



Policy Forum on **Fairer Labour Migration**

Event Report **Tangail**

August 2017



Model High Commission focusing on migrants



The Event

Migrants going to abroad are usually vulnerable to abuse and fraudulence. IID Policy Forum on Fairer Labour Migration, held on 30 August 2017 in Tangail, focused on the role of Bangladeshi high commissions in key destination countries to ensure worker's safety. Institute of Informatics and Development (IID) organised the forum in partnership with Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).



The Discussion

A large number of Bangladeshi workers live in the Middle Eastern countries. Almost 80% of our

migrants go to the Gulf countries and they usually send huge amount of remittance in the country. Bangladeshi High Commissions in these countries need to prioritise migration related services in these countries. While smooth flow of remittance is crucial for our economic development, workers' wellbeing and safety at overseas is imperative to our smooth flow of remittance. Since most workers who go to these countries are low-skilled and work at the low paying job, they are more vulnerable to abuse, fraudulence and violence. As offices and relatives in Bangladesh cannot do much from distance, Bangladesh High Commissions can play a key role in ensuring safety in such cases. In this context, following issues were discussed in the forum:

Bangladesh High Commissions in the destination countries need to provide services with a "**Migrant First**" (*Probashi-Prothom*) approach. High

Commissions in these countries should take up their responsibility to actively engage in the protection of the human and labour rights of migrant workers. They must strengthen their presence, responses, and advocacy on behalf of migrants, particularly when human rights violation occurs.

There are instances when migrants **do not get appointed to the job they were promised**. Most of the returnee migrants claimed that they get the contract paper after departure or at the airport, when it is too late to review or change any clause.

There are a lot of benefits government provides for migrants including loans through Probashi Kalyan Bank (PKB), embassy support, fraudulency charge, support for passport or visa fraud and compensation to dead immigrant's family. Migrants **lose out on these benefits if they are unregistered**.

Medical fitness is a pre-requisite for getting visa. **Most of the medical centres are placed in big cities**. Once they are rejected, they have to take the test twice or more. Also they have to incur extra cost of accommodation and travelling as medical centres situated mostly in big cities.

In general, there is a **malpractice of not keeping money transaction record** between broker and aspiring migrant, which increases the chance of being victim of fraud. And later, they usually cannot claim the money back or go to court since, no document means no evidence.

Representative of PKB, responsible to provide loan to the migrants,' claims that PKB cannot provide loans due to lack of enough evidence/paper they receive from the aspiring migrants. However, migrants complain that PKB demands a lot of documents which makes loan sanction process lengthy.

The Suggestions

The issues identified by the participants to suggest fairer labour migration include—





Few Model High Commissions can be set up which will provide assistance to migrants who have experienced any sort of human rights violation. It should ensure services to both undocumented migrants and those without possession of their passports, ensure safe accommodation for migrant workers who left their worksites due to abuse and who are seeking and awaiting legal redress.

Campaign should encourage registration of migrants and highlight the benefits of having **proper documents and access to government benefits** which also help in case of fraudulence from brokers or employers.

By **spreading the concept of 'Uthan Boithok (yard meeting),'** local organisations can promote awareness by reaching out the local communities who do not have access to online or offline information.



Build medical centre locally to support aspiring migrant so that they do not incur extra cost of visiting distant medical centre for medical fitness test.

Language is a major barrier to migrants and this may increase the likelihood of fraudulence to ill-informed migrants. **Documents should be translated** for migrants to understand the agreement paper.

Pre departure trainings should include basic air travel etiquette, cultural norms and language of the destination countries.



 **The Policy Forum**

IID Policy Forum, also known as 'AncholikAlapon' in Bangla, is a discussion series that brings grassroots voice to national policy process. Typically organised at the local level, the series follows an innovative and adaptive format to conduct policy discussions involving multistakeholders from local communities. There is no designated Chairperson or special guests in the forums where participants including government and political representatives, community leaders, activists, NGO workers, local professionals and youth leaders get engaged as equals.



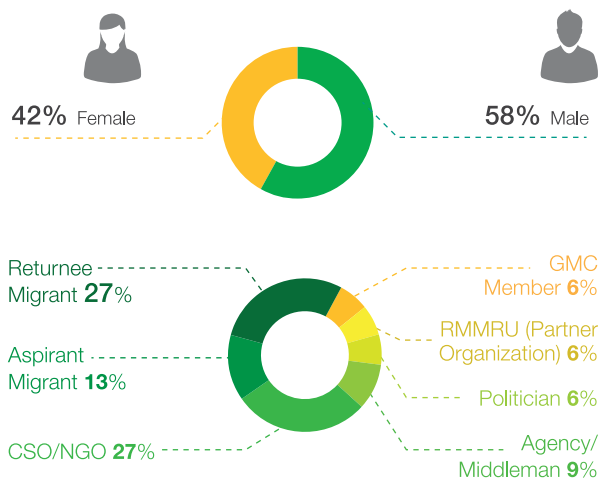
IID's policy advocacy for Fairer Labour Migration (FLM) is part of the PROKAS (Promoting Knowledge for Accountable Systems) project. PROKAS is funded by the UK's Department for International Development and implemented by a consortium led by the British Council, supported by Palladium and WISE Development.

The Issues

While the migrant 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

Representatives from IID and RMMRU came together along with aspirant migrants, migrants, returnee migrants, brokers, NGO activists, local CSO representatives, youth group representatives, UNO and others. The forum included 25 male and 18 female participants who actively engaged and participated in the discussion.



Policy Forum Participants