanisms. Consequently, cost of migration goes up, imposing the burden on aspirant migrants. Once they have migrated overseas, they face harassment and discrimination, both financially and socially. While supporting evidence of this exploitation exists, little attention is being given to make the process fairer and efficient.

The Participants

Participants of this forum included representative of IID and WARBE Development Foundation, aspirant migrants, returnee migrants, political leaders, Social and NGO campaigners, business people, relatives of migrants in trouble, civil society leaders and others. Among the participants, there were 24 male and 21 female participants who actively engaged and participated in the discussion.

