

Experience of fraudulence in current migration system

Summary

This policy brief highlights the extent of fraudulence in current migration processing in Bangladesh. A recent RMMRU study conducted in nine villages and eleven wards of the Tangail district found that 51% of the aspirant, current and returnee migrant households experienced some form of fraudulence, harassment and inhumane or degrading treatment. Among this group, 19% could not go abroad after making part or full payment of migration costs. They paid the amount to intermediaries who were mostly their relatives, friends or dalals (sub-agents). On an average they spent BDT 243,000 in failed migration. While processing migration they hardly had any contact with the formal recruiting agencies. It may be noted that at the end of the process it is the recruiting agencies who secure the emigration clearance from the BMET, the line agency of the government. The RMMRU research is titled 'Role of Dalals in Migration System of Bangladesh: Extent of Fraudulence' and the consultation was held on July 19, 2017. The research was conducted under the Fairer Labour Migration project of RMMRU, supported by PROKAS Project of British Council.



Address by Justice Md. Nizamul Huq Nasim at the consultation on Fraudulence in Processing Migration, on July 19, 2017 organised by RMMRU.

Introduction

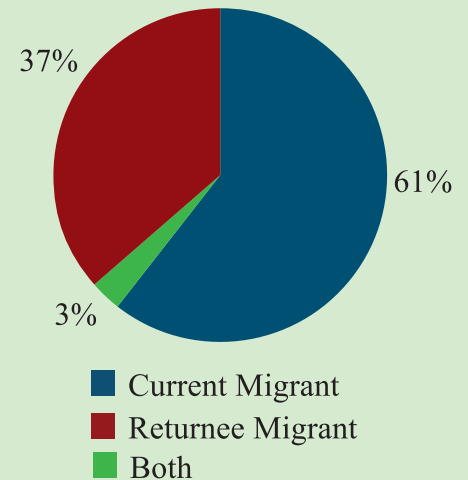
Over the last two years migration flows from Bangladesh is increasing significantly whereas the remittance flow is experiencing a negative growth. In 2016, 650,000 workers migrated to the Gulf, other Arab and Southeast Asian countries. This year (2017) up to August the figure exceeded 690,046 (BMET Statistics). Compared to previous year in 2016 remittance figure dropped by 11% and this year the figure is likely to drop further. One of the hypotheses of this research is that although the scale of migration has increased, fraudulent practices in the process are adversely affecting the income of migrants. Along with low oil price and tightening of fiscal policies in the Gulf and other Arab countries (World Bank, 2017) and Brexit in the UK, fraudulence in current migration system is also contributing to lower flow of remittances.

International labour migration has been an integral part of Bangladesh's economic and social development since the 1980s (Siddiqui, 2016). Poor people treat migration as an important livelihood opportunity. However due to reasons operational in the destination countries as well as in Bangladesh many migrants cannot fulfill their dream, endure major losses and some slide down to further poverty.

The study was conducted in 9 villages of Paikora union and 11 wards of Elenga municipality. 300 households from each village/ward were covered. The villages were divided into sub areas each constituting 300 households. One of the sub areas was then randomly selected for conducting census using serpentine method. Altogether 5407 households were covered under the census.

Extent of migration

Percentage of migrant households is very high in these two areas of Tangail district. 40% of the total households are migrant households. Compared to the wards of municipal area the propensity of migration is high in the villages. 47% households of Paikora Union at least have one migrant. In Bangladesh there is hardly any data on extent of return migration. This census shows that 37% of them are returnee migrants and 61% are current migrants. Around 3% of the households have both current and returnees.



40%
Of the rural HH are
migrant HH

19%
Could not go after
paying

32%
Experienced
inhumane and
degrading work
conditions



Fraudulence practices

51% of the aspirant, current and returnee migrant households experienced some form of fraudulence, harassment and inhumane or degrading behaviour. Among this group, 19% could not go abroad after paying some or full amount mostly to relatives, friends and dalals. On an average their families spent BDT 243,000 in failed migration. 32% faced fraudulence and various degrading inhuman treatment while staying in the countries of destination. 36% to 40% of those who went to Oman, Qatar, UAE and Malaysia experienced fraudulence. In case of Saudi Arabia and Singapore percentage of fraud cases was around 25%.

Inhumane and degrading treatment at destination

7% of those who faced inhuman and degrading treatment in destination experienced jail and detention camps, 6% were subjected to extortion and blackmail, 10% faced police harassment, 14% physical and mental abuse, 2% led inhumane life in deserts, jungles and remote islands, 9% experienced non-payment or irregular payment of wages and 1% experienced forced return. As many as 52% complained about poor quality of food and accommodation.

Limited role of recruiting agencies

97% respondents stated that they received migration information and purchased employment contract from persons living in the countries of destination, relatives, friends and dalals. Only 3% stated that they were recruited directly by recruiting agencies and BOESL (government recruitment agency). Recruiting agencies were however involved at the last stage when they secure clearance from BMET. This indicates that there is a huge gap between how recruitment is taking place at the grassroots and how government would like it to happen. As per Overseas Employment and Migration Act 2013 only licensed recruiting agencies have the permission to process migration. Intermediaries have no role in migration processing.

Recommendations

Fraudulence is committed both by the recruiting agencies and middlemen. Since middlemen do not have any formal recognition and they are not covered under the law, it is easy for the recruiting agencies to pass on blames of fraud on the dalals. Fraudulent practices are committed both within Bangladesh and in the countries of destination need to be reduced through reform of the recruitment process.

‘There exist a chain of migration whereby people used to migrate through familiar channels like middlemen and this can be termed as a FnF syndrome. People mainly have faith on their relatives and other acquainted persons rather than agencies.’



K. M. Ali Reza, Deputy Chief, MoEWOE

6%
subjected to
blackmail

12%
led life in deserts,
jungles and islands

7%
faced jail or
detention

14%
faced physical and
mental torture

10%
faced police harassment and
non or irregular payments

52%
were not provided with
proper food and accomodation

‘The whole migration system would collapse within days if we the sub agents do not connect the aspirant migrants with the two groups those who send work permits from destination countries and the recruiting agencies. We work as do the medical representatives who take the new medicines of pharmaceutical companies to the door steps of consumers. However everyone says bad things about us and all the problems created by the recruiting agencies fall on our shoulder as local people only know me, not the recruiting agents. This situation should end and government should regularize us.’



Sanowar Hossain, Middlemen, Tangail



Since the very beginning of labour migration from Bangladesh, government tried to abolish the system of dalals from recruitment but of no avail. Time has come to institutionalize the dalal system by recognizing their role and bringing them under legal cover.

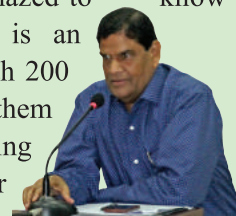
Overseas Employment and Migration Act 2013 does not allow the function of dalals. Under the provisions of sections 31-36 and 47 of the Act there is scope to allow dalals to perform their task legally.

Dalals can be registered with the recruiting agencies. In case of fraudulence investigation should be conducted against both the concerned recruiting agency and the dalal. It is time that government realizes fraudulence practices that are taking place because of this gap in the formal system.

Acknowledgement

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'It will be difficult to recruit workers by the recruiting agencies without the help of intermediaries. I am amazed to know that in Korotia there is an association of dalals with 200 members and some of them are here today demanding for regularization of their role.'



Benjir Ahmed, President, BAIRA

'This research and the testimonies of the middlemen have brought in new perspective on scope of fraudulence at the grassroots. We have to bring in major change in reducing fraudulence in recruitment.'

Jabed Ahmed, Additional Secretary, MoEWOE

'The middlemen should be brought under legal framework in order to ensure safe migration. The sub-agents and intermediaries need to be regularized by the Migration Act or the Rules.'



Justice Mohammad Nizamul Huq Nasim
Retired Judge, Appellate Division, Supreme Court

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Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU)

Sattar Bhaban (4th Floor), 179, Shahid Syed Nazrul Islam Sarani, Bijoy Nagar, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Tel: 880-2-9360338, Mobile: 01942738908

E-mail: info@rmmru.org, Web: www.rmmru.org

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