

Social Cost of Migration

Left-behind Children, Husbands and
Wives in Bangladesh



Tasneem Siddiqui
Anas Ansar

**Social Cost of Migration: the Left-behind Children,
Husbands and Wives in Bangladesh**

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BC	Boy Child
BMET	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
ED	Executive Director
FMC	Female Migrant's Child
GC	Girl Child
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
HH	Household
HHs	Households
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Resource
HSC	Higher Secondary School Certificate
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	Instant Online Messaging Platform
IMPD	Impact of Migration on Poverty and Local Development in Bangladesh
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
INT	Internal
INTL	International
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information Technology

KII	Key Informant Interview
LBH	Left-behind Husbands
LBW	Left-behind Wives
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MMC	Male Migrant's Child
MP	Member of Parliament
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NM	Non-Migrant
P value	Calculated Probability
RMMRU	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit
RSS	Rapid Screening Survey
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
STATA	Statistics and Data
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
T test	Statistical Hypothesis test
TV	Television
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
UNO	UpazilaNirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
USA	United States of America
WEWB	Wage Earners' Welfare Board

Glossary of Non-English Terms

<i>Bazar</i>	Market
<i>Chachi</i>	Paternal aunt
<i>Dalal</i>	Middleman/ broker/ sub agent
<i>Eid</i>	Muslim religious festival
<i>Eidgah</i>	Prayer ground
<i>Hafezi</i>	An Islamic education system of memorizing the Quran
<i>Hujur</i>	A teacher in a religious educational institution
<i>Khala</i>	Maternal aunt
<i>Madrasa</i>	Religious educational institution
<i>Puja</i>	Religious festival of Hindu community
<i>Sari</i>	A garment consisting of a length of cotton or silk elaborately draped around the body, traditionally worn by women from South Asia
<i>Shalwar</i>	Traditional combination dress worn by
<i>Kameez</i>	women of South Asia
<i>Union Parishad</i>	Lowest tier in the local government
<i>Upazilla</i>	Sub district Unit

Foreword

It is my pleasure to commend the publication *Social Costs of Migration on the Left-behind Children, Husbands and Wives in Bangladesh* prepared by RMMRU, under the leadership of Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Globally, the phenomenon of labour migration has become a major influencer of development and poverty alleviation. Recognizing this phenomenon, now there exists a global framework established in 2018 to harness the potential of migration - known as the Global Compact for Migration. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) puts migration at the centre of achieving multiple goals and targets related to economic development, protection and decent work.

Switzerland as a pioneer, in integrating migration as a development issue, became a key stakeholder in the global debate on migration since 2011. SDC is well positioned to play a determinant role in shaping future priorities in the debate and in linking political visions with concrete action. The first step to reach this vision requires substantial data collection and rigorous analysis.

While a number of studies show the link between migration and development in Bangladesh, there is a dearth in research drawing the social costs of migration on left-behind family members. This study attempts to make the findings on social costs of migration on the left-behind family members of migrant workers robust. The aim is also to highlight the contribution of left-behind family members

in making the migration endeavour of one of the household members successful.

One important finding is that more and more spouses in migrant households are making joint decisions around education and the future of their children than in earlier years. Moreover, many of the left-behind husbands are redefining their masculine role and are undertaking household responsibilities that are often viewed as "feminine". It would be interesting to see to what extent these transformations and values around gender division of labour will sustain.

It is important to note that although the economic benefits of migration are enjoyed by the nation as a whole, the social costs, on the contrary, are largely borne by the individual family members of the migrants. Besides, there is a common understanding that social costs are an integral part of overall migration outcomes. However, we know that through meaningful policy interventions and social awareness, these harmful social costs can be reduced. The recommendations of this study present an important step forward in this regard.

On behalf of the SDC, I would like to thank Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui and her team of dedicated researchers for their efforts in preparing this important study. We hope that this publication will not only serve as reference for interested readers and practitioners but also inspire future researchers to continue the analytical work in the field of migration. Lastly, we hope the Government of Bangladesh will take this book into consideration to devise policies and strategies on migration and the wellbeing of migrants and their left-behind family members in Bangladesh.



Suzanne Mueller

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Switzerland, Dhaka

Preface

For quite some time, the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) wanted to undertake a research to analyse the social costs of migration on the left-behind family members. After RMMRU's much discussed Impact of Migration on Poverty and Local Development in Bangladesh (IMPD) study, the government and other stakeholders underscored the need for a study that offers a better understanding of the social costs of migration on the migrants' left-behind family members in Bangladesh. In February 2018, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) accepted RMMRU's proposal for such a study and this has enabled the Unit to undertake its much desired research titled 'Social Cost of Migration: the Left-behind Children, Husbands and Wives in Bangladesh'. The aim of the research is to generate knowledge to help policy-makers to integrate the concerns of the left-behind children, wives and husbands of the migrants in overall migration policy and actions.

It gives us immense pleasure to publish this book based on the landmark survey of 4884 members of 1741 households that covers both the male and the female internal, international and non-migrant households across twelve districts of the country. We are indebted to those left-behind children and spouses of the migrants who participated in this study for their patience, the valuable time they gave and rich life experiences that they shared.

This study evolved through a long participatory process that involved close engagement and dialogue with the policy-makers, academics, members of the civil society, researchers, and above all,

the left-behind children, husbands and wives of the migrants and when required, the other family members. We acknowledge the contribution of all those who helped RMMRU with their knowledge, expertise and experiences. RMMRU expresses its deep gratitude to the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) for its insightful comments in shaping the research and identifying survey districts. Above all, the enthusiasm of the Ministry has inspired the research team to carry forward the study, which has the potential to contribute to the framing of government policies and planning, in particular to the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016. This will be an important step forward in addressing the plights and challenges of the left-behind family members. We express our deep appreciation to all those ministry officials who managed to spend time to comment on RMMRU proposal and provided insightful comments on how to carry forward the study. Such inputs from the ministry have substantially enriched the methodology of the research. We particularly thank Dr. Ahmed Munir Saleheen, Additional Secretary, MoEWOE for committing to take action to change the mind-set about the left-behind husbands and wives through future programmes of Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB).

We thank the entire team of BMET, particularly the then Director General, Mr. Selim Reza. His support has been crucial in conducting the field work and in securing active cooperation of the local government officials at the field sites. We are thankful to the concerned UNOs and police officers including Superintendents of Police of various districts and Officers in Charge of police stations in the study sites for their help without which it would have been virtually impossible to conduct such ambitious fieldwork.

More than 30 research assistants and 5 supervisors worked tirelessly to collect the data in remote areas of 12 districts. They worked for a period of 6 months including the month of Ramadan, in a less supportive weather. We deeply acknowledge their contribution. Senior staff members of RMMRU, Marina Sultana, Director

Programme, Nayan Mitra, Admin and HR Coordinator, Md. Kaisar Hossain, Finance and Accounts Coordinator and Parvez Alam, Senior IT Officer along with Sanjida Akhter, Research Assistant for their contribution in successful completion of the research.

We are thankful to Mahmudol Hasan Rocky, Research Coordinator of RMMRU. He has provided valuable inputs in designing the field research, training of the enumerators and supervisors, guiding data crosschecking and cleaning. We express our special thanks to Mahmuda Jahan for her commitment to statistical rigour. She has designed the programme in STATA for data analysis and prepared all the tables that have been used in this research. Since the very beginning of the research, she has been proactively involved in all the activities ranging from organising the in-depth interviews to support in writing. We are also thankful to the two interns of RMMRU, Raanya Siddiqui and Raayda Siddiqui for translating and editing the 300 in-depth interviews of the left-behind children, husbands and wives of the migrants.

We consider ourselves very fortunate for receiving commitment from Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to use the research findings in future policy-making. We are happy to have received insightful comments from eminent scholars and development practitioners like Irene Tumwaze, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF, Christopher Morris, Country Representative, Terre Des Hommes, Farah Kabir, ED, Action Aid, Rina Roy, Director Programme, MJF, Shameem Akhtar, Film-maker and Rights Activist, Prof. Syeda Rozana Rashid, University of Dhaka and Asif Munier, the then Programme Officer, ILO. Their comments have enriched the quality of the book substantially.

Finally, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for mandating this study and helping us to prioritize the issue of migration in a holistic approach bringing the left-behind family members' stories to the mainstream and thus helping the government in their policy process. Our sincere thanks to Suzanne Mueller, Senior Adviser,

Nadim Rahman, National Programme Officer - Migration and Local Governance and Nazia Haider, Programme Manager - Safer Migration at SDC for their enthusiastic role and thorough feedback on every aspect of the research as well as its management.

RMMRU
Dhaka, January, 2020

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the theory of “new economics of migration”, a number of studies on temporary labour migration, both internal and international, explained migration decisions primarily as a household strategy aimed at diversifying sources of family income or, minimizing household risks or, insurance of household against income loss from traditional sources etc. (Stark and Bloom 1985). They demonstrated that migration is not always a rational choice of individuals motivated by self-interest; it is more of an attempt of a household to improve the socio-economic circumstances of both migrants as well as their left-behind family members.

A major rationale of global migration regime in mainstreaming migration into development is its capacity to reduce poverty and enhance social and economic advancement of households of the migrants in the origin areas. There is now a vast literature on the impact of remittances sent by the migrants to their households (Adams and Page, 2005; Leinbach & Watkins, 1998; Levitt, 2001; Mahmud and Siddiqui, 2014; Siddiqui and Mahmud, 2015). It is well understood that the impact of migration is context specific, largely constructed within the gender, generational and other cultural norms regulating the societies concerned (Rashid and Sikder, 2015).

These studies have brought our attention to the left-behind households, yet they treat households as the basic unit of analysis and do not go beyond. The studies tend to provide aggregate analysis of migration and remittances on the households. In reality,

however, all household members do not experience the impact of migration in the same way. It varies on a number of factors such as gender, age, economic status, and role in family decision-making. In other words, the migration outcomes would differ among the male and female adult members of the households depending on who holds the decision-making authority. The children would experience the impact of migration differently from the adult members of the household. Even the impact on children would vary further based on sex. The same goes for the left-behind male and female spouses. In the context of Bangladesh, there is hardly any research that looks particularly into the social costs of migration borne by different groups of household members on the basis of their sex, age and relationship with the migrant. Therefore, the aim of this study is to look at the consequence of migration of both male and female labour migrants on a section of household members, the girl and boy child as well as the left-behind husbands and wives.

1.1 Objective and Purpose of the Study

Broad objective of the study is to generate knowledge on the impact of internal and international migration on the left-behind family members and to help policy makers integrate the interest of left-behind families in national planning as well as ensuring benefits of Sustainable Development Goals, 2030 cover the members of migrant households.

1.1.1 Specific Objectives

Specific objectives of this study are: (a) to understand the gravity of the social costs borne by the left-behind children of male and female migrants; (b) to analyse the role of migration in ensuring well-being of the left-behind children, both boy and girl, and to understand agency of children in overcoming the insecurities created by parental migration; (c) to map the social cost borne by the left-behind wives and husbands due to migration of their spouses; (d) to analyse the impact of migration on gender relationship between the migrants and their left-behind spouses; (e) to assess the role of

migration in empowering and/or disempowering the left-behind spouses and (f) to understand agency of the left-behind spouses in overcoming the insecurities created by migration.

1.1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to gather rigorous qualitative and quantitative evidence on the nature of social costs borne by the children and left-behind spouses of the male and female migrants. The main aim of gathering such information is to advocate with the policy makers for including the interests of the left-behind children, wives and husbands in national plans and programmes. The Eighth Five Year Plan is at the preparatory stage. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide with strong evidence for the Planning Commission to integrate the left-behind children and spouses in its migration related action plans. The purpose of the study is also to feed in the needs of the left-behind migrant children and spouses to the 21 member secretary level committee that oversees the implementation of the SDGs. The General Economic Division of Planning Commission is again the focal point in this regard. The Wage Earners' Welfare Board of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment does require information to design programmes for the left-behind family members. This study will be one of a kind to meet the need of all the institutions mentioned above.

1.2 Literature Review

Hugo (2010) shows that migration offers opportunities for personal, social and economic development. At the same time, the left-behind families of the migrants face various types of risks, insecurities, violence, mental sufferings and exploitation. These sufferings are treated as unavoidable social cost of migration. It is only recently that social cost of migration is surfacing in a major way in migration literature. Social cost of migration was treated as one of the major areas of discussion at the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) of 2016. This section reviews literature on

the social cost of migration experienced by three specific groups. These are the left-behind husbands, the left-behind wives and the left-behind children. It is however important to note that recent literature not only highlight the social cost of migration, it also attempts to locate agencies of the left-behind members in facing those insecurities and risks.

1.2.1 The Left-behind Children

In recent years, a number of systematic research has been carried out in some of the labour origin countries on the impact of international migration of both men and women on their children who stay back home. This section reviews existing literature on the impact of migration of parents on the children. Available literature highlights the impact of migration on psychosocial wellbeing, educational attainment, health etc. of children. Two streams of literature are now available on the impact of migration on the left-behind children: qualitative and quantitative. Both streams highlight the challenges that the left-behind household members face in the absence of the migrant. At the same time, they also provide evidence that indicate positive outcomes that are experienced by the left-behind children.

Antman (2012) highlights that children's wellbeing depends not only on economic resources but also on parental care. Parental migration inherently involves parental absence from home that can have a negative impact on upbringing of children, which may outweigh the positive effect of remittances. The idea of loss of parental care due to migration also varies by gender of the parents. In countries where gender roles still remain very rigid with mother's main role being to nurture children and the father's to be the breadwinner, migration of mother is perceived as a much larger disruption in a child's life than the absence of the father (Reyes, 2008, Cortes, 2015). Children with migrant fathers are cared for by their mothers who can afford to stay at home, whereas the left-behind husbands of female migrants may have other jobs to pursue or may not want to break the gendered division and rarely become

the primary care givers.

Asis (2013), Tanalega (2002) and Parreñas (2005) find that the majority of Filipina female migrants actively remain connected with their children through phone calls and other means and engage in long-distance parenting. They largely succeed in keeping their families physically and emotionally intact during their period of absence. Overall, Filipino mothers continue to bear much of the responsibility for childcare and household finances even after leaving the country (Asis 2006, Parreñas 2002, 2005, 2006).

Parreñas (2010) reviews the literature on the impact of female migration on the left-behind children from a gendered perspective. She highlights that since the feminization of international labour migration, a large pool of literature has been generated which discourages migration of women. Care deficit of the left-behind children, particularly the girl child has been the main consideration. She argues this stream of literature favours the status quo of maintaining traditional gender division of work where women are responsible for child care.

Giannelli and Mangiavacchi (2010) find that parental migration has a negative impact on school attendance for the children left-behind in Albania. Since the migrants are mostly men, much of the literature has focused on the father's contributions (Heymann et al. 2009, Antman, 2012). Booth (1995) stresses the detrimental impact of absence of father as disciplinarian and figurehead in sending the left-behind children to school in Swaziland. Heymann et al. (2009) find that migration of a care-giver spouse is significantly associated with academic, behavioral and emotional problems for the children left-behind in Mexico. Meyerhoefer and Chen (2011) find that parental labour migration in China is associated with a significant lag in the educational progress of girls; a finding they argue is due to shifting girls' time allocation toward home production. Similarly, McKenzie et al. (2011) find a negative effect of migration on schooling of the older children left-behind in Mexico and match this

behaviour to increased housework for the girls and migration for the boys.

Ratha et al. (2011), Adams (2011), Adams et al. (2005), Nagarajan (2009) Valero-Gill (2008), World Bank (2011) and Pendleton et al. (2006), on the other hand, highlight that remittance from international migration are disproportionately spent on education of the left-behind children, whereas an IOM-Save the Children study (2017) finds that a substantial portion of the remittance are spent on food. Bracking and Sachikonye (2008) and Lu and Treiman (2007) find that the children of migrant sending households are more likely to be enrolled in schools compared to the children of non-migrant households. Siddiqui and Mahmud (2015) find that the international migrants spent 35 and 34 percent more on private tutoring compared to the internal migrants and the non-migrants respectively. The CHAMPSEA¹ project, which has studied children under 12 years of age in 4000 households across Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand, finds that the children of migrants often do better when it comes to ensuring quality education through spending more on good school and private coaching but not always psychologically.

Rashid and Sikder (2015) present that the first-generation migrants pay more attention to facilitating consumption and building tangible property. The second generation, by contrast, spends on education. The same study reveals that remittances help these households to avoid sliding down into further poverty by engaging in small investment and family enterprises in rural areas and it has also enabled them to accumulate resources. It is important to note here that the remittance-opportunity nexus works to enhance the youths' educational aspirations.

¹ Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia (CHAMPSEA) was a research project of the National University of Singapore. It examined the reconfiguration of the support systems after parental migration and the impact on child health/wellbeing in South-East Asia, analysing the impact of parental absence on health/wellbeing of the left-behind children.

It is clear that children's education receives higher priority in remittance use. However, gendered analysis of how benefits are distributed among girls or boys is hard to obtain. Hugo (2005) and Asis (2000) provide evidence that in many parts of South-East Asia, parents prefer to educate their sons rather than their daughters. INSTRAW and IOM (1999) and Siddiqui (2001) look into the impact of migration of women on children's education, age of marriage, exposure to peer group and coping in stress situation. They find that migration of women brought mixed results for their children. On some occasions, better opportunities for education have been created for the children. In other cases, their education suffered because of the absence of the principal women member of the household. No major difference was observed in dropout rates between boys and girls as well as children of migrant and non-migrant families. Early marriages of both sons and daughters have been relatively higher in the female migrant households compared to the non-migrant families. In case of substance abuse, no major difference was observed between migrant and non-migrant households. A recent study of Save the Children and IOM (2017) identifies the impact of migration on the left-behind children in terms of safety and protection. The study finds that the children of migrant households are less healthy in terms of height and weight compared to the children of non-migrant households. In comparison to internal migrants, children of international migrants have significantly lower likelihood of mental break down and addiction, but exhibited comparatively greater tendency of being introvert and disobedient. The same study also finds that parental separation seems to affect the psychological development of the child.

Focusing on the risk of mental health and nutritional problems faced by the left-behind children in Sri Lanka, Wickramage and Siriwardhana (2015) find that 2 in every 5 left-behind children have mental disorders such as socio-emotional mal-adjustment and behavioural problems. On the contrary, another study conducted in Mexico reveal that migration of parents improves child health outcomes and lowers infant mortality (McKenzie, 2006). In a

review article of multiple studies Bryant (2005) suggests that the children of migrant households have better health than the children in non-migrant households due to the use of remittances for the children's health needs. Remittances improve children's overall health because remittances enable families to provide better diet and to attain access to health care (Cortes, 2007).

INSTRAW and IOM (1999) and Siddiqui (2001) show that the prolonged absence of the mothers and inflexible gender role of the male spouses could not harm physical and mental wellbeing of the left-behind children as the extended families, particularly grandparents and aunts, take over their responsibilities.

1.2.2 The Left-behind Husbands

Compared to the literature on the left-behind wives, studies on the left-behind husbands are rather limited. Studies that are available mostly concentrate on four issues. These are: emotional wellbeing of the left-behind husband, reorganization of gendered division of labour within the household, tension in marital relationship and coping mechanism.

Wilkerson et al. (2009), Asis et al. (2016) and Thao (2013) show that international migration disassociates the left-behind husbands from their wives often for very long periods of time. The separation of partner contributes to emotional stress for the left-behind husbands. Some of them feel a sense of loss and anxiety after their wives depart. Some feel lonely and some even suffer from depression.

Pallikadavath et al.'s (2015) work on Indonesia show that the husbands use all kinds of coping mechanism to deal with the absence of their partners. Most of them increase their workload that keeps themselves busy. A few have taken to drinking, gambling and prostitution. A number of them have divorced their wives. Hugo (2002), Pallikadavath et al. (2015) and Horne et al. (2014) find that the husbands who had no previous experience of undertaking

household duties have taken charge of the household. Although small, a section of them have engaged in cooking, washing and cleaning along with child rearing. Some have sought help from female relatives such as sisters, mothers and mother-in-laws. These studies show the left-behind husbands adapted to the dual role of being both mother and father to the children left-behind and they have taken over roles that are traditionally assigned to women. However, not all husbands have adapted to the changed circumstances and there are examples of marriages coming under strain. Nonetheless, Hugo (2002) finds that the left-behind husbands do not feel competent to address special needs of adolescent daughters, babies and toddlers. Adolescent daughters require female members' support to cope with menstruation, sexual harassment and meet their emotional needs.

Although remittance was a major incentive for the husbands to perform some of the above duties, a section of the husbands indulge in new relationships, and in some cases, that results in dissolution of marriage. Besides, gender role reversal in respect to household functions may not sustain once the wife returns. Upon return of the migrant women, the traditional gender division of work is reinstated. Nonetheless, a section of women can retain their decision-making power, although their husbands' consent may be required for certain economic transactions. Hugo (2002) finds that international female migration creates instability in marital unions as the transitional role of the husband in the neo-family structure does not survive long enough and the social cost of international female migration outweighs the apparent economic benefits from migration. In the context of Vietnam Thao (2014) also finds that many of the left-behind husbands are not ready to accept the breadwinner role of women, resulting in tensions within the family.

Hoang and Yeoh (2011) explore the notion of masculinity and gender identities in the families of the international female migrants in northern Vietnam. It shows how the husbands left-behind had to continuously renegotiate their gendered identity of masculinity

when they perform child care duties, while at the same time being under considerable pressure to live up to locally accepted masculine ideals. When facing a decline in economic options, men are forced to redefine their gender identities.

Hoang and Yeoh (2011) further show that men feel a loss of self-respect and dignity when their wives take the role of breadwinner. The feeling is aggravated as many left-behind husbands do not hold regular jobs. Feelings of inadequacy in failing to provide for the family and the shame at having to do housework may lead them to 'vices' such as gambling, drinking and womanizing.

Graham et al. (2012) examine the mental health of the husbands who stay behind in Indonesia and the Philippines. According to this study, the left-behind husbands are more likely to suffer common mental disorders compared to the male spouses of non-migrant households. In the Sri Lankan context Hettige et al. (2012) find a section of the left-behind husbands disengage themselves from the family and some others fall prey to substance abuse. Dependence on wife's remittance in some cases reduces the self-worth and esteem of the husband. In cases where male and female spouses together decide on migration, the left-behind husbands more willingly shoulder household responsibility and gendered role reversal.

In the context of Bangladesh, there is hardly any research that explores the impact of female migration on the left-behind husbands. INSTRAW and IOM (1999) conducted a research on female migration from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Based on the same dataset, Siddiqui (2001) details out the Bangladesh experience more elaborately. Among other things, these studies look into the impact of migration of women on their left-behind husbands and find that the male left-behind spouses very rarely take over the responsibility of their wives, which are typically female jobs such as cooking, cleaning, washing and child rearing. They manage these services through extended or dependent family members, underage daughters and to some extent by employing domestic workers while

they oversee all the activities that are needed to be performed in managing a household in the absence of the wife. They shoulder more responsibility in respect to children's education. The study was conducted almost twenty years ago and since then major changes have taken place in the society and economy of Bangladesh. The current study may show changed reality in respect to the gendered impact of migration on the left-behind husbands in Bangladesh.

1.2.3 The Left-behind Wives

A large pool of literature is available on the left-behind wives of the male migrants. The major research questions pursued in respect to the left-behind wives are performance of dual role of a mother as well as a father, emotional stresses, mobility and autonomy, role in decision-making in household and societal level and capacity to bring in change in traditional gender norms.

Gardner's (1995) work on the left-behind wives of Bangladeshi migrants in the UK concludes that male migration enhances women's ability to exercise power in the household as well as in the social and economic spheres. In the absence of the husbands, the left-behind wives create and sustain networks of relationship between neighbours and kin. Gulati's (1991) earlier work on the left-behind women of Gulf migrants from Kerala state, India, suggests that the migration of men helps women overcome their isolation, increase their mobility, and bring them into contact with a wider network of institutions than before. On the other, Zachariah and Rajan (2009) find in the same state of Kerala, India, the left-behind wives of male migrants in the Gulf faced considerable 'insecurity' (32.6%), 'loneliness' (85.8%), 'added responsibilities' (86.7%) and 'difficulties in bringing up children alone' (38.6%).

Datta and Mishra (2011) show men's migration leads to the higher autonomy of their wives and in many occasions, it stimulates women to seek employment outside. On the contrary to Datta and Mishra, Khaled (1995), however, shows that women take outside

employment out of financial need due to insufficient remittances rather than out of aspirations for employment. Yabiku et al. (2010) show that the autonomy of women is related to the economic outcomes of husband's migration. The greatest increase in autonomy may occur to those women whose husbands are not successful in overseas employment. Perhaps the increased autonomy that the left-behind wives experience may have been forced upon them with greater responsibilities and duties as a result of their husbands' limited success in migration endeavour.

Maharjan et al. (2012) demonstrate that in rural Nepal the left-behind wives have broadened and deepened their involvement in rural society by taking household decisions, managing household funds, and expanding resources as a result of male out-migration, which could lead to either the empowerment or disempowerment of women. Similar research by Datta and Mishra (2011) find that women have increased their workload, mobility, and participation in both private and public spheres in rural areas of Bihar, India, as their husbands migrate into towns or other villages for work. Battistella (1997) and S.T Hettige (1997) also note similar results in case of the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Lokshin and Glinskaya (2009) find that male migration negatively affects the labour market participation of the women who remain at home in Nepal.

Desai and Banerji (2008) show that household structures form the key mediating factor through which the husbands' absence affects women. Using data from large-scale surveys they conclude that the women not residing in extended families face both higher levels of responsibilities and greater autonomy, while the women who live in extended households do not experience the increased work demands or benefits. Akram and Karim (2005) also find that, in the context of Bangladesh, migration leads to better decision-making authority regarding agricultural production, children's education, debt repayment, and use of remittances in case of those left-behind wives who live in a nuclear family and are relatively older.

D'Emillio et al. (2007) concentrate on the emotional strain on the migrant spouses in Latin America and the Caribbean and note that migration increases risk of family breakdown, fragmentation of social networks and psychological stress. Rashid (2013) examines Bangladeshi women's experience of migration of their husbands. She focuses on the lifestyles, household responsibilities and levels of compliance with, or defiance against dominant gender ideologies concerning the everyday lives of the left-behind women. She concludes that the enhanced power and agency of the left-behind wives due to their husbands' absence are not straight forward. Some left-behind wives advance their role in family decision-making through strategic amicable negotiations with their husbands and some others resist their husbands what they perceive to be unnecessary interference through pursuing decisions that they think wise. Initially, it creates tension, but over a period of time, husbands accept wives' decisions.

A number of studies find that migration can influence gender norms. The women whose husbands migrate often maintain sustainable authority on household matters even after their husband's return (Parreñas, 2005; Piper and Roces, 2003). However, De Haas & Van Rooij (2010) state that international migration and remittances enable the women and their families to live more comfortable and secure lives, but not necessarily change the gender role pre-existing in the society. Although migration of the husbands leads to a temporary increase in the tasks and responsibilities of the women, the additional role is generally perceived as a burden. They further argue that it should, therefore, not be equated with emancipation in the meaning of making independent choices against prevailing gender norms. Significant improvements in the position of the rural women are primarily the result of general social and cultural change, although migration might have played an indirect, accelerating role in these processes. Schoen (2015) studied the left-behind working wives of international migrants. She shows that the character of the left-behind wives becomes a major area of analysis while understanding

the social impact of male migration. She argues that, through such stereotyping, patriarchy in fact tries to maintain its traditional gender barriers.

Research Gap: It is clear from the review of literature that, in the context of Bangladesh, quite a few studies have been done on the social cost of migration on the left-behind wives. Nonetheless, still it is not evident from these studies, how migration creates scope for developing agency of the left-behind-wives. Information is lacking on how their participation in outside work leads to their empowerment. There is also a need to re-examine some of the earlier findings of wife's empowerment through husband's migration in the context of new developments in communication technology. While reducing the loneliness, regular communication may also lead to curtailment of power to make independent decisions. It needs to be understood if the women left-behind can sustain their empowered position once their husbands return. Except for a few earlier studies (Siddiqui, 2000, 2001) and the recent IOM and Save the Children study (2017), there is hardly any other research available on the left-behind children of migrants in Bangladesh. It is, therefore, pertinent to generate new knowledge on how the children of different age groups experience the social cost of migration and how they cope with the absence of one of their parents. Literature is also limited on the left-behind husbands. The study of INSTRAW and IOM (1999) and Siddiqui (2001) are pioneering research in this respect. However, almost 20 years have passed since. Many of the findings may not be relevant in the present context. To make government interventions in respect to labour migration inclusive of all left-behind household members, it is important to initiate new research.

1.3 Research Questions

What percentage of the migrant households has left-behind children? What age group do they belong to? How does the parent's migration impact children's subjective and objective wellbeing in

Bangladesh? What types of social costs do they experience? How the impact of migration of a parent on child varies across gender, age and class of the children? Does the impact of migration of a parent on children differ according to the sex of the parent? Can the government do anything to reduce the scope of such losses? Do the male and female migrants use new technology to stay close to the family? What are the new evidences of long-distance parenting? What are the differences, if any, in respect to the use of migrant resources on boy and girl child of the household? What challenges do the left-behind children face in the absence of migrant parent? How does the left-behind children exercise agency to sustain or resist the constrained situations created by parental migration? What percentage of the children is unable to cope with the hardship created by the absence of one of their parents?

What are the differences in social costs experienced by the left-behind husbands with that of the left-behind wives? In what circumstances migration of men and women empower their left-behind spouses? In what circumstances it results in disempowerment? What impact does female migration make on the left-behind male spouse? How does he cope with the changed situation? Based on literature review, it is observed that when men migrate, it alters female role within the household. Does gendered role of the left-behind husbands go through similar transformative process like the way it happens in case of a section of the left-behind wives? How development of regular communication has impacted upon decision-making authority of the left-behind spouses? Does migration of a spouse bring in changes in power relationship between husband and wife? What role does the state need to play in this respect?

1.4 Methodology

This study aims to understand the social cost of migration on three groups of the left-behind household members. These are the left-behind husbands, the left-behind wives and the left-behind children.

Covering these three groups in one research is extremely ambitious. It is, therefore, important to develop a comprehensive research methodology. This section elaborates different methodological steps such as research instrument, data source and methodology used in operationalizing the study.

1.4.1 Research Instruments

The research has used four instruments. These are: literature review, screening of households with the left-behind husband, wife and children from SDC and RMMRU panel survey, household survey and in-depth interview.

Literature Review: The first step of any research requires gathering of secondary data. Those include research articles and books, government data, gray material² etc. Literature identified for review include (a) country specific studies on the social cost of migration (b) multi country quantitative surveys that partially reflect on this issue, and (c) concepts and methods used for understanding social costs, agency, empowerment etc.

Data Screening: Understanding the social cost of migration requires empirical research. This would involve identification of the households with the left-behind wives of the male migrants, the left-behind husbands of the female migrants and the left-behind children of both male and female migrants. Instead of creating a new dataset, this study used the panel survey dataset of SDC and RMMRU³.

² Gray materials refer to unpublished manuscripts, reports etc.

³ A panel survey has been initiated by RMMRU to understand the impact of migration on poverty and development with the financial support of SDC. It covers 6000 HHs in 20 districts. In order to understand the impact, same HHs are being interviewed after every 3 years. Two waves of survey have already been conducted. 1st one was in 2014 and the 2nd one was in 2017. The HHs have been selected randomly from a near census of the study villages. Current research created its survey sample from this dataset. The dataset is referred to as RMMRU-SDC Household Survey, Wave I and Wave II.

Household Survey: This is the major instrument selected to create the empirical evidence of the research. Three sets of questionnaires are designed to capture the social cost of migration on three different groups. Household information, place of residence, performance of household tasks in the absence of the migrant, coping with leisure and loneliness, level of communication between the migrant and their left-behind spouses and children and scope of developing agency are the main areas that are covered in a quantitative survey.

In-depth Interview: Quantitative methods have their limitations in probing issues such as the social costs of migration, empowerment and disempowerment, isolation, mental stress vs. development of agency to change the situation in favour of the affected person. Therefore, the study required use of some techniques that allow generation of qualitative data. In this scenario, in-depth interview was the most suitable instrument. In order to respect the privacy of the interviewees, their names have been changed.

Validation and Dissemination Workshop: Validation workshop and dissemination workshop are two important instruments that are used in this study. Validation workshop refers to a process where inputs are gathered from a wide range of stakeholders for identifying major issue areas and methods to be followed for conducting the research. Dissemination workshop involves a process where the findings are shared with the relevant stakeholders.

1.4.2 Data Source

The empirical base of the study is a detailed household survey which has been carried out in 12 districts of Bangladesh. The 12 districts are: Chattogram, Cumilla, Tangail, Munshiganj, Manikganj, Lakshmipur, Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Sunamganj, Faridpur and Chapai Nawabganj. These districts are selected from the 20 high, medium and low migration districts covered in SDC and RMMRU Wave 2 panel survey of 2017.

Table 1.4.2.1: Geographic distribution of HHs by migration type

District	Internal	International	Non-migrant	No. of HHs
Chattogram	20	61	31	112
Cumilla	28	83	33	144
Dhaka	11	114	33	158
Faridpur	9	73	34	116
Gazipur	14	94	40	148
Lakshmipur	13	63	31	107
Manikganj	2	115	26	143
Munshiganj	18	109	31	158
Narayanganj	12	95	37	144
Chapai Nawabganj	133	14	36	183
Sunamganj	12	134	34	180
Tangail	7	106	35	148
No. of HHs	279	1061	401	1741

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

The survey districts for this study represent (a) presence of married couples, (b) pockets of female international migration and (c) presence of the children below 18 years of age in the household. Through frequency distribution analysis, 9 districts have been selected out of the 20 panel survey districts of SDC and RMMRU. These households have higher number of married couples with the children up to the age of 18. The districts are Chattogram, Cumilla, Tangail, Munshiganj, Manikganj, Lakshmipur, Dhaka, Sunamganj and Chapai Nawabganj. Then three female migrant intensive districts are purposively selected. These are Gazipur, Narayanganj and Faridpur. Names and addresses of households, which have married couple and children, have been generated from the main dataset of the SDC and RMMRU panel survey. Survey of the current study, therefore, have not gone through the process of selection of upazillas and villages as this process was already completed during the first wave of the SDC and RMMRU panel survey. However, tracing exercise had to be conducted for locating the houses. 1741 households covering 279 internal migrants, 1061 international migrants and 401 non-migrants' households have

been identified which have married adults and children⁴. Table 1.4.2.1 shows the distribution of the sample households across individual districts.

A total of 4884 members have been interviewed: 135 left-behind husbands of the female migrants, 1094 left-behind wives of the male migrants, 286 non-migrant husbands, 382 non-migrant wives, 2216 left-behind children and 771 children of the non-migrant households have constituted the data source of quantitative survey (Table 1.4.2.2). Three hundred in-depth interviews representing all three groups constitute the source of qualitative data.

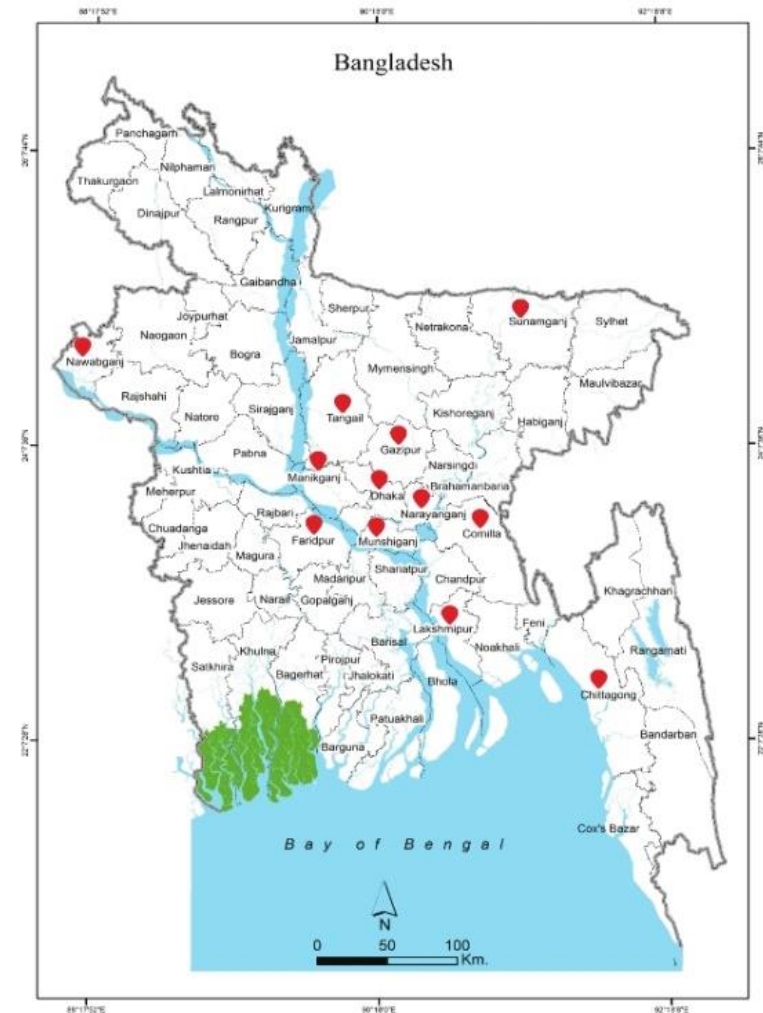
Table 1.4.2.2: Geographic distribution of respondents by migration type

District	Internal				International				Non-migrant				No. of respondents
	LBH	LBW	Children	Subtotal	LBH	LBW	Children	Subtotal	Husbands	Wives	Children	Subtotal	
Chattogram	0	20	45	65	1	58	122	181	18	35	70	123	369
Cumilla	1	27	56	84	0	80	147	227	9	28	70	107	418
Dhaka	0	10	16	26	8	105	178	291	28	30	59	117	434
Faridpur	0	7	14	21	31	19	117	167	35	35	67	137	325
Gazipur	0	13	20	33	29	41	146	216	23	31	66	120	369
Lakshmipur	0	11	19	30	2	61	124	187	27	31	65	123	340
Manikganj	0	0	1	1	34	60	151	245	14	25	49	88	334
Munsiganj	0	18	26	44	0	106	194	300	28	33	59	120	464
Narayanganj	0	12	23	35	22	55	139	216	32	35	62	129	380
Chapai Nawabganj	0	129	187	316	1	13	21	35	28	38	65	131	482
Sunamganj	1	10	17	28	5	128	283	416	23	29	83	135	579
Tangail	0	6	8	14	0	105	162	267	21	32	56	109	390
No. of respondents	2	263	432	697	133	831	1784	2748	286	382	771	1439	4884

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands, LBW = Left-behind Wives

Figure 1.4.2.1: Delineation of study area



⁴ The study used the UN definition of children where a 'child' is a person below the age of 18.

The table shows that the highest number of respondents from migrant household has been found in Sunamganj district. A total of 444 migrant and 135 non-migrant family members have been interviewed from 180 households in Sunamganj district. The second highest respondents are from Chapai Nawabganj district. A total of 351 migrant and 131 non-migrant family members are interviewed from this district. However, while most of the respondents from Sunamganj are from the international migrant households, it is largely family members of internal migrants who have been interviewed from Chapai Nawabganj district.

1.4.3 Operationalisation of Qualitative and Quantitative Field Survey

Both qualitative and quantitative fieldworks have been conducted simultaneously. It begun in April 2018 and was completed in July the same year. The fieldwork has taken place in three consecutive rounds. In the first round, Chattogram, Lakshmipur, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Faridpur have been covered; in the second round, Cumilla, Dhaka, Sunamganj, Manikganj and Tangail are covered; and in the third round

Munshiganj and Chapai Nawabganj have been covered. Through a rigorous process of interview, 30 field enumerators and 5 field supervisors have been selected. They have been trained over a period of six days. Under the guidance of the field supervisors, the enumerators administered three separate questionnaires. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted by the enumerators once the quantitative survey of a particular district has been completed. The qualitative interview has been done on the basis of an open-ended interview schedule. A field monitoring team was constituted with two co-researchers and a RMMRU core staff.

1.4.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data has been processed by using STATA and SPSS programmes. Following the generation of the dataset, they have been cleaned, cross-checked, edited and pre-tested for any

inconsistencies. The statistical tools used to analyze the data included frequencies, cross tabulation, reporting and statistical tests such as chi-square and t-tests. The book is based on a mix method where the quantitative data has been complemented by the in-depth interviews.

1.4.5 Definition of Terminologies Used in This Study

Migration type: Migration type includes three groups of interviewees- internal migrant, international migrant and non-migrant.

Household: This study uses the UN definition of household. It is defined as a group of two or more persons living together who make common provision for food or other essentials for living. Of course, a household can also be constituted by a single person when he arranges all provisions for living by himself.

Gender: In this study gender is defined as a socially constructed relationship between men and women that can change over time and it varies within and between cultures. It is not biologically predetermined, nor is it fixed.

Masculinity and Femininity: This study uses Connell's (1998) definition of masculinity. Masculinity is perceived notions and ideals on how men should or are expected to behave in a given social, political and economic setting. Femininity again is a construct of how women are expected to behave in similar socio-political and cultural surroundings. Masculinity and femininity are relational concepts, which only have meaning in relation to each other. Masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations.

Empowerment: Empowerment is seen in this study as a process that reduces social inequalities and redress power imbalances across different socio-economic groups. Empowerment has also been

defined in terms of capabilities which are opportunities or freedoms to achieve what one considers valuable (Sen, 1999).

Patriarchy: Patriarchy is linked to the capitalist formation of modern society (Engels, 1972). Over the years, patriarchy has been seen as an institutionalized system of male authority which exploits women through its social, political and economic institutions (Lerner, 1989).

Agency: Agency is loosely defined as the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. It is the capacity to challenge and remake social order by going against the status quo to create new norms and relationships.

Social Cost: Social cost is the sum of the private costs resulting from a transaction and the costs imposed on the migrant and his/her family as a consequence of being exposed to the transaction for which they are not compensated or charged. It includes emotional and psychological costs, lost opportunities of education and health care.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The current study has two major limitations. Firstly, the scope of the research is quite broad. It has covered three groups of the left-behind members of migrant households. These are the left-behind children, husbands and wives. Challenges faced by these three groups are complex and diverse. Having to deal with three types of groups in a single study has not allowed the researchers to unravel various aspects affecting the left-behind groups in a greater detail. Independent study on each of these three categories would have done justice to the issues identified.

A research on understanding the social cost necessitates qualitative research. Learning from each respondent demanded visit to the

same person for at least four times. Due to time constraints and other limitations, such an approach has not been followed. The study has mostly followed the quantitative approach. To supplement the findings of the quantitative research, in depth interviews of a select number of the respondents have been conducted.

1.6 Organisation of the Book

This book is divided into six chapters. Chapter I lays down the objectives of the study, conduct a review of literature on the impact of migration on the left-behind children, husbands and wives. It also articulates the major research questions and develops the methodology required to pursue the study. Chapter II begins with providing an overall migration scenario of Bangladesh. It then presents the socio-demographic profile of the households which constitutes the empirical basis of the study. Chapter III presents the social cost of migration experienced by the left-behind children of the migrants. Chapter IV presents the social cost of migration experienced by the left-behind husbands of the female migrants. Chapter V, on the other, does the same analysis on the left-behind wives of the male migrants. The final chapter summarizes the major findings and explores their implications for future research and policy.

CHAPTER II

NATIONAL MIGRATION TREND AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This chapter begins with a brief overview of international short term contract migration from Bangladesh. Discussion on the national trends of international labour migration from Bangladesh includes flow of labour migration, male female distribution of the labour migrants, their countries of destination and flow of remittance. After setting the broad context, it then presents the socio-demographic profile of the international short-term contract migrant, internal migrant and non-migrant households who have been interviewed in this study. Socio-demographic profile of the survey households includes family size, the age of the household members, their level of education, employment, countries of destination, monthly income and access to bank account.

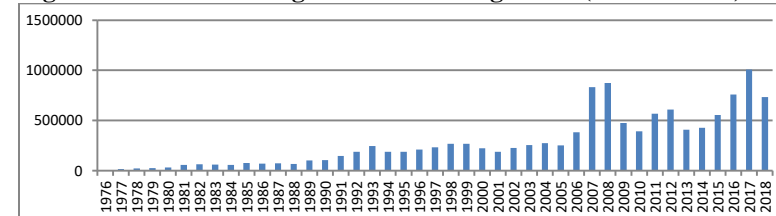
2.1 National Scenario of Labour Migration

Flow: The Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET)⁵ data inform that a total of 734,181 Bangladeshi workers have migrated to the Gulf, other Arab and South-East Asian countries in 2018. In 2017, the number of male and female migrants who have gone abroad for work was 1,008,525. Compared to 2017, the flow of migration in 2018 has reduced by 27 percent.

⁵BMET is the executing agency of Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. On behalf of the Ministry, it manages short term contract migration from Bangladesh.

Figure 2.1.1 shows the year-wise migration flow from 1976 to 2018. During this period, altogether 12,199,124 Bangladeshis have migrated overseas for employment. The figure reflects the total stock of migrant workers; it does not imply that all the 12.2 million Bangladeshis are working abroad currently. Bangladeshis mainly participate in the short-term contract labour market and they have to return upon finishing their contracts. There is no mechanism in place to record data on those who have returned. Hence, it is not possible to have an estimate about the number of migrants currently working abroad by subtracting the number of returned migrants who have returned to Bangladesh after finishing their contract from the total number who migrated abroad.

Figure 2.1.1: Labour migration from Bangladesh (1976 to 2018)



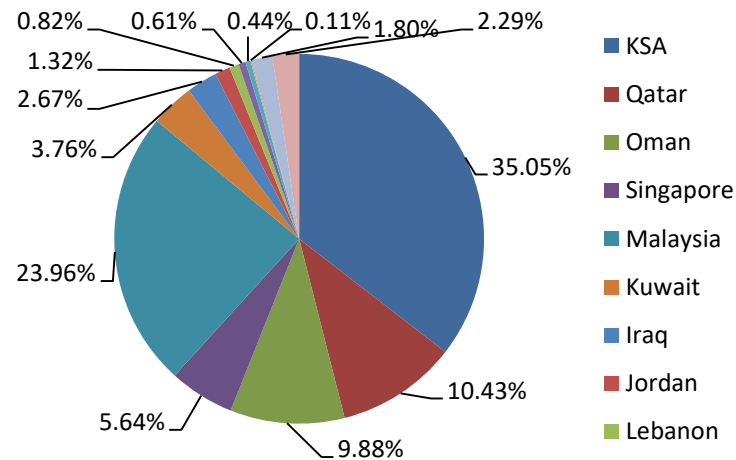
Source: Prepared from BMET Data

Distribution of Male and Female Migrants: During the initial years, Bangladeshi migrants have been predominantly male. Females had hardly migrated for work. A small number of domestic workers have been taken by the Bangladeshi professionals staying abroad and a handful of nurses also have gone for work. They constituted the bulk of female migrants working abroad. Up to 1999, proportion of female migrants has been estimated to be less than 1 percent (Siddiqui, 2000). From 1981 to 2003, the government of Bangladesh either banned or imposed restriction on migration of women. In 2003, following evidence based research and policy advocacy by civil society, the government lifted restriction on migration of women. Since 2003, female migration has gradually

increased. By 2010, female constituted 5 percent of the total migration flow⁶. Female migration from Bangladesh has drastically increased from 2015. The highest number of female workers has migrated in 2017. That year, 121,925 female workers migrated overseas. They constituted 12 percent of the flow. In 2018, a total of 101,695 females have migrated for work which is 14 percent of the flow of migrants in the same year. Compared to 2017, the ratio of female migrants has increased by 2 percent in 2018.

Countries of Destination: Majority of the Bangladeshi short-term contract workers migrate to the Gulf and other Arab countries. Around 64 percent of the workers who have migrated from Bangladesh in 2018 have gone to this region. The remaining 35.5 percent have gone mostly to different South-East Asian countries.

Figure 2.1.2: Destination countries of Bangladeshi migrants in 2018



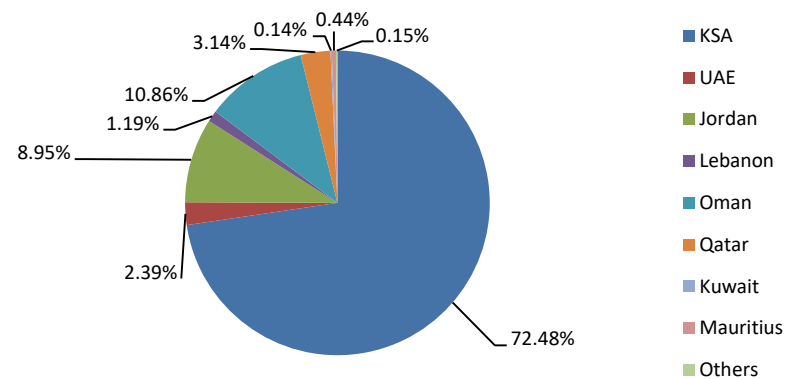
Source: Prepared from BMET Data

⁶ RMMRU (2011), Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2011: Achievement and Challenges.

In 2018, the highest number of Bangladeshi workers migrated to Saudi Arabia. The figure stands at 257,317, which is 35 percent of the total flow. A total of 175,927 workers have migrated to Malaysia which is 76 percent higher than the previous year. Qatar has been the third largest destination country of the Bangladeshi labour migrants in 2018. A total of 76,560 workers have migrated to this country. Oman, Bahrain, Singapore, Lebanon, Jordan and Kuwait are other important destination for the Bangladeshi labour migrants.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia has been also the most important destination of the Bangladeshi female migrants. A total of 73,713 female workers have gone there which is 72.5 percent of the total flow of female migrants of that year. Oman is the second largest destination where 11,034 females have migrated. The third largest destination country is Jordan which accounts for 9,100 female workers. Ninety-two percent of the female workers have migrated to these three countries. This demonstrates that labour market for the Bangladeshi female migrants is more limited. Other destinations of the female workers are Lebanon, Kuwait, UAE and Qatar.

Figure 2.1.3: Destination countries of female migrants in 2018

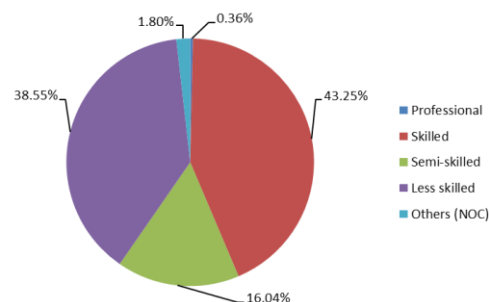


Source: Prepared from BMET data

Skill Composition: BMET classifies the short term migrant workers of Bangladesh into four categories: professional, skilled, semi-skilled and lowly skilled. Doctors, engineers, teachers and nurses are considered as professionals. Manufacturing or garments workers, construction workers, electricians, drivers and domestic workers are considered as skilled. Tailors and masons are considered as semi-skilled. Agricultural labourer, bearer, cleaners, gardeners and security guards are considered as lowly skilled workers. Chart 2.1.4 presents the skill composition of the outbound migrant workers in 2018. It shows that proportion of the skilled workers remains almost the same in 2018 (43.25%) in comparison to 2017 (43.07%). Sixteen percent of the migrant workers fall under the semi-skilled category and 39 percent of the workers fall under the less skilled category. The shares of semi-skilled and less skilled categories also have not changed significantly from the previous year. Only 0.36 percent of the migrants belong to professional and 1.8 percent belong to other categories.

Remittance Flow: According to Bangladesh Bank, the migrants have remitted US \$15.54 billion in 2018 which is 14.86 percent higher than 2017 (US \$13.53 billion).

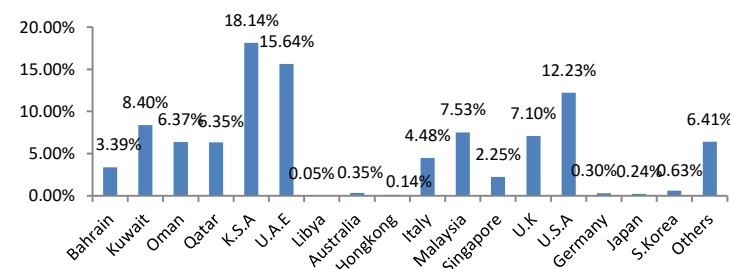
Figure 2.1.4: Skill composition of Bangladeshi migrants in 2018



Source: Prepared by RMMRU from BMET data (RMMRU 2018)

Generally, the migrants can remit regularly from the year following their migration. The scenario is alike in 2018. The recorded increase in remittance of 2018 has been the result of huge migration from Bangladesh in 2017. Following the trend of the previous year, the highest amount of remittance was sent from Saudi Arabia (18.14%) followed by the UAE (15.64%), the USA (12.23%), Kuwait (8.40%), Malaysia (7.53%) and the UK (7.10%).

Figure 2.1.5: Source countries of major remittance flow in 2018



Source: Prepared from BMET Data

2.2 Profile of the Households under the Study

Number of Household Members: Against the backdrop of national scenario, this section presents the socio-demographic profile of the households of the left-behind husbands, wives and children. Table 2.2.1 shows 1741 households have altogether 6509 members. However, among them, 4884 members have been interviewed. To understand the impact on spouses, the study has only interviewed the left-behind wives and husbands of the migrants. To understand the impact on the left-behind children, it has defined children who are below 18. Therefore, it has not interviewed those children of the migrants who are above 18 years old. The study has not interviewed any of the migrants. In case of the non-migrant households, it has interviewed either the husband or the wife and the children below 18 years.

Table 2.2.1: Distribution of migrant and non-migrant HH members

Type of HH members	Internal			International			Non-migrant			Subtotal
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Migrants	272	12	284	861	209	1070	N/A	N/A	N/A	1354
Spouses	2	263	265	133	831	964	286	382	668	1897
Children<18	213	219	432	960	824	1784	408	363	771	2987
Children>18	16	18	34	99	57	156	47	34	81	271
Grand total	503	512	1015	2053	1921	3974	741	779	1520	6509

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Household Size: Table 2.2.2 shows the size of the migrant and non-migrant households interviewed from 12 districts. Irrespective of their migration status, most of the households have 4 to 5 family members. Forty-nine percent of the internal and 56 percent of the international migrant households and 67 percent of the non-migrant households belong to this category. The migrant households have relatively less family members compared to the non-migrant households.

Table 2.2.2: HH size by migration type (%)

Family size	Internal	International	Non-migrant
1-3	40.7	34.1	19.5
4-5	48.5	55.8	66.8
6-7	7.4	8.2	12.7
8-10	3.0	1.7	1.0
10+	0.4	0.2	0.0
Total No. of HHs	279	1061	401
Average family size	4	4	4

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Table 2.2.3: Number of children per HH by migration type (%)

Number of children	Internal	International	Non-migrant
No children	9.3	8.4	0.7
1	37.3	32.2	28.2
2	36.6	36.0	40.6
3	11.8	17.2	21.9
4	3.9	4.4	5.7
5	1.1	1.0	2.2
5+	0.0	0.7	0.5
Total no. of HHs	279	1061	401
Average children per HH	2	2	2

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

However, in all types of households the average family size is 4. For the family size of different migration types, the P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the internal and the international migrants at 0.05 level of significance.

The migrant as well as the non-migrant households on an average have 2 children. Forty-one percent non-migrant households have 2 children while around 36 percent of both internal and international migrant households have 2 children. For the number of children of different migration types, the P value is 0.025; hence there is significant difference between the internal and the international migrants at 0.05 level of significance.

Age Group: Table 2.2.4 shows the average age of the husbands and wives of migrant and non-migrant households. The average ages of all three groups of husbands are more than 40 years. The average age of the non-migrant husbands is 43, whereas it is 42 for the left-behind husbands of the internal female migrants and 41 for the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants. The P value is 0.007; hence there is significant difference between the left-behind husbands and the non-migrant husbands at 0.05 level of significance.

The average age of the left-behind wives of the male internal migrants is 30, for the left-behind wives of the male international migrants it is 32 and for the wives of the non-migrant households it is 35. The table also shows that around 51 percent of the left-behind wives of the international male migrants are less than 30 years old, which is about 61 percent in case of the internal households. Literature review in Chapter I shows that the left-behind wives who are less than 30 years may face more restrictions in movement and outside work compared to those who are relatively older. The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is a significant difference of age between the left-behind wives and the non-migrant wives at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2.2.4: Age group of husbands and wives by migration type

Age	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	LBH	LBW	Total	LBH	LBW	Total	Husbands	Wives	Total
0-17	0.0	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.5
18-25	50.0	31.2	31.3	1.5	22.4	19.5	2.2	13.1	7.8
26-30	0.0	27.8	27.5	12.8	28.5	26.3	7.2	21.9	14.7
31-40	0.0	31.2	30.9	40.6	38.1	38.5	34.7	41.6	38.2
41-50	0.0	6.1	6.0	36.8	9.5	13.3	33.4	20.4	26.8
51-60	50.0	2.3	2.6	7.5	1.1	2.0	18.0	1.7	9.7
60+	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.1	4.2	0.5	2.3
No. of cases	2	263	265	133	831	964	401	411	812
Average age	42	30	30	41	32	33	43	35	39

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands, LBW = Left-behind Wives

Table 2.2.5 shows the average current age of the internal male migrants is 36 and for the international male migrants it is 39. The average age of the internal female migrants is 30 and for the international female migrants it is 33. The current age of all types of migrants is quite high. This is because these migrants have migrated quite some time ago. The international migrants have been staying or stayed abroad for more than 8 years and the internal migrants have been migrating for more than 7 years. Obviously, the average age of the migrants was much lower when they first migrated. The average age of the international migrants during first migration is 30 whereas it is 29 for the internal migrants.

Table 2.2.5: Age group of migrants by migration type and gender

Age	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
18-25	8.5	33.3	9.3	1.6	13.2	3.9
26-30	20.7	33.3	21.1	9.7	31.4	13.9
31-40	40.4	22.2	39.8	50.2	43.1	48.8
41-50	23.0	0.0	22.2	29.5	10.8	25.9
51-60	6.3	11.1	6.5	8.0	1.5	6.7
60+	1.1	0.0	1.1	0.9	0.0	0.8
No. of cases	270	9	279	853	204	1057
Average age	36	30	36	39	33	38

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

In both cases, compared to the internal migrants, the age of the international male and female migrants is higher. For both the male and female migrants of internal and international migration types, the P values are less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the internal and the international migrants at 0.05 level of significance. Usually, the internal migrants are younger than the international migrants. One of the reasons can be that the processing of international migration requires time and resource. However, if a person decides to migrate internally, he/she can move rather quickly with the help of social network with very little cost.

Marital Status: Table 2.2.6 shows the marital status of the male and female migrants and non-migrants. More than 98 percent of all male migrants, be it internal or international, are married. Same is true for the non-migrants. Also, the P value is 0.089 for this; hence there is no significant difference between the male migrants and non-migrants at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2.2.6: Marital status of migrant and non-migrant adults by gender

Marital Status	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Unmarried	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Married	99.3	58.3	97.5	99	75.1	94.3	98.3	96.1	97.2
Separated	0.4	8.3	0.7	0.5	8.1	2.0	0.7	1.2	1.0
Divorced	0.4	16.7	1.1	0.5	10.5	2.4	0.2	0.2	0.2
Widow/widower	0.0	16.7	0.7	0.1	5.3	1.1	0.7	2.4	1.6
Total no. of cases	272	12	284	861	209	1070	401	411	812

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Fifty-eight percent of the internal female migrants, 75 percent of the international female migrants and 96 percent of the female non-migrant adults are married. This indicates that among the female internal and international migrants, a large proportion is either widowed or divorced or separated. Information on these separated and divorced female migrant households are gathered because the study has interviewed their children. Also, the P value is less than

0.001; hence there is significant difference between the female migrants and non-migrants at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the propensity of migration of the divorced and separated female migrants is much higher than their male counterparts in similar situation.

Level of Education: Table 2.2.7 shows the educational status of the husbands and wives of internal, international and non-migrant households. Fifty percent of the left-behind husbands of the internal migrants and 47 percent of the left-behind husbands of the international migrants are not literate. Percentage of not literate is the lowest among the non-migrant male (41%). The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the educational status of the left-behind husbands and the non-migrant husbands at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2.2.7: Education level of husbands and wives by migration type

Level of Education	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	LBH	LBW	Total	LBH	LBW	Total	Husbands	Wives	Total
No education	50.0	9.9	10.2	47.4	13.4	18.1	40.6	28.5	34.5
Class 1-5	50.0	28.1	28.3	32.3	23.7	24.9	25.7	28.7	27.2
Class 6-10	0.0	49.0	48.7	15.8	44.3	40.4	21.2	31.9	26.6
SSC	0.0	7.6	7.5	3.0	12.1	10.8	6.7	5.8	6.3
HSC	0.0	3.4	3.4	0.8	4.8	4.3	2.7	4.1	3.4
BA	0.0	1.5	1.5	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.2	0.5	0.9
MA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.4	1.5	0.5	1.0
Diploma	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1
Others	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
No. of cases	2	263	265	133	828	961	401	411	812

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands, LBW = Left-behind Wives

Interestingly, for both internal and international migrants, percentage of the left-behind wives with no education is very low. For the left-behind wives of the internal migrants, it is 10 percent and for the international migrants it is 13 percent. Compared to male, percentage of not literate is also low among the non-migrant wives (29%); however, compared to the internal and international

females left-behind, it is more than double. The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the educational status of the left-behind wives and the non-migrant wives at 0.05 level of significance. This perhaps indicates that the female migrants, be it internal or international, come from those families who have less opportunity to access education.

Occupation: Table 2.2.8 shows occupations of the husbands and wives of the migrant and non-migrant households. Thirty-six percent of the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants' main occupation is agriculture compared to 42 percent of the non-migrant husbands. Service is the main occupation for 20 percent of the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants and 22 percent of the non-migrant husbands. However, 21 percent of the non-migrant husbands are engaged in business compared to only 12 percent left-behind husbands of the international female migrants. A significant observation can be drawn from this table on level of unemployment. Seven percent of the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants are unemployed whereas only 2 percent of the male non-migrants are unemployed. The number of persons without formal employment would be much higher among the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants if this study includes those who have identified themselves as housekeeper and those who are only involved in household work. Percentage of the left-behind husbands of the international migrant households who are not pursuing any formal profession is 14, whereas for the husbands in non-migrants household it is only 3. The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the occupation of the left-behind husbands and the non-migrant husbands at 0.05 level of significance.

Furthermore, around 95 percent of the left-behind wives of the

internal and international migrants have identified themselves as housewives, while 93 percent of the non-migrant wives have identified them as housewives. It seems that the wives of non-migrant households are slightly more involved in work outside the house compared to the left-behind wives. The P value is 0.283; hence there is no significant difference between the occupation of the left-behind wives and the non-migrant wives at 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative data show that this slightly less involvement of the left-behind wives is mostly due to three reasons: discomfort of the husband, lack of additional financial need of the household and the presence of other male members in the household to work.

Table 2.2.8: Main occupation of husbands and wives by migration type

Occupation	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	LBH	LBW	Total	LBH	LBW	Total	Husbands	Wives	Total
Agriculture	0.0	1.1	1.1	36.1	0.8	5.7	41.9	1.0	21.2
Business	0.0	0.4	0.4	12.0	0.6	2.2	20.9	1.2	11.0
Service	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.3	1.2	3.9	22.2	1.0	11.5
Construction	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.2	0.7	3.2	0.0	1.6
Manufacturing	50.0	0.4	0.8	4.5	0.1	0.7	2.2	0.7	1.5
Household work	50.0	0.4	0.8	6.0	0.0	0.8	1.0	0.5	0.7
Managerial	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Professional	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.4	0.3	2.2	0.7	1.5
Retired	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1
Unemployed	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.8	0.0	0.9	1.7	0.0	0.9
Home-maker	0.0	95.4	94.7	0.8	95.5	82.4	0.7	93.4	47.7
Others	0.0	1.1	1.1	7.5	0.5	1.5	3.2	0.7	2.0
Not applicable/students	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.7	0.5
Total no. of cases	2	263	265	133	828	961	401	411	812

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands, LBW = Left-behind Wives

Income: Monthly income of the husbands and wives are shown in table 2.2.9 by migration type. On an average, the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants earn Tk. 13049 (US \$158)⁷ and the left-behind husbands of the internal female migrants earn Tk. 1750 (US \$21). The husbands from non-migrant

households earn Tk. 12459 (US \$150). The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the monthly income of the left-behind husbands and the non-migrant husbands at 0.05 level of significance. This again leads to the reality of poor economic background of the female international migrant households. Since there are only 2 cases of the internal left-behind husbands, their income level cannot be generalised.

On the other hand, the left-behind wives of the internal migrants earn Tk. 3745 (US \$45), the left-behind wives of the international migrants earn Tk. 4714 (US \$57) and the wife of the non-migrant households earns Tk. 5720 (US \$69).

Table 2.2.9: Monthly income for the last 1 year by migration type

Monthly income	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	LBH	LBW	Total	LBH	LBW	Total	Husbands	Wives	Total
<=5000	100.0	80.0	81.5	14.3	72.9	33.7	8.7	63.5	15.1
5001-10000	0.0	8.0	7.4	46.2	13.6	35.4	47.2	26.9	44.8
10001-15000	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.8	10.2	18.0	24.0	1.9	21.4
15001-20000	0.0	12.0	11.1	10.1	0.0	6.7	10.2	5.8	9.7
20001-30000	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.1	7.4	0.0	6.5
30001-40000	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	3.4	3.9	1.0	0.0	0.9
40001-50000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.6	1.0	1.9	1.1
50000+	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.6	0.5	0.0	0.5
No. of cases	2	25	27	119	59	178	392	52	444
Average	1750	3745	3597	13049	4714	10286	12459	5720	11670

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands, LBW = Left-behind Wives

Earning of the wives of the non-migrant households is the highest among the three groups. The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the monthly income of the left-behind wives and the non-migrant wives at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the wives of the non-migrant households have more opportunity to earn an income.

Bank Account: Table 2.2.10 shows that a higher percentage of the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants (31%) hold a bank account compared to the husbands of the non-migrant

⁷US \$1 = Tk. 82.788 as per the exchange rate of April, 2018.

households (25%). The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the left-behind husbands and the non-migrant husbands for owning a bank account at 0.05 level of significance. From the perspective of financial inclusion, having bank account is very important. This indicates that in future if some of these families are interested to avail loan to support their investment; their eligibility will be higher compared to those who do not.

Forty-four percent of the left-behind wives of the international male migrants hold a bank account. This is by far the largest group of account holders among male and female as well as migrant and non-migrant. Twenty-one percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants hold a bank account and it is 16 percent in case of the wives of the non-migrant households.

Table 2.2.10: Ownership of bank account by migration type and gender

Owner of bank account	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	LBH	LBW	Total	LBH	LBW	Total	Husbands	Wives	Total
Yes	0.0	20.9	20.8	30.8	43.6	41.8	25.4	16.1	20.8
No	100.0	79.1	79.2	69.2	56.4	58.2	74.6	83.9	79.2
No. of cases	2	263	265	133	824	957	400	409	809

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands, LBW = Left-behind Wives

Holding a bank account is indicative of level of financial literacy. The left-behind wife having a bank account signifies her capacity to participate in management of household finance. The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the left-behind wives and the non-migrant wives for owning a bank account at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2.2.11: City of destination for the internal migrants by gender

District	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Bagerhat	0.4	0.0	0.4
Barisal	0.4	0.0	0.4
Bhola	0.4	0.0	0.4
Bogura	0.4	0.0	0.4
Chattogram	8.4	0.0	8.1
Chuadanga	0.4	0.0	0.4
Cumilla	2.4	11.1	2.7
Cox's Bazar	0.4	0.0	0.4
Dhaka	65.5	77.8	65.9
Dinajpur	0.4	0.0	0.4
Faridpur	0.4	0.0	0.4
Feni	0.4	0.0	0.4
Gazipur	2.8	0.0	2.7
Hobiganj	0.4	0.0	0.4
Khagrachori	0.4	0.0	0.4
Khulna	0.4	0.0	0.4
Lakhsmipur	0.4	0.0	0.4
Manikganj	0.4	0.0	0.4
Mymensingh	0.4	0.0	0.4
Narayanganj	3.6	0.0	3.5
Narsingdi	0.4	0.0	0.4
Natore	0.4	0.0	0.4
Chapai Nawabganj	4.0	11.1	4.3
Nilphamari	0.4	0.0	0.4
Noakhali	0.4	0.0	0.4
Rajshahi	0.8	0.0	0.8
Rangamati	0.4	0.0	0.4
Sunamganj	2.4	0.0	2.3
Sylhet	2.0	0.0	1.9
Total no. of cases	249	9	258

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Destination Cities within Bangladesh: For both male and female internal migrants, the most common destination is Dhaka. Sixty-six percent of the male migrants and 78 percent of the female migrants have migrated to Dhaka (2.2.11). Next largest destination for male is Chattogram, but no female has migrated to Chattogram. Destination of the male migrants is more diverse compared to the female migrants. The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the male and female internal migrants at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2.2.12: Country of destination for the international migrants

Country	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Saudi Arabia	34.9	25.9	33.1
UAE	21.4	19.0	20.9
Kuwait	8.1	1.1	6.7
Oman	8.9	5.2	8.2
Qatar	5.5	2.9	5.0
Bahrain	4.5	0.6	3.7
Lebanon	1.4	17.2	4.6
India	0.1	0.6	0.2
South Africa	0.3	0.0	0.2
Jordan	0.4	23.6	5.1
Libya	0.3	0.6	0.3
Malaysia	7.4	0.6	6.0
Singapore	2.3	0.0	1.8
Italy	0.6	0.0	0.5
Brunei	0.6	0.0	0.5
Mauritius	0.7	2.3	1.0
Iraq	0.3	0.0	0.2
Maldives	1.0	0.0	0.8
USA	0.0	0.6	0.1
Others	1.3	0.0	1.0
No. of cases	693	174	867

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Countries of International Destination: In conformity with the national data presented in section 2.1, Saudi Arabia is the largest destination for both male and female migrants under this study (2.2.12). This is followed by the UAE. Thirty-five percent of the male migrants and 26 percent of the female migrants have gone to Saudi Arabia. Twenty-one percent of the male and 19 percent of the female migrants have gone to UAE. The female migrants go to some specific destinations where male hardly migrate. These are Jordan (24%) and Lebanon (17%).

Remittance: Table 2.2.13 shows the average remittance received by the left-behind husbands and wives. Remittances received by the international migrant households are 73 percent higher than those received by the internal migrant households. Again, in case of the international migrants, the left-behind wives have received higher remittance compared to the left-behind husbands. On an average, the left-behind wives of the international migrants have annually received Tk. 178656.57 (US \$2158.00). The left-behind husbands

of the international female migrants have received Tk. 148321.69 (US \$1791.58). Remittances received by the left-behind husbands and wives of the internal migrants are also quite significant. The left-behind wives of the internal migrants have received Tk. 100125.83 (US \$1209.42) and the left-behind husbands have received Tk. 85900.00 (US \$1037.60). The P value is less than 0.001; hence there is significant difference between the left-behind wives and husbands at 0.05 level of significance. The left-behind husbands of the internal female migrants receive 17 percent less remittance compared to the left-behind wives of the internal male migrants. Similarly, the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants receive 20 percent less remittance compared to the left-behind wives of the international male migrants. In the past, the gap between remittances received by the left-behind husbands and wives of the international migrants has been much bigger.

Table 2.2.13: Annual average remittance received by LBH and LBW

Remittance	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	LBW	LBH	Total	LBW	LBH	Total
Average remittance	100125.83	85900.00	100003.72	178656.57	148321.69	172651.36
Total no. of cases	231	2	233	709	175	884

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands, LBW = Left-behind Wives

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter begins by providing national statistics on migration flow from Bangladesh and it also introduces the basic socio-economic characteristics of the international, internal and non-migrant households which have been interviewed in this study. In 2018, more than 700,000 Bangladeshis have migrated to the Gulf, other Arab and South-East Asian countries. Eighty-six percent of them are male and 14 percent are female. In 2018, Bangladesh has received \$15.54 billion as remittances from the international migrant workers.

The socio-demographic profile of the survey households shows that, on an average, all three types of households: internal, international and non-migrants have 4 members including 2 children. The current average age of the left-behind husbands of the international migrant households is 41. In case of the left-behind husbands of the internal migrant households, it is 42 and for the husbands of the non-migrant households, it is 43. The average age of the left-behind wives of the internal and international male migrants ranges from 30 to 32 and for the wives of the non-migrant households, it is 35. Lesser educational background of the left-behind husbands of the female migrants compared to the left-behind wives of the male migrants may indicate that the former belong to more economically depressed situation compared to the latter. The assumption is strengthened when it is found that the number of persons who do not have any educational background is also higher among the male spouses of the female international migrants as well as the non-migrant households.

Almost all the male migrants are currently married, whereas 25 percent of the international female migrants and 42 percent of the internal female migrants are separated, divorced, widowed or unmarried. Major occupations of the left-behind husbands are agriculture, service, business, household work etc. Hundred percent of the women of the female migrant households are employed overseas. Compared to this, 95 percent of the left-behind wives can afford not to work outside. This indicates that the female migrant households, both internal and international, come from an economic background where they need to earn, whereas the left-behind wives of the internal and international migrants can afford to remain as housewives. The average income of the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants and the husbands of the non-migrant households are quite similar. Only 2 internal female migrants have left their husbands in the village and income of these 2 left-behind husbands is quite low. In both internal and international migrant households, the left-behind wives and husbands receive significant amounts of remittances. The left-behind husbands of the internal

female migrants receive 17 percent less remittance compared to the left-behind wives of the internal male migrants. Similarly, the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants receive 20 percent less remittance compared to the left-behind wives of the international male migrants. In the past, the gap between remittances received by the left-behind husbands and wives of the international migrants has been much bigger. This perhaps indicates two things. Firstly, the income gap between male and female migrant is reducing; therefore, women can send more remittance than before. Secondly, it may also be the case that the earning of the male migrants is also reducing.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL COST OF MIGRATION: THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN

This chapter concentrates on the impact of migration of parents on the left-behind children. The UN definition of children is followed in this study that classifies the boys and girls below 18 years of age as children. The section on review of literature (Chapter I) highlights the positive and negative outcomes of migration of one or both parents on the left-behind children. Quite a number of studies are now available which shows migration of mothers as significantly more detrimental to the psychological wellbeing of the children, be it an infant or an adolescent. This chapter is divided into four sections. Section I presents the social costs of parental migration identified by the children; Section II documents the changes in workload of the children in the absence of migrant parents. It also offers a comparative analysis of the children of internal, international and non-migrant households in respect to education, health, food and nutrition. Section III deals with the psychological well-being of the children of migrants and the last section attempts to locate the agencies of children in coping with stresses due to the absence of parents. The assessment is done at three levels: among internal, international and non-migrants; of boy and girl child of the households and of the children of the male migrants and the female migrants. It uses both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.1 Social Cost of Parental Migration

The children of internal and international migrants identify all kinds of challenges that they face in the absence of their father, mother or

in a few cases of both parents. The challenges identified by the children vary according to the type of migration, gender of the child and gender of the migrant parent. Children of both internal and international migrants feel the absence of their migrant parent. Feeling of insecurity, loneliness or unnecessary disciplinary action by many guardians of extended family is common experience of the children of both internal and international migrants.

Psychological Cost: The most important social cost experienced by the young children of migrants is the missed opportunity of developing an emotional attachment with their parents, particularly their mother. Cases have been identified where the child does not feel the bond with the mother; rather he/she feels more comfortable with relatives who have taken care of him/her in the absence of their parents.

Sabbir (5) lives with his grandmother in Chor Hajariganjun of Faridpur district. His father abandoned his mother before he was born. Due to the sheer need for survival, his mother Nurjahan Begum migrated to Lebanon when Sabbir was only 4 months old. Sabbir's early childhood development took place under his grandmother. Now he considers his grandmother as his mother and father. His mother contacts him over phone every now and then, but he is not interested to engage in the conversation after a certain point. In reality, he has no meaningful attachment with his mother. In his own words, "My grandma is everything to me". He likes wandering in different places. He feels a little empty when he sees closeness of some of his friends with their mothers.

Jami (10) from Sreepur union of Gazipur district states, "My mother left for work when I was very little. Since then I was raised by my *Khala* (maternal aunt). I am deeply attached to her. I call her Mom. Now my mother has returned. She wants me to call her Mom, but I cannot".

Rafiqul Islam (9) is from Gomostapur union of Chapai Nawabganj

district. His mother Johura Khatun is an internal migrant who is working in Dhaka. He thinks his mother does not love him. In his words, “If she loved me, she would come to see me more often. She only comes to village during two *Eids*. Compared to my friends’ mothers, she brings fewer clothes. Many of my friend’s mothers help them in their study. I am in Class II, but I never experienced studying with my mother. She calls us once a week. That’s not enough for me”.

These cases reveal the social costs faced by very young children during their early childhood development. The nature of social cost on children changes with age. A section of the children do not find anyone to open up to. Suraiya Akter (11) is from Raypur union of Lakshmipur district. Her mother works in Dhaka. She states, “After my mother left for work, I have no one with whom I can talk freely”.

In the absence of parents, it is perhaps a better option to stay with adult sisters. However, the child may not feel secure even when she is staying with her siblings. Such was the case with Piyanka Rani (15) from Mirsarai *upazilla* of Chattogram district. She had a lovely childhood. Her father used to work in Oman. Her family consisted of her sister, mother and herself. Everything changed when her mother died in a road accident. In her own words, “After my mother’s demise, my father wedded off my elder sister and left for Oman by handing over the household responsibility to my sister and brother-in-law. For some reason, I do not feel secure. I feel that in the absence of my mother, I needed my father at home. It seems to me that I have a non-existent living father”.

Mohammad Habib (13) studies in Class VIII. He stays at his maternal grandfather’s house with his mother and sister in Krishnapur village of Cumilla district. In his own words, “My father has been working in Dhaka for a long time. He only visits us during holidays. I have issues with my father. He is upset with me because I failed in two subjects during the final examinations of Class VII.

At first he was rude and later he stopped talking to me. At that time, I took part in an inter-school cricket tournament and got a prize for winning. I dream to become a fast bowler like Mustafiz and play in the national team, but my father does not appreciate that. Every now and then, I want to leave the house. However, I stopped myself from doing that thinking of the consequences that my decision would have on my mother and little sister”.

Meher Afroz (15) is from Mirsarai *upazilla* of Chattogram district. She has a mind of her own. Her mother is working in Saudi Arabia as a domestic worker. Meher does not like wearing *Shalwar Kameez*. She likes to wear jeans and T-shirts. When her mother was here and she was younger, no one questioned her outfit. Meher Afroz says, “My father has imposed a strict dress code since the neighbours pass comments about my outfits. I do not like my father for this. I wish my mother was here as she would have found a way to help me”.

Abdullah Al Fahad (16) is from Wahadpur union of Chattogram district. His case exposes the readers to a new challenge. His father works in Oman. In his own words, “In the absence of my father, my mother Israt Jahan is the household head. Since our childhood, my father has been sending all kinds of presents to us. He also remits money every month. My mother is shy to go out and receive remittance. She relies on me for receiving remittance as well as doing shopping. I have become used to spending money. Over the last two years, I am not attending school regularly. I have my friends with whom I spend time with, instead of going to school. Among my friends, I am the one with money. They all like me because all of them can enjoy things with my money”. His mother was very upset with him.

The cases presented above highlight that challenges faced in taking care of the left-behind children vary between the left-behind fathers, mothers or other relatives. The challenges also vary on the basis of age of the child. Bonding with the migrant mother is a major

challenge for the young children. However, challenges of bonding with the migrant father have not been reported. The adolescent girls face challenge in opening up with fathers about issues related to reproductive health. The left-behind mothers of adolescent children occasionally share financial function with the adolescent boys, which may result in making young boys used to spending money unnecessarily.

Loneliness: The highest number of children of the male international migrants identified “missing their father”, “not being able to go outside holding father’s hand”, “unable to enjoy the company of father during meal times or going out” as the major social costs of their fathers’ migration. A section of the boys missed their fathers the most during *Eid* prayers. They would have liked to go to *Eidgah* with their father like their other friends.

Table 3.1.1: Social costs of parental migration by gender of the child

Type	Boy Child	Girl Child
Child of both of internal & international migrant parents		
Insecurity	√	√
Loneliness	√	√
Too many guardians and unnecessary scolding	√	√
Inability to demand for special food and toys	√	√
Additional work during play time	√	√
Specific to child of international migrant father		
Missing the presence of father	√	
Not able to go out holding father’s hand	√	
Miss father during <i>Eid</i> prayers	√	
Specific to child of international migrant mother		
Absence of mother during sickness	√	√
Missing mother during menstrual cycle		√

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

The case of Tonmoy (12) of Wahadpur union of Chattogram district is a good example of unmet desire in the absence of father. Tonmoy says, “In the absence of my father, there is no one to take us to see

different places, neither for special shopping. I have been longing for a bicycle for quite some time. My father even sent money for that, but my mother doesn’t go out much and for ages I could not get my bicycle”.

Some boy children expressed resentment over too much control of mother in the absence of father. Sakib (12) is from Manikganj district. He states, “In the absence of my father, my mother is too strict with me. She does not allow me to go to a different village for taking part in games. I wish my father was here”.

Girl children also expressed similar feeling on absence of father. Shanta (11) is from Mirsarai *upazilla* of Chattogram district. When her father went to Saudi Arabia, she was only 1 year old. Her father never came back during holidays. She says “I do not remember seeing my father. He left us when I did not understand anything. All my friends enjoy time with their fathers. They bring in things to school which their fathers buy for them. I have never experienced such love. More important is that I crave to see my father”.

The case of Dipannita Debnath (15) from Dhamgor union of Cumilla district is a little different. Her father has been residing in Oman for a long period of time. She stays at her grandparents’ house along with her mother and sister. Her father calls her over the phone every now and then and her mother insists that she talks with him. But Dipannita reveals, “The father I have is not the one whom I want. I want a father who will talk with me, listen to me. Whenever I talk with my father, he comes up with all kinds of barriers. I should not be going out; I should not be doing this or that etc. He gives my mother a tough time for me being defiant of him. As far as I am concerned my father is non-existent”.

Both girl and boy children miss their migrant mother. The absence of mother is particularly felt by the girl and boy children during sickness. This is common for the children of all ages. Mitu (5) is from Chor Hajiganj union of Faridpur district. Her mother went to

Lebanon when she was only 2 years old. Her father looks after her quite well. Last year when she was being operated for a tumor, the only person she wanted was her mother. Once her mother heard about Mitu's situation, she could not stay there and came back to Bangladesh before finishing her contract.

A section of the adolescent girls miss their mother particularly during menstrual cycle. Anika (15) is from Munshiganj district. She says, "I am very emotional when I go through my cycle. I cry a lot during that time and want my mother beside me".

The need to have someone for making demands is expressed in the following statement of Brishti (9) from Chapai Nawabganj. She says, "My cousin can nag her mother for special bangles or dress. I am not that fortunate. I do not have my mother with me. There is no one I can bother for getting a dress or eating a special food when I desire".

From the above identification of social costs by the migrant children, it is clear that economic gains accrued from migration have a high social cost.

Loss of Childhood: Shouldering additional responsibility of household chores is common for both internal and international male and female migrant households. Compared to the non-migrants, the migrant children spend more time in household activities. Often, involvement in household chores is very much gendered. The eldest son/daughter suffers more in this respect in comparison to the younger ones. A section of the girl children of the migrants have to take care of their younger siblings, some others need to take partial/full responsibility of cooking and cleaning. The boy child, on the other, may have to earn his own sustenance by providing labour in family enterprises or agricultural field. Some even have to start working at other people's enterprises or home. The following in-depth interviews highlight the complexities of additional burden shouldered by the left-behind boys and girls.

Shariful (11) is from Chor Bhodrasan union of Faridpur district. In his words, "My mother is a domestic worker in Lebanon. My father passed away when I was young. When I was only one year old, my mother went abroad leaving me with my aunt at my grandparents' home. In the last 10 years, my mother had come home only three times. I have studied till Class IV. But my grandfather had decided to discontinue my education and instead put me into work in a workshop of steel almirah. I very much want to go back to the school. If my mother was at home or my father was alive, I would not have had to give up my studies".

Liza (14) is from Faridpur district. Her mother is working in Saudi Arabia and her father Sheikh Karim is a farmer. She has a 19 year old brother and a 3 year old sister. She is studying at Chor Notakhola High School. Liza said, "Along with pursuing my studies, I have to perform all types of household chores. I have to help my aunts with the cooking, keep our rooms clean and on top of that take care of the cattle. While performing all these tasks, I miss my classes often. My *Chachi* (paternal aunt) scolds me a lot. I cannot do many things as per my wish. If my mother was here, things would have been different".

Shorna (14) is from Kathalighata village of Dohar *upazilla* in Dhaka district. She says, "My mother has migrated to Saudi Arabia for work. Our family consists of me, my brother and sister and father. Although my father is with us, I have to take over the responsibility of running the household. I have to take care of cooking, cleaning as well as looking after my two younger siblings. I wish my mother was here and I did not have to look after all these at such an early age".

These cases demonstrate that a section of the children of the left-behind migrants have, for all practical purposes, lost their childhood. However, how much of it is due to migration and how much of it is due to pre-existing social and economic reality of the household concerned is an important issue while analysing the

impact of parental migration on the childhood of the left-behind children. On some occasions, a left-behind child only has a single parent. When the single parent migrates, the young child is kept with relatives. A section of the relatives occasionally treat him or her insensitively, sometimes ruthlessly, and occasionally use them as glorified labourers. In some other instances, the relatives may not have the capacity to support an extra person. So they put them in job market. A section of the left-behind fathers also impose too much burden on the shoulder of the young children, often their teen-aged daughters. Pro-active policies may play a role in reducing the scope of such use of child labour.

Early Marriage: Some of the earlier qualitative research finds that the female migrants tend to marry off their daughters early. This is out of the concern that in the absence of the mother there will be no one to protect her from being abused or from falling into wrong relationship. The girl children are given into marriage to ensure sexual protection whereas the boy children are married off to bring in a female in the household to look after the family. Early marriage of girls has been treated as a major social cost of female migration. This study for the first time compares the situation of early marriage among migrant and non-migrant households. Such comparison gives a new perspective. Table 3.1.2 shows that early marriage is a reality among a section of both migrant and non-migrant households. Interestingly, early marriage is more common in non-migrant families compared to the migrant households.

Table 3.1.2: Marital status of children by gender of the child

Marital Status	Internal (%)		International (%)		Non-migrant (%)	
	BC	GC	BC	GC	BC	GC
Unmarried	99.2	97.0	99.2	97.2	99.1	95.5
Married	0.4	3.0	0.8	2.8	0.9	4.5
Separated	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Divorced/widow/widower	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total no. of cases	229	237	1059	881	455	397

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

It is obvious that compared to the boy children, early marriage among the girl children is higher. Three percent of the girl children of the internal and international migrant households are already married; whereas, less than 1 percent of the boy children are married. If a comparison is made on the basis of gender of the migrants, it seems the women migrants marry off their child more compared to the male migrants. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, compared to earlier times; early marriage among the children of migrants has reduced.

3.2 Work Load in the Absence of Migrant Parent

Workload: Review of literature shows that in the absence of parents both girl child and boy child have to shoulder additional responsibilities. This study also finds that family responsibility of the migrant children increases during the absence of one parent. The increase of workload of the migrant children is assessed in comparison to the non-migrant children. The study finds that both migrant and non-migrant children take part in household activities which is also very much gendered. Table 3.2.1 shows that 80 to 81 percent of the children belonging to all three groups, internal, international and non-migrant, take part in completing the day-to-day household chores. Gendered division of labour within the household is also obvious in respect to performance of household chores by boy child and girl child. This is, however, true for both migrant and non-migrant households. The girl children take part in cooking, cleaning, assisting mother/father in any possible tasks assigned to them and taking care of younger siblings. The boy children take part in bazar, agricultural works, paying bills etc. Like girl child, boy child also assists mother/father in different miscellaneous activities. In 76 percent cases, the left-behind fathers are staying alone with their children in a nuclear setting. In those cases, the fathers manage their household with the support of their own children. In a number of cases, the additional family members like the grandparents guide and support the children in this respect. Some of the in-depth interviews reveal that there is no additional

member; neither does the father instruct the children on how to conduct those chores. It is the migrant mother who instructs the children over phone. Those who have access to regular conversation with the migrant mother can cope with additional responsibility more quickly compared to those who do not have.

Girl children of 38 percent of the internal migrant households, 54 percent of the international migrant households and 54 percent of the non-migrant households take part in cleaning of the homestead, kitchen, sweeping yards and other spaces. In contrast, the boy children of only 6 percent of the internal migrant households, 8 percent of the international migrant households and 6 percent of the non-migrant households take part in similar activities.

Cooking is predominantly a women's work in Bangladesh. Table 3.2.1 also shows that 20 percent of the girl children of the internal migrant households take part in cooking.

Table 3.2.1: Participation in HH work by gender of the child

Household Chores	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Cooking	1.9	20.4	11.1	2.2	18.2	9.5	1.8	21.6	11.1
Cleaning	5.6	37.7	21.6	8.2	54.0	29.1	5.9	53.8	28.5
Looking after domestic animal	6.8	1.9	4.3	5.3	2.9	4.2	10.9	2.7	7.0
Looking after elderly	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.2	0.8	0.3	0.0	0.2
Looking after younger siblings	2.5	4.3	3.4	4.9	10.3	7.4	5.9	6.6	6.3
Helping in agriculture	6.8	0.6	3.7	6.3	0.9	3.9	13.9	1.7	8.1
Taking care of business	0.6	0.0	0.3	1.6	0.0	0.9	4.4	1.7	3.1
Shopping	34.0	1.2	17.6	29.4	1.1	16.5	27.2	2.0	15.3
Paying bills	3.7	0.0	1.9	3.7	0.6	2.3	2.1	1.0	1.6
Do not perform anything special	19.8	17.9	18.8	24.2	14.9	20.0	24.6	15.0	20.0
Others ⁸	0.6	0.0	0.3	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.1
Total no. of cases	162	162	324	788	659	1447	338	301	639

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

⁸Others include driving CNG, fishing, sewing, washing cloths of uncle etc.

Eighteen percent of the girl children in the international migrant households take part in cooking compared to 22 percent of the girl children of the non-migrant households. The boy children do not participate in this work. Only 2 percent of the boy children of all three types of households, internal, international and non-migrant assist in cooking. This implies that the participation of children in household chores is explained more by the patriarchal social structure of Bangladesh. Nonetheless, time spent in household chores sometimes is more for the left-behind children compared to the children of non-migrant households.

On the other hand, the participation of the boy children is much higher compared to the girl children in all three types of households when it comes to shopping, helping in agriculture or family business or payment of different types of bills. Thirty-four percent of the boy children of the internal migrant households, 29 percent of the international households and 27 percent of the non-migrant households shoulder the responsibility of all kinds of shopping for the household. Around 7 percent of the boy children of the internal and 6 percent of the international migrant households and 14 percent of the boy children of the non-migrant households participate in agricultural work. The girl child takes part in shopping in only 1 to 2 percent households of all three categories. Participation of the girl child in agricultural activities in the field is also very low. Around 4 to 10 percent of the girl children of internal, international and non-migrant households take care of their younger siblings. The boy children also look after their younger siblings. However, they participate more in helping them to study or teaching them other skills such as grocery shopping, taking care of domestic animals etc. The girl children, on the other, act as care giver- carrying, feeding and keeping toddlers occupied.

This may indicate that the participation in household activities, be it inside or outside the home, is not determined by migration, rather it is determined by the pre-existing norms and culture of involvement of the children in household work. Nonetheless, the migrant children spend more time in household activities compared to the

non-migrant children.

Nowrin Sultana (11) lives at Mirsarai *upazilla* of Chattogram district. She studies in Class VI. She states, “From my childhood, I have seen my mother working both in and outside home as my father had migrated quite a while ago. Since a very early age, I have been helping my mother in household work. When I grew up a little, I also started buying small things from grocery stores. Now I even do day to day grocery. I am not afraid in doing all these jobs. Compared to other girls of my class, I am more confident. I think helping mom with household work has made me responsible”.

Involvement in Work before Parental Migration: An interesting question is to find out whether the children performed the same tasks prior to their parent’s migration. Sixty-one percent children of the internal migrants and 64 percent children of the international migrants were not involved in household chores before parental migration. Earlier in Table 3.2.1, it has been seen that around 80 to 81 percent of the internal and international migrant children take part in household chores after their parents migrated. This means the percentage of children taking part in household chores increases during migration of the parent. This finding confirms earlier studies that migration of parent increases the workload of both boy and girl child. If the data is segregated on the basis of the gender of the child, it appears that percentage of the girl child is much higher compared to the boy child who has been performing different household work (Table 3.2.2).

Table 3.2.2: Participation in HH work before parental migration by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Yes	19.0	27.2	23.0	11.7	19.1	15.1
No	63.3	58.9	61.2	65.2	62.5	63.9
Not applicable (minor)	17.7	13.9	15.9	23.1	18.5	21.0
Total no. of cases	158	151	309	761	634	1395

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018
Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Impact of Work on Education: Thirteen percent of the internal and international migrant children and 16 percent of the non-migrant children perceive that their education has suffered to some extent due to participation in household chores. Another 1 percent of the internal and 2 percent of the international migrant children felt their education suffered badly due to participation in household activities. It is important to look at the perception of the migrant children through gendered lens. Previous studies point that the girl child’s education is affected more compared to the boy child as a result of parental migration.

Table 3.2.3, however, gives a new perspective. The gap between participation of the boy child and the girl child has reduced compared to the past. Fourteen percent of the boy children and 15 percent of the girl children of the internal migrant households thought that their education was hampered either to some extent or severely due to participation in household chores. Thirteen percent of the boy children and 16 percent of the girl children of the international migrant households saw correlation between their household chores and poor performance in education.

Table 3.2.3: Effect of participation in HH work on education by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Do not hamper	86.5	84.6	85.5	86.8	83.6	85.3	83.3	83.8	83.5
Hamper to some extent	12.7	13.8	13.3	12.2	14.3	13.2	16.4	15.5	15.9
Severely hamper	0.8	1.6	1.2	1.0	2.1	1.6	0.4	0.7	0.5
Total no. of cases	126	123	249	592	568	1160	269	277	546

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018
Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Table 3.2.4 offers a comparison of educational outcome on the basis of gender of the migrant. An interesting finding emerges here. It becomes obvious that the children of the international female migrants are affected more when it comes to the impact of household chores on education.

Table 3.2.4: Effect of participation in HH work on education by gender of the migrant

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Do not hamper	85.2	100.0	85.5	88.5	71.1	85.3	83.5
Hamper to some extent	13.5	0.0	13.3	11.0	22.5	13.2	15.9
Severely hamper	1.2	0.0	1.2	0.4	6.4	1.6	0.5
Total no. of cases	244	5	249	942	218	1160	546

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Twenty-three percent of the children of the international female migrants' education are hampered to some extent due to participation in household chores. The percentage share of the children of the international male migrants who are in the same situation is almost half than that of the female migrants. In the category of badly hampered, the children of the international female migrants surface strongly as well. Education of 6 percent of them has been hampered severely whereas in case of the international male migrants it is less than 1 percent. This implies that in the absence of the father, the left-behind wives can take better care of the children's education. This is perhaps because of her close presence with the children at home. It may also be that the left-behind wives employ the children for lesser time. The left-behind husbands also do a good job, but it is a little less than what the left-behind wives can ensure.

3.3 Material Wellbeing

The social costs borne by the left-behind children of the migrants are quite evident from Sections I and II. Nonetheless, their parents migrate internally or internationally to provide them with better food and nutrition, educational opportunities and healthcare. This section analyses if the parents are able to achieve their goals in these respects. Material wellbeing of the children is assessed on three areas. These are: education, food and nutrition and health.

Education

Table 3.3.1 presents the level of enrollment of the migrant and non-migrant children in educational institutions. Ninety-two percent children of school going age of both internal and international migrants are enrolled in school. Compared to that, percentage of school enrollment of the children of non-migrant households (86%) is lower. This implies that the migrant children are situated in a better position compared to the children of non-migrants. Migration outcome is also different when data is segregated on the basis of the gender of the migrant child. In this case, the girl children of the migrants are in better position. Ninety-five percent of them have been studying in school, while it is 90 percent for the boy children of the international migrant households and 88 percent for the boy children of the internal migrant households.

Table 3.3.1: Enrollement at school by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Yes	87.9	95.1	91.5	89.5	94.6	91.8	81.6	91.5	86.2
No	12.1	4.9	8.5	10.5	5.4	8.2	18.4	8.5	13.8
No. of cases	165	163	328	788	663	1451	347	307	654

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Along with the impact of parental migration, there are other incentives as well which keeps the girl child into school. The government provides stipend to the girl child. Perhaps adherence to law against child marriage also allowed the girl child to continue their studies. This finding contradicts with Meyerhoefer and Chen's (2011) finding on China. They find that parental labour migration in China resulted in a significant lag in the educational progress of the girls. They attributed that this lag is due to involving the girl child in household activities.

However, if the data are segregated on the basis of gender of the migrants, it is interesting to note that achievement in respect to enrollment of the migrant children in education is gendered. Ninety-

three percent children of the international male migrants are enrolled in schools compared to 85 percent children of the international female migrants. Similarly, 92 percent children of the internal male migrants are enrolled in school compared to 88 percent children of the internal female migrants. It indicates that in the absence of the father, the left-behind wife of the migrant is more capable in ensuring that the children are enrolled in educational institutions. Although many of the left-behind husbands performed significantly well, it is lower than the performance of the left-behind wives.

Table 3.3.2: Enrollment at school by gender of the migrant (%)

Response	Internal			International			Non-migrant
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Yes	91.6	87.5	91.5	93.4	85.1	91.8	86.2
No	8.4	12.5	8.5	6.6	14.9	8.2	13.8
No. of cases	320	8	328	1175	276	1451	654

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Medium of Education: Irrespective of the migration status, a majority of the children study in Bangla medium schools. Seventy-one percent children of both internal and international migrants go to Bangla medium schools compared to 73 percent children of non-migrants. Popular perception about the labour migrants of Bangladesh is that they prefer Islamic education more as they are exposed to theocratic Islamic way of life through their migration to different Middle Eastern and South-East Asian countries. However, data on education of the children of the internal, international and non-migrant households negate such stereotyping. It shows that about 15 percent of all types of households send their children to Madrasa (religious school). Eleven percent of the internal migrant, 9 percent of the international migrant and 5 percent of the non-migrant households send their children to kindergarten schools. School fees in the kindergartens are relatively higher than the other schools. It implies that the internal and international migrant

households are keen to shoulder the higher costs of education of the children. There are no significant differences between the boys and girls of the migrants or non-migrants in respect to preference of type of education system.

Table 3.3.3: Types of schools attended by gender of the child

Medium	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Bengali	70.8	70.5	70.7	69.7	71.7	70.6	70.7	74.4	72.5
Kindergarten	9.7	11.5	10.7	9.1	7.8	8.5	5.7	3.9	4.8
Madrasa	12.5	16.0	14.3	15.0	14.4	14.8	14.8	15.7	15.2
College	5.6	1.9	3.7	4.3	5.2	4.7	6.0	5.3	5.7
Hafez khana	0.7	0.0	0.3	1.4	0.5	1.0	1.8	0.4	1.1
Vocational	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	1.1	0.4	0.7
No. of cases	144	156	300	712	630	1342	283	281	564

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Table 3.3.4: Types of schools attended by gender of the migrant

Medium	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Bengali	70.6	71.4	70.7	68.6	80.1	70.6	72.5
Kindergarten	10.6	14.3	10.7	8.9	6.6	8.5	4.8
Madrasa	14.7	0.0	14.3	16.2	8.3	14.8	15.2
College	3.4	14.3	3.7	4.8	4.6	4.7	5.7
Hafez khana	0.3	0.0	0.3	1.1	0.4	1.0	1.1
Vocational	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.7
No. of cases	293	7	300	1101	241	1342	564

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Again, significant difference is visible when the data are segregated on the basis of the gender of the migrants. Eighty percent of the international female migrant households send their children to Bangla medium schools, whereas 69 percent of the international male migrant households do so. Nine percent children of the international male migrants attend English medium kindergartens compared to 7 percent children of the international female migrants. Sixteen percent children of the international male migrants attend madrasas. In contrast, only 8 percent of the international female migrants send their children to madrasas. The discussion on

education shows that the stereotyped notion that education of the children of the migrants is neglected does not hold ground empirically.

Class Attendance: Table 3.3.5 shows that 20 percent of the international migrant households, 22 percent of the internal migrant households and 49 percent of the non-migrant households do not have any school going children and the rest have.

Table 3.3.5: Days absent in the last month by gender of the child

Days	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
No classes missed	12.4	13.3	12.8	7.4	10.5	8.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
1-5	56.6	50.4	53.5	56.5	50.5	53.7	38.2	37.4	37.8
6-10	8.8	8.8	8.8	12.3	11.1	11.7	10.6	7.5	9.0
11-15	1.8	3.5	2.7	2.6	4.0	3.3	2.5	1.8	2.1
16-20	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.5
21-25	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.4
26-30	0.9	0.0	0.4	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.7	0.9
Not applicable ⁹	19.5	23.9	21.7	19.3	21.0	20.1	46.3	52.3	49.3
No. of cases	113	113	226	570	505	1075	283	281	564

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Class attendance is a good indicator of commitment to education. Percentage of the children who did not miss any class over last month is the highest for the internal migrants (13%) compared to 9 percent children of the international migrants. No household among the non-migrants had any children who attended all classes over the last one month. Thirty-eight percent children of the non-migrant households missed classes up to 5 days. Fifty-four percent children of both internal and international migrant households missed classes up to 5 days. The percentage of households whose children missed school from 6 to 10 days is slightly higher in case

⁹ Not applicable includes no school going children or could not specify.

of the international migrants (12%). In case of other two groups, it is 9 percent. This finding contradicts with what Giannelli and Mangiavacchi (2010) find in the context of Albania. They find that parental migration negatively affects school attendance of the children.

Table 3.3.6: Days absent in the last month by gender of the migrant

Days	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
No classes missed	13.1	0.0	12.8	7.1	16.0	8.8	0.0
1-5	52.7	100.0	53.5	57.0	40.1	53.7	37.8
6-10	9.0	0.0	8.8	11.4	13.2	11.7	9.0
11-15	2.7	0.0	2.7	3.0	4.2	3.3	2.1
16-20	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.9	1.0	0.5
21-25	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.4
26-30	0.5	0.0	0.4	1.3	0.0	1.0	0.9
Not applicable ¹⁰	22.1	0.0	21.7	19.1	24.1	20.1	49.3
No. of cases	222	4	226	863	212	1075	564

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Comparison of school attendance between the boy and the girl children shows that the percentage of the girl children is higher than the boy children in the category where none of them missed any classes during the last month. This may indicate that the girl children are more motivated in attaining education than the boy children. Even after attending household chores, a section of them have attained higher rate of school attendance.

Reasons for the Absence in Class: IOM and Save the Children Study (2017) cited falling sick and having to carry out household chores as major reasons for the irregularity in school attendance. Only 3 percent of the children of both internal and international migrant households identified additional household chore as a reason for not being able to attend school. Sickness is however cited as the top reason for not attending school.

¹⁰ Same as footnote 9

Table 3.3.7: Reasons for not attending schools by gender of the child

Reasons	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Sick	40.0	32.9	36.5	41.3	49.6	45.0	39.5	54.5	46.5
Sickness in the family	5.3	11.0	8.1	2.8	2.0	2.5	3.3	3.8	3.5
Household work	4.0	1.4	2.7	3.1	3.5	3.3	4.6	4.5	4.6
Travelling	18.7	28.8	23.6	17.2	12.8	15.2	12.5	14.4	13.4
No reason assigned	25.3	19.2	22.3	26.4	20.6	23.8	26.3	12.9	20.1
Agricultural reason	4.0	0.0	2.0	1.4	0.3	0.9	4.6	0.8	2.8
Others ¹¹	2.7	6.8	4.7	7.8	11.3	9.4	9.2	9.1	9.2
Total no. of cases	75	73	148	424	345	769	152	132	284

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Thirty-seven percent of the internal migrants was absent at school due to sickness. In case of the international migrants, it was 45 percent and for the non-migrant it was 47 percent. While comparing between the boy and the girl child, no major differences have been found in this respect. However, percentage of the girl child of the internal migrant households is higher compared to their boy child who could not attend school due to sickness of another member of household.

Private Tutor: Table 3.3.9 shows around two-thirds of the children do not have a private tutor. The children of the international migrants have more access to a private tutor than those of the internal and non-migrants. Around 40 percent of the children of the international migrants have a private tutor, while it is 31 percent and 30 percent for the internal and the non-migrants respectively. The

¹¹ Others include attending wedding ceremony, death in family, bad weather, college situated far from home, family issue, migrant father and mother visiting home, getting married, grandmother did not take him to school, had an accident, have been fasting, *Hujur* being absent in madrasa, did not know that college was open, looking after little sister, money problem, mother did not get time to take the child to the school, sports competition in the school, to participate a national scout competition, stayed at in-laws' house, attended *Tablig's Chilla*.

findings thus show that the children of the non-migrant households have a lower probability of having a private tutor compared to the children of the international migrant households. There can be several reasons behind this. Most important among them is that the international migrant households have more capacity to spend on education in comparison to the other two groups studied. In case of the non-migrant families, both mother and father can oversee children's education. In the absence of one parent, most of the times, external support is required.

Table 3.3.8: Reasons for not attending schools by gender of the migrant

Reasons	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Sick	36.8	25.0	36.5	43.8	50.8	45.0	46.5
Someone sick in the family	8.3	0.0	8.1	2.8	0.8	2.5	3.5
Household work	2.8	0.0	2.7	2.8	5.4	3.3	4.6
Travelling somewhere	23.6	25.0	23.6	15.3	14.6	15.2	13.4
No reason assigned	21.5	50.0	22.3	24.3	21.5	23.8	20.1
Agricultural reason	2.1	0.0	2.0	1.1	0.0	0.9	2.8
Others ¹²	4.9	0.0	4.7	9.9	6.9	9.4	9.2
Total no. of cases	144	4	148	639	130	769	284

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Table 3.3.9: Employing house tutor by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Yes	29.7	31.6	30.7	40.5	38.6	39.6	30.0	30.9	30.4
No	70.3	68.4	69.3	59.5	61.4	60.4	70.0	69.1	69.6
No. of cases	148	155	303	755	643	1398	283	282	565

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

When access to private tutoring is compared between the boy and girl child, there is no major difference in respect to the internal,

¹² Same as footnote 11.

international and non-migrant households. However, having a private tutor is 17 percent higher in case of the children of the internal male migrants compared to the internal female migrants. Forty-two percent children of the international male migrants have a private tutor compared to 29 percent children of the international female migrants.

Table 3.3.10: Employing house tutor by gender of the migrant

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrants (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Yes	31.1	14.3	30.7	42.0	29.4	39.6	30.4
No	68.9	85.7	69.3	58.0	70.6	60.4	69.6
No. of cases	296	7	303	1136	262	1398	565

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Monthly Expenditure on Private Tutor: Table 3.3.11 shows that the children of the international migrants, on an average, pay Tk. 802 (US \$10) on private tutoring; it is Tk. 461 (US \$6) and Tk. 623 (US \$8) for the children of the internal migrants and the non-migrants respectively.

Table 3.3.11: Monthly expenditure for private tuition by gender of the child

Expenditure in taka	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
0-500	81.8	76.0	78.7	58.0	66.1	61.6	75.3	70.1	72.7
501-1000	13.6	22.0	18.1	28.3	21.8	25.4	11.8	20.7	16.3
1001-1500	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	5.6	5.9	5.9	9.2	7.6
1501-2000	2.3	2.0	2.1	3.6	2.8	3.2	2.4	0.0	1.2
2000+	2.3	0.0	1.1	3.9	3.6	3.8	4.7	0.0	2.3
No. of cases	44	50	94	306	246	552	85	87	172
Average	484.4	440.0	460.8	813.4	688.4	801.9	682.2	565.1	623.0

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

When expenditure on private tutoring is compared between the boy and girl child of the international migrants, on an average the boy children pay higher for private tutor (Tk. 813/US \$10) compared to the girl children (Tk. 688/US \$8). On the other hand, the internal

migrants spend almost half on private tutor compared to the international migrants. Their expenditure on the boy child (Tk. 484/US \$6) is higher compared to the girl child (Tk. 440/US \$5). However, the gap between the boy and girl child is much less in case of the children of the internal migrants compared to the international migrants. This finding is in conformity with Hugo (2005) and Asis (2000). They show that the migrant families spend more on the boy child's education than their girl child.

Table 3.3.12 compares the expenditure on private tuition among the male and female migrant households with that of non-migrants. On an average, the international male migrant households spend 31 percent higher (Tk. 837/US \$10) for their children's education compared to the international female migrant households (Tk. 639/US \$8). The difference is even higher when the expenditure is compared between the male and female internal migrant households. The internal male migrant households spend 365 percent higher than the internal female migrant households. It is clear that the male migrant households have more disposable income compared to the female migrant households. Rashid (2015) shows that the left-behind wives are more serious on pursuing education of their children as the path to upward economic and social mobility.

Table 3.3.12: Monthly expenditure for private tuition by gender of the migrant

Expenditure in taka	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
0-500	78.5	100.0	78.7	60.3	68.4	61.4	72.7
501-1000	18.3	0.0	18.1	26.0	22.8	25.5	16.3
1001-1500	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.6	2.5	6.0	7.6
1501-2000	2.2	0.0	2.1	3.2	3.8	3.3	1.2
2000+	1.1	0.0	1.1	4.0	2.5	3.8	2.3
No. of cases	93	1	94	473	79	552	172
Average	464.5	100.0	460.8	837.4	639.2	801.9	623.0

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

This can also be the case for these families. It may also be that the female migrants have less control over the remittances they sent to their husbands or other male members. Their left-behind husbands prioritize other expenditure over education.

Educational Performance: Educational performance has been compared among the three groups through last year's annual examinations. Almost 82 percent children of the internal migrant and 85 percent children of both international migrant and non-migrant households have passed in all subjects and were promoted to the next class in their last annual examination. For all categories, in less than 1 percent cases the children have not been promoted to the next class.

This finding matches with the findings of the CHAMPSEA project research which has not found any negative correlation with migration and education performance of the left-behind children.

Table 3.3.13: Result of annual exam of last year by gender of the child

Results	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrants (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Passed in all subjects and promoted	78.2	85.3	81.8	83.3	88.5	85.7	81.3	89.3	85.3
Failed in few subjects but promoted	9.2	3.3	6.2	7.7	2.6	5.3	8.1	5.3	6.7
Not promoted into next class	1.4	0.0	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.6	1.1	0.7	0.9
Did not sit for exam	2.8	3.3	3.1	2.6	2.0	2.3	3.2	0.4	1.8
Others ¹³	8.5	8.0	8.2	5.9	6.3	6.1	6.4	4.3	5.3
Total no. of cases	142	150	292	700	615	1315	283	281	564

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Again, the performance of the girl child is slightly better if a comparison is made between the boy and girl child. Eighty-nine

¹³ Others include enrolled in school only this year, studying *Hafezi*, HSC examinee and result not published yet.

percent of the girl children of the international migrants have passed in all subjects and have been promoted to the next class compared to 83 percent boy children of the international migrants. In case of the internal migrants, 85 percent of the girl children and 78 percent of the boy children have passed in all subjects. Siddiqui (2001) and Rashid (2015) argue that the girl children perform better for quite a few reasons. Higher attendance in classes and lesser access to outside activities create congenial atmosphere for better performance of the girl children during initial years of education. This study further adds that the girl children have lesser access to social media compared to boy children. This may also contribute to more time to study and therefore, performing better.

Table 3.3.14 compares the examination result of the children looked after by the left-behind wives with that of the left-behind husbands.

Table 3.3.14: Result of annual exam of last year by gender of the migrant

Results	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Passed in all subjects and promoted	82.5	57.1	81.8	86.1	84.0	85.7	85.3
Failed in few subjects but promoted	6.3	0.0	6.2	5.1	6.3	5.3	6.7
Not promoted into next class	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.4	1.7	0.6	0.9
Did not sit for exam	2.8	14.3	3.1	2.3	2.1	2.3	1.8
Others ¹⁴	7.7	28.6	8.2	6.1	5.9	6.1	5.3
Total no. of cases	285	7	292	1078	237	1315	564

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Performance of the children of the internal female migrants is significantly lower compared to the children of the internal male migrants. However, one has to keep in mind, cases of the female migrant with the left-behind husband is much low. No significant differences are there in respect to the international male and female migrants' children.

¹⁴ Same as footnote 13

Table 3.3.14 compares the examination result of the children looked after by the left-behind wives with that of the left-behind husbands. Performance of the children of the internal female migrants is significantly lower compared to the children of the internal male migrants. However, one has to keep in mind, cases of the female migrant with the left-behind husband is much low. No significant differences are there in respect to the international male and female migrants' children.

Therefore, it can be said that there is no major difference between the children of the migrant and non-migrant households in respect to access to education as well as performance. The performance of the girl children is better than the boy children of both migrant and non-migrant households.

Food and Nutrition

The purpose of looking into the number of food intake is to see the capacity of the households to provide their children with adequate food. Table 3.3.15 shows that 97 percent children of both internal and non-migrant households can take 3 or more meals per day. It is 1 percent less for the children of the international migrants. When the data is divided on the basis of gender of the left-behind children, it appears that percentage of the girl child of the international migrants who have less than 3 meals per day is higher (6%) compared to the boy child (3%). Interestingly it is opposite in case of the internal migrants.

Table 3.3.15: Number of meals per day by gender of the child

Times	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
One time	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.0	1.0	0.5
Two times	3.6	1.9	2.8	3.0	5.4	4.1	3.2	2.3	2.8
Three times	87.3	84.5	85.9	90.0	86.7	88.5	89.9	92.2	91.0
More than three times	9.0	13.7	11.3	6.7	7.5	7.1	6.9	4.6	5.8
No. of cases	166	161	327	790	667	1457	347	306	653

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Four percent of the boy children consume less than three meals per day compared to 2 percent girl children. This, however, does not include assessment of the quality of food.

Table 3.3.16: Diseases suffered in the last 1 year by gender of the child

Diseases	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Stomach ache, aches in bones, rheumatic, weakness	14.0	18.1	16.0	10.5	13.4	11.9	10.3	11.1	10.7
Malaria, influenza, dengue, fever, cough, pox, typhoid, jaundice, diarrhea, diphtheria, cholera	72.6	65.8	69.2	70.8	66.7	68.8	73.2	76.4	74.7
Childbirth, gynecologic problem, abortion	0.0	1.3	0.6	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.0	1.0	0.5
Eye problem, skin disease, dental problem, tonsil, ENT problem	7.0	10.3	8.7	10.3	12.2	11.2	8.0	5.7	6.9
Cancer, epilepsy, paralysis, tumor, appendicitis, arthritis	0.6	1.3	1.0	1.0	2.4	1.6	0.6	1.0	0.8
Thyroid, gastric, infection, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, asthma, breathing problem, pneumonia, anemia	1.9	0.6	1.3	2.6	2.1	2.4	2.1	2.0	2.1
Neuro disease, mental illness, insomnia	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.2
HIV/AIDS, STD, gonorrhea	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Road and other accidents	1.3	0.6	1.0	2.2	0.7	1.5	3.8	1.7	2.8
Does not know the name	0.6	1.3	1.0	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2
Disability	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.3
Others ¹⁵	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.8	1.3	1.6	0.9	1.0	0.9
Total no. of cases	157	155	312	812	715	1527	339	297	636

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018.

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

SDC and RMMRU Wave 2, household survey data 2017, however, shows that expenditure on food item by the international migrant family is around 50 percent more than the internal migrant producing households (Siddiqui et al. 2018).

¹⁵ Others include allergy, endoscopic pain, hand and leg sweating, headache, liver disease, vomiting, operation, lack of appetite, worm etc.

Access to Doctor: Table 3.3.17 shows that the children of both internal and international migrant households avail the services of doctors more than the children of non-migrant households. Ninety-one percent of the internal and 90 percent of the international migrant households take their children to the doctors when they are sick. Eighty-five percent of the non-migrant households take their children to the doctors. While looking at the gender of the children, visit to the doctor during sickness is 3 percent higher for the boy child compared to the girl child in the international migrant households. However, it is 1 percent higher for the girl child compared to the boy child in the internal migrant households. This may indicate that health of the children may not be neglected when both or one parent is absent.

Table 3.3.17: Availing treatment of doctors by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Yes	90.3	91.5	90.9	91.4	88	89.9	85	84.9	84.9
No	9.7	8.5	9.1	8.6	12	10.1	15	15.1	15.1
No. of cases	145	142	287	724	607	1331	306	272	578

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Table 3.3.18: Availing treatment of doctors by gender of the migrant

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Yes	90.7	100.0	90.9	91.2	84.0	89.9	84.9
No	9.3	0.0	9.1	8.8	16.0	10.1	15.1
No. of cases	281	6	287	1081	250	1331	578

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Capacity to Purchase Medicine: Table 3.3.19 shows that the children of the international migrants have much higher access to medicine. In 94 percent cases of sickness of the children, all medicines have been purchased as per the doctor's prescription. Ninety-two percent of the internal migrant and 89 percent of the non-migrant households purchased all medicines when their children have been sick.

There is not much of a difference observed if access to medicine is compared on the basis of the boy child and the girl child. This perhaps indicate discriminatory practice between the boy and girl child in respect to health care is reducing compare to past.

Table 3.3.19: Purchase of medicine as per prescription by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Yes	89.6	94.1	91.8	95.0	92.8	94.0	89.2	89.5	89.4
No	10.4	5.9	8.2	5.0	7.2	6.0	10.8	10.5	10.6
No. of cases	134	135	269	681	566	1247	279	248	527

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Table 3.3.20: Purchase of medicine as per prescription by gender of the migrant

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Yes	92.0	85.7	91.8	94.6	91.3	94.0	89.4
No	8.0	14.3	8.2	5.4	8.7	6.0	10.6
No. of cases	262	7	269	1017	230	1247	527

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Table 3.3.20 shows that if the data is segregated on the basis of gender of the migrants, the likelihood of buying all medicines is 6 percent higher for the internal male migrants' children compared to the children of the internal female migrants. Also, it is 3 percent higher for the children of the international male migrants compared to the international female migrants' children.

Place of Treatment: Table 3.3.21 gives us an overview of the medical facilities used by the internal, international and non-migrant households. All three groups mainly take services from the doctors located at their villages and unions (58% of the internal migrants, 56% of the international migrants and 65% of the non-migrants) followed by *upazilla* level government (29% of the internal

migrants, 20% of the international migrants and 19% of the non-migrants) and private hospitals (6% of the internal migrants, 18% of the international migrants and 12% of the non-migrants). In some cases, they go to district level hospitals and specialized doctors as well (7% of the internal migrants, 6% of the international migrants and 5% of the non-migrants). The findings suggest that the children of the international migrants have 7 percent higher likelihood of being taken to a private hospital at *upazilla* compared to the children of the non-migrants. However, if a comparison is made between internal and international migrants, it is 12 percent higher for the children of the latter compared to the children of the former. A significant difference has been observed while comparing between the children of the male and female international migrant households.

Table 3.3.21: Place of treatment by gender of the child

Place	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Village/union doctor	52.6	62.5	57.6	56.7	56.0	56.4	63.2	66.3	64.6
Upazilla govt. hospital	33.8	25.0	29.4	18.1	21.6	19.7	18.0	19.2	18.6
Upazilla private hospital	6.8	5.1	5.9	19.3	17.0	18.3	11.8	11.7	11.7
District/Dhaka govt. hospital	6.0	5.9	5.9	3.1	2.9	3.0	4.4	1.3	2.9
District/Dhaka private hospital	0.0	0.7	0.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	0.8	1.2
Specialized doctor	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.1	0.8	1.0
Total no. of cases	133	136	269	674	552	1226	272	240	512

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Taking children to a private hospital at upazilla is 10 percent higher for the children of the male migrants compared to the children of the female migrants (Table 3.3.22). Twenty percent children of the male international migrants are taken to the private hospitals at upazilla. On the contrary, taking children to a local village doctor is 18 percent higher in case of the children of the international female migrants compared to those of the male migrants.

Table 3.3.22: Place of treatment by gender of the migrant

Place	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Village/union doctor	56.5	100.0	57.6	53.0	71.3	56.4	64.6
Upazilla govt hospital	30.2	0.0	29.4	20.9	13.9	19.7	18.6
Upazilla private hospital	6.1	0.0	5.9	20.0	10.3	18.3	11.7
District/Dhaka govt hospital	6.1	0.0	5.9	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.9
District/Dhaka private hospital	0.4	0.0	0.4	1.6	0.0	1.3	1.2
Specialized doctor	0.8	0.0	0.7	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.0
Total no. of cases	262	7	269	1003	223	1226	512

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

This section leads us to argue that the left-behind children's health is not neglected in the absence of their migrant parents. This is not only due to the fact that the migrant parents can afford health care but also due to greater awareness about the need for health care. However, gender based difference still remains to some extent. In the absence of the male migrant, his wife makes sure that due care is taken during sickness. In the absence of the female migrant, although the father and other family members take the children to the doctor, it is a little less than the level of care that the mother ensures.

3.4 Agency in Overcoming Social Cost

In the first section of this chapter, it is seen that the migrant children face all kinds of challenges in coping with the absence of migrant parents. A majority of the research on the impact of parental migration on the children places them in a vulnerable position. They highlight the psychosocial stresses that migrant children go through due to parental migration. One of the hypotheses of this study is that these children, while going through the sufferings and stresses due to absence of their one or in a few cases both parents develop their own mechanism to cope with the situation. Their capacity to challenge and remake their social order is termed as agency. This

section looks into methods used by the migrant children in adjusting with the absence of their migrant mother or father and in the long run how that creates agency among them. First, use of communication will be discussed as one of the tools of development of agency.

Communication with Parents

Socialization of the children begins at home. Along with the parents, the extended family plays a major role in social and cultural life of the children. The mother and the father are prime actors in contributing to early childhood development of their children. The absence of one or both parents can psychologically affect the child in a negative way. Studies suggest that frequent communication with the migrant parents help the left-behind children to overcome some of the negative impacts of migration (Parreñas, 2002).

Table 3.4.1: Level of communication with migrant parent by gender of the child

Times	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Almost everyday	70.7	75.0	72.8	55.5	60.2	57.6
Frequently in a week	18.9	16.9	17.9	31.2	25.1	28.4
Once in a week	7.9	5.6	6.8	6.5	7.1	6.8
Once in 15 days	1.2	1.9	1.5	4.0	3.7	3.9
Once in a month	1.2	0.6	0.9	2.9	3.9	3.3
Total no. of cases	164	160	324	770	646	1416

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018
Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

This study also reveals that regular communication of the children with their parents is an important avenue that helps the children in experiencing the love, affection and guidance that they require. The same table also gives an idea about the frequency of communication by gender of the children. In case of the internal migrants, it shows that communication of the girl child with their parents is higher compared to that of the boy child. Seventy-one percent of the boy children communicate with their parents almost every day whereas 75 percent of the girl children communicate with

their parents every day. In case of the international migration as well, daily communication between the parents and the girl children is 5 percent higher than the level of communication with the boy children. The importance of communication becomes very clear from the statement of Akram Fahad (6) from Raipara union of Dohar upazilla of Dhaka district. He states that, “I refuse to take my dinner unless I say hello to my father”.

If the data is segregated on the basis of gender of the migrants, interesting insight emerges (Table 3.4.2). Eighty-eight percent of the internal female migrants talk to their children over phone every day and 73 percent of the internal male migrants do the same.

Table 3.4.2: Level of communication with migrant parent by gender of the migrant

Times	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total
Almost everyday	72.5	87.5	72.8	61.3	42.1	57.6
Frequently in a week	18.0	12.5	17.9	28.0	30.0	28.4
Once in a week	7.0	0.0	6.8	5.2	13.2	6.8
Once in 15 days	1.6	0.0	1.5	3.4	5.9	3.9
Once in a month	0.9	0.0	0.9	2.0	8.8	3.3
Total no. of cases	316	8	324	1143	273	1416

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018
Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Sixty-one percent of the international male migrants communicate with their children every day whereas only 42 percent of the international female migrants can maintain communication with their children on a daily basis. Given the easy access to phone for the internal migrant mothers, the level of communication with the children is the highest. If the international female migrants enjoyed similar access to mobile phone, then perhaps it would have been the same for them. Ninety-five percent of the female international migrants work as domestic workers. Not all of them are allowed to maintain day-to-day communication with their children. Some of them do not have access to their phones all the time, while some are not allowed to keep mobile phones at all.

Table 3.4.3: Mode of communication by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Mobile	100.0	100.0	100.0	90.8	91.7	91.2
IMO	10.4	13.0	11.7	68.9	68.1	68.5
Facebook	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.3	0.5
Messenger	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3
Whats App	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.2	0.4
Skype/Video call	1.2	0.6	0.9	3.5	2.9	3.2
Total no. of cases	163	162	325	771	649	1420

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Mode of Communication

Table 3.4.3 shows that the migrant family members keep in touch with each other mainly by two modes. These are mobile phone and IMO (a voice and video chatting app). Although the percentage is very low, a section of the families use Skype, Messenger and Facebook as well. Nearly every boy and girl child of the internal migrants talks to their parents over mobile phones. It is, however, a little low in case of both boy and girl child of the international migrants. Ninety-one percent of the boy child and 92 percent of the girl child talk to their parents over mobile phone. Only 10 percent of the boy child and 13 percent of the girl child of the internal migrants use IMO, whereas 69 percent of the boy child and 68 percent of the girl child of the international migrants use IMO. This is somewhat natural. The internal migrants visit their family during holidays. Some even visit during weekends. Therefore, video chatting with the family members over phone is not so important for the internal migrants. For the children of the international migrants, visually seeing their parents are important. Therefore, IMO is used by the international migrant children in a much larger scale compared to the internal ones.

Table 3.4.4 further highlights the lack of access of the international female migrants to communicate with the children through cell or IMO. Their access to the children through mobile phone is 9 percent lower compared to the male migrants. Again, their access to family

through IMO is 8 percent lower compared to the male migrants. Hanif (6) is from Dohar *upazilla* and he is the only child of his parents. His father went abroad quite a few years ago. Initially, Hanif used to cry for his father a lot. However, he has learnt to cope with the absence of his father due to use of IMO. In his own words, “Now I do not feel that he is far away from me. Everyday my father makes a video call to us and I can see him. He talks with me for 10 to 15 minutes and then talks to my mother. If I am sick, he even calls more than once. I have a feeling that my father loves me more than my mother”.

Table 3.4.4: Mode of communication by gender of the migrant

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total
Mobile	100.0	100.0	100.0	93.0	83.7	91.2
IMO	12.0	0.0	11.7	70.0	62.3	68.5
Facebook	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.5
Messenger	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.1	1.1	0.3
WhatsApp	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.4	0.4
Video call	0.9	0.0	0.9	3.3	2.9	3.2
No. of cases	316	9	325	1144	276	1420

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Possession of personal mobile

It is interesting to observe that 12 percent of the internal migrants and 17 percent of the international migrants' children have personal mobile phones (Table 3.4.5). The table also presents the gendered division of the children who have personal mobile phone. This is where the difference between a boy and a girl child is visible. As high as 20 percent of the boy children of the internal migrants have personal mobile phones compared to only 4 percent of the girl children. The same scenario is true for the international and non-migrant households. Twenty-five percent of the boy children and only 8 percent of the girl children have personal phone in both the groups. An interesting observation is that higher number of the boy children have personal mobile phones, whereas the girl children although have lesser access to personal mobile phones, they

communicate more frequently with the migrant parent. Of course, they do that by using the phones of their family members.

Table 3.4.5: Possession of personal mobile by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Yes	20.1	4.4	12.3	24.8	7.9	17.1	25.1	7.5	16.9
No	79.9	95.6	87.7	75.2	92.1	82.9	74.9	92.5	83.1
No. of cases	164	160	324	783	658	1441	346	306	652

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Table 3.4.6: Type of social media used by gender of the child

Social Media	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Facebook	11.6	3.1	7.4	18.7	3.8	11.9	16.6	4.3	10.8
YouTube	7.3	1.9	4.6	10.4	3.0	7.0	7.0	1.7	4.5
Skype	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.2
IMO	3.7	1.9	2.8	9.1	5.0	7.2	5.8	3.0	4.5
Viber	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
WhatsApp	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Online games	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.2	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.3
Use nothing	81.0	90.7	85.8	68.8	83.9	75.7	75.7	87.4	81.2
No. of cases	164	162	326	788	662	1450	344	303	647

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Table 3.4.6 shows the children of 14 percent of the internal migrant households, 24 percent of the international migrant households and 19 percent of the non-migrant households use social media. Table 3.4.7 shows the reasons for which the migrant children use social media. The major reasons are for talking with parents, to contact relatives and friends, for entertainment and for news. For the children of the international migrants, communicating with the parents is an important reason (46%). However, the highest percentages use social media for communicating with friends (54%). Thirty-eight percent use social media for entertainment. Only handful of them uses social media for news (4%). There is a

gendered aspect in using social media by the children of the international migrants. The girl child provided more emphasis on being connected with the parents whereas the boy child stressed more on being connected with friends.

For the children of the internal migrants, the use of social media is more to do with keeping in contact with friends and for entertainment. Here as well, a gendered difference among the respondents is pronounced. To the girl child, it is important to keep connected with the parents. However, it is not that important for the boy child. It is natural that the use of social media by the children of the non-migrants for remaining connected with the parents will not be that high as they are living with their parents. They use social media mostly to be in touch with relatives (75%) and friends (41%).

This section on communication confirms the findings of Parreñas (2002) where she shows that the regular communication between the children and their migrant parents reduces the distance between them. While the children do miss their parents, their feeling of loneliness has been reduced to some extent through such communication.

Distance Parenting

In the absence of one of the parents, day-to-day needs and decisions regarding children are taken care of by the other parents remaining at home. In some cases, the children are faced with a situation in which their only living parent migrates. In such cases, the children are left mostly with the grandparents or other relatives. The latter take all the day-to-day decisions regarding the children.

This study, however, finds that along with the left-behind parent or relatives the migrant also get involved in parenting through using cell phone and social media.

Table 3.4.7: Purposes for using social media by gender of the child

Purpose	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
To communicate with parents	4.3	33.3	10.3	43.0	56.9	46.1	22.2	45.5	28.2
To contact relatives	13.0	16.7	13.8	19.6	17.6	19.1	82.5	54.5	75.3
To contact friends	73.9	33.3	65.5	58.7	39.2	54.3	41.3	40.9	41.2
For entertainment	47.8	16.7	41.4	37.4	39.2	37.8	3.2	13.6	5.9
For news	8.7	33.3	13.8	3.4	3.9	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Others ¹⁶	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.2
Total no. of cases	23	6	29	179	51	230	63	22	85

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Table 3.4.8: Issues discussed during one to one communication by gender of the child

Topics	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Educational performance	83.3	90.7	87.0	84.4	84.9	84.6
Health concerns	74.7	74.5	74.6	73.8	74.8	74.2
Monetary need	3.7	0.0	1.9	7.2	3.2	5.4
Food intake	45.1	39.8	42.4	45.0	50.8	47.7
Inquiry on work and sports	3.1	1.9	2.5	7.1	6.3	6.7
Share feelings- happy/sad	9.9	7.5	8.7	10.3	6.1	8.4
Negative comments/sexual harassment	0.6	7.4	4.0	1.7	7.6	4.3
Others ¹⁷	1.2	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.9
Total no. of cases	162	161	323	774	655	1429

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Through phone or other online methods, the parents regularly advice their children. Such parenting is referred to as distance parenting. Table 3.4.8 shows that 1752 children have made multiple responses on the contents of their conversation with their parents.

¹⁶ Others include listening sermon.¹⁷ Others include query of children about the country of destination of the migrant, about training opportunities, prayers, advice not to climb tree, not to go near water, about friends, share jokes, father asks about mother, parent asks where he went outside etc.

Eighty-seven percent of the internal migrants and 85 percent of the international migrants' children state that their parents enquire about their studies.

The second most important area of discussion for both internal (75%) and international migrants (74%) is health. Forty-two percent of the internal migrants and 48 percent of the international migrants follow up on quality and nutritional level of food intake of the children. About 8 percent of the issues are motivational; these are particularly to reduce the loneliness and sadness. Five percent of the discussions are financial in nature for international migrants. Suggestions on ways to counter negative comments as well as issues relating to sexual harassment are mostly part of the discussion with the girl child.

Table 3.4.9: Issues discussed during one to one communication by gender of the migrant

Topics	Internal (%)			International (%)		
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total
Educational performance	87.3	75.0	87.0	87.1	74.1	84.6
Health concerns	74.0	100.0	74.6	76.5	65.0	74.2
Monetary need	1.9	0.0	1.9	5.4	5.5	5.4
Food intake	41.6	75.0	42.4	47.1	50.0	47.7
Inquiry on work and sports	2.5	0.0	2.5	5.9	10.2	6.7
Share feelings- happy/sad	8.9	0.0	8.7	8.5	8.0	8.4
Negative comments/sexual harassment	4.1	0.0	4.0	3.9	6.6	4.3
Others ¹⁸	1.0	0.0	0.9	0.7	1.8	0.9
Total no. of cases	315	8	323	1155	274	1429

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Psychosocial Stress Management by the Children

Table 3.4.10 shows that the majority of the children themselves or with the support of other family members has developed own mechanism of managing the stress that they go through in the absence of their parents. Important among them are participation in

¹⁸ Same as footnote 17.

games and sports, keep themselves engaged with mobile phones, watch television, visit relatives' house, spend time with friends, read books, cry, or just sit quiet and do nothing. Forty-three percent of the internal migrant children and 33 percent of the international migrant children take part in different types of games and sports. Twenty-two percent of both internal and international migrants' children occupy themselves in watching TV when they feel lonely or sad.

Table 3.4.10: Methods of dealing with loneliness and sadness by gender of the child

Activity	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Take part in sports	50.6	35.0	42.8	44.1	19.4	32.8	39.5	19.7	30.2
Busy with mobile	5.5	3.7	4.6	11.4	4.7	8.3	11.9	6.3	9.3
Watch TV	18.3	25.8	22.0	20.4	24.1	22.1	16.6	19.7	18.1
Visit relatives	0.6	2.5	1.5	2.6	2.0	2.3	0.6	2.6	1.5
Talk to parents through phone	14.0	9.8	11.9	16.3	15.1	15.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Alienate from others/stay alone	14.0	18.4	16.2	17.6	29.8	23.2	19.5	35.2	26.9
Chat with friends	9.1	8.0	8.6	14.7	9.5	12.3	18.0	9.9	14.2
Read book	2.4	3.1	2.8	1.9	5.1	3.4	1.2	3.3	2.2
Sometimes cry	14.6	16.6	15.6	13.9	19.4	16.4	13.4	24.0	18.4
Others ¹⁹	2.4	3.7	3.1	3.3	5.3	4.2	9.0	7.9	8.5
Total no. of cases	164	163	327	783	664	1447	344	304	648

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Twelve percent of the internal migrants' children and 16 percent of the international migrants' children talk to their left-behind parent directly or their parent in destination over the phone. Nine percent of the internal and 12 percent of the international migrant children spend time with their friends when they feel lonely and sad. Also,

¹⁹ Break things, drawing sketches, go outside, listen to and sing songs, help in farming, learn guitar, sit in brother's lap, remain busy by doing different works, lie down on bed, sleep, feed pigeons, practice handwriting, pray, recite Quran, reminisce good times spent with parent, ride cycle, sewing and tailoring and study.

14 percent of the internal, 24 percent of the international and 19 percent of the non-migrant households' children use social media such as Facebook, YouTube, IMO, WhatsApp etc. The use of social media is also a technique of communicating with friends and being happy.

Table 3.4.11: Methods of dealing with loneliness and sadness by gender of the migrant

Activity	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Take part in sports	42.3	62.5	42.8	33.5	29.8	32.8	30.2
Busy with mobile	4.7	0.0	4.6	7.4	12.1	8.3	9.3
Watch TV	21.6	37.5	22.0	23.1	18.1	22.1	18.1
Visit relatives	1.6	0.0	1.5	2.1	3.2	2.3	1.5
Talk to parents through phone	12.2	0.0	11.9	17.4	8.9	15.8	0.0
Alienate from others/stay alone	16.3	12.5	16.2	21.7	29.4	23.2	26.9
Chat with friends	8.2	25.0	8.6	11.5	15.6	12.3	14.2
Read book	2.5	12.5	2.8	3.8	1.8	3.4	2.2
Sometimes cry	15.4	25.0	15.6	15.2	21.6	16.4	18.4
Others ²⁰	3.1	0.0	3.1	3.9	5.3	4.2	8.5
No. of cases	319	8	327	1165	282	1447	648

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Rajia (10) is a student of Class V. She stays in Khajuria village of Wahadpur union of Chattogram district. Her father works in Chattogram city. Rajia says, "My father visits us once in every month. My mother is too strict and does not let me go out and play much. When I feel helpless, I miss my father. I watch TV a lot and so my mother gets very upset with me. What can I do? TV keeps me happy. When my father comes on monthly breaks, I do not need to watch TV as much".

²⁰ Same as footnote 19.

Sixteen percent of both internal and international migrants' children vent their emotions through crying. They cry when they miss their mother or father who is abroad. Sixteen percent of the internal and 23 percent of the international migrants' children do not know how to cope with sadness. They just sit on their own doing nothing but feeling sad. Musabbir (9) is from Raypara union of Dohar *upazilla* of Dhaka district. He studies in Class IV. His father is a rickshaw van puller and he is the youngest of the five siblings. According to him, "My mother went to Saudi Arabia two years ago to work as domestic worker. My father works the whole day. My two sisters are busy with their studies. They do not have time for me to talk. I have become very lonely once my mother left. I used to go to school regularly and did well in examinations. I was good at games as well. Once mother left, nothing can make me happy anymore. I do not even spend time with friends. Most of the time, I stay on my own and just sleep. I am obsessed with the thought of when my mother will be back".

Rajib Hossain (12) studies in Class VII. He is from Mirsarai *upazilla* of Chattogram district. His father Mafiz Hossain works as a security guard in Chattogram city. He along with his mother Rabeya Begum, and his younger sister Rajia live in the village. According to Rajib, "Our economic condition was not good before my father migrated. We could not have three meals a day. After my father migrated, our economic condition has improved. My sister is alright and my mother is satisfied in this changed situation, but I am not. Every now and then, I become sad. When students of other classes make fun of me, I miss my father. If he was here, he could have taught them a lesson. I cannot cope with the pressure and whenever I become sad, I just go to a quiet place and spend time on my own. Earlier I used to cry, but now I don't even cry".

These groups of children are at risk of psychological trauma. At this stage, society is not equipped to provide them counseling and other forms of psychosocial support. In earlier days, reading books and visiting relatives were important parts of recreation. However, the

children interviewed in this study hardly took recourse to those avenues.

Friendship

Friendship is an important avenue for doing things together, playing different games, learning various skills, sharing happiness and sadness as well as keeping oneself occupied. Table 3.4.12 shows that almost 97 percent of the children of the internal, international and non-migrant households have close friends. Thirty-six percent children of the internal migrants, 37 percent of the international migrants and 39 percent children of the non-migrant households at least have 3-4 close friends (Table 3.4.14).

Table 3.4.12: Status of having friends by gender of the child

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
Yes	96.3	98.1	97.2	96.5	96.2	96.4	96.8	98.0	97.4
No	3.7	1.9	2.8	3.5	3.8	3.6	3.2	2.0	2.6
No. of cases	164	161	325	790	666	1456	347	306	653

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Eighteen percent children of the internal migrants, 21 percent of the international migrants and 19 percent children of the non-migrant households at least have 5-6 close friends. The percentage of having more friends is higher among the boy child compared to the girl child. The reason for the boy child having more friends is obvious. The boy child has more freedom to go out and mingle with friends whereas movement of the girl child is more restricted compared to the boy child. Therefore, the girl child has less opportunity to make friends.

Table 3.4.13: Status of having friends by gender of the migrant

Response	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Yes	97.2	100.0	97.2	96.9	94.3	96.4	97.4
No	2.8	0.0	2.8	3.1	5.7	3.6	2.6
No. of cases	317	8	325	1177	279	1456	653

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Table 3.4.14: Number of close friends by gender of the child

Number of Close Friends	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
1-2	22.0	39.2	30.6	30.9	37.8	34.1	29.6	39.7	34.3
3-4	38.4	33.5	36.0	36.7	37.5	37.0	38.8	39.0	38.9
5-6	21.4	15.2	18.3	23.4	18.4	21.1	20.9	16.3	18.7
7-8	6.3	4.4	5.4	3.4	4.0	3.7	4.8	2.3	3.6
9-10	10.7	7.0	8.8	3.9	2.0	3.1	4.5	2.3	3.5
10+	1.3	0.6	0.9	1.7	0.3	1.1	1.5	0.3	0.9
No. of cases	159	158	317	766	643	1409	335	300	635

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Sixty-seven percent of the boy children of the internal migrants, 62 percent of the international migrants and 66 percent of the non-migrant households spend at least two hours with friends outside the school (Table 3.4.16).

Table 3.4.15: Number of close friends by gender of the migrant

Number of Close Friends	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
1-2	30.4	37.5	30.6	33.2	38.0	34.1	34.3
3-4	35.6	50.0	36.0	36.1	41.1	37.0	38.9
5-6	18.4	12.5	18.3	22.5	14.8	21.1	18.7
7-8	5.5	0.0	5.4	3.6	4.2	3.7	3.6
9-10	9.1	0.0	8.8	3.3	1.9	3.1	3.5
10+	1.0	0.0	0.9	1.3	0.0	1.1	0.9
No. of cases	309	8	317	1146	263	1409	635

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

Table 3.4.16: Time spent with friends outside of school by gender of the child

Hours	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)		
	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total	BC	GC	Total
0	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.7	3.9	2.1	2.7	4.0	3.3
1	32.1	39.6	35.8	37.7	53.9	45.1	31.5	51.3	40.8
2	45.9	41.6	43.8	43.1	31.0	37.6	45.7	35.3	40.8
3	11.9	10.4	11.2	11.7	6.7	9.4	10.4	5.0	7.8
4	5.7	4.5	5.1	3.5	2.8	3.2	5.3	2.3	3.9
5	1.9	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.3	1.3	3.3	0.7	2.0
5+	1.3	1.3	1.3	2.0	0.5	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3
No. of cases	159	154	313	742	616	1358	337	300	637

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: BC = Boy Child, GC = Girl Child

Fifty-nine percent of the girl children of the internal migrants, 42 percent of the international migrants and 45 percent of the non-migrant households spend at least two hours with friends outside the school. This indicates that the girl child of the international migrants who can spend at least two hours with friends is much less compared to the other two groups. The time spent by the girl child with friends is 20 percent less than the boy child in respect to the international migrants. In case of the internal migrants, the difference between the boy and the girl child is only 8 percent and in case of the non-migrant, it is 21 percent.

Practice of Religion

A section of the children of all faiths participate in religious activities such as attending prayers, reciting from holy books, taking Arabic lessons, fasting, participating in different religious festivals etc.

Table 3.4.17 shows that 70 percent children of the internal, 79 percent of the international and 77 percent of the non-migrant households participate in various forms of religious activities. Around 40 percent of them participate in one type or other religious activities once a week. Twenty-seven percent of the internal, 34 percent of the international and 32 percent of the non-migrant

households' children participate in some form of religious activities every day. Some of the left-behind members of the migrant family encourage the migrant's child to practice religion as a way of overcoming loneliness.

Table 3.4.17: Attendance in prayer (above 7 years old) by gender of the migrant

Times	Internal (%)			International (%)			Non-migrant (%)
	MMC	FMC	Total	MMC	FMC	Total	
Everyday	27.4	12.5	27.0	35.7	27.8	34.2	32.0
Weekly	38.4	50.0	38.7	38.1	43.0	39.0	40.3
Monthly	4.1	0.0	4.0	5.4	6.5	5.6	4.4
Never	30.2	37.5	30.4	20.9	22.7	21.3	23.3
No. of cases	318	8	326	1172	277	1449	653

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: MMC = Male Migrant's Child, FMC = Female Migrant's Child

The left-behind husbands as well as wives state that it provides certain sense of community feeling and it also keeps the children busy. Some researchers have highlighted that participation in religious activities has been superimposed on some migrant households by the migrants who have been exposed to strict adherence to religious rituals of their country of destination. This study however shows that religious practice in Bangladesh is socially and culturally constructed and not imported through migration of the household members. This is argued on the basis that practice of religion is also a common experience of the children of the non-migrant households.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presents the social costs of parental migration borne by the left-behind children. Assessment of social cost includes emotional and psychological well-being, educational attainment, access to health and nutrition, involvement of child labour etc. Some social costs identified by the boy and girl child are common. For example, both the groups experienced insecurity, loneliness, absence of parent, not having mother beside during sickness etc. In

the absence of the mother, a section of the adolescent girl children long for emotional support during menstrual cycle. The young boys, on the other, missed their fathers during festivals. During the beginning of the millennium, early marriage of the children of the female migrants was identified as an important social cost of migration. However, there are only a few examples of early marriage among the migrant households under this research. Interestingly, the percentage of the children who have been married off before they became 18 is higher in case of the non-migrant households.

Both boy and girl children shoulder different responsibilities in the absence of their migrant parent. The responsibilities shouldered by the migrants' children are very much gendered. The girl child participated in cooking, cleaning and taking care of siblings whereas the boy child shoulder additional responsibility in the area of day-to-day shopping, payment of bills, supporting agricultural work etc. An interesting finding of the study is that taking part in household chores may not always be an outcome of migration of parents. The children of the non-migrant households of similar percentage also take part in household chores. More importantly, only a few of the left-behind boy and girl children feel that their education suffer due to shouldering of household responsibilities. On the contrary, 88 percent of the internal, 91 percent of the international and 92 percent of the non-migrant children have successfully been promoted to the next class. School attendance of the migrant children is also regular and it is higher than attendance rate of the children of the non-migrant households. This finding negates the overwhelming social perception in Bangladesh that migration of the parent, particularly of the mother, has been detrimental to education of the child. Around 70 percent of the children of all three categories of households attend Bangla medium schools. Fourteen to 15 percent of the children have been studying in *madrasas*. Less than 1 percent attends vocational schools. Interesting difference is in the area of English medium school. Around 5 percent of the non-migrant children go to the English medium kindergarten school whereas 11 percent of the internal and

9 percent of the international migrant children attend the English medium kindergarten. Perhaps their struggle in communicating in English in different destination countries prompts them to send their children to kindergartens.

An important finding of the study is that after the migration of parent almost all the children do experience loneliness and insecurity. However, 85 percent of them keep themselves busy with games, spending time with friends, watching TV, participation in various religious activities etc. But 16 percent of the internal and 23 percent of the international migrants' children do not take any measure to overcome the situation, rather they seclude themselves. These children require greater social attention as well as welfare interventions of the state and development actors.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL COST OF MIGRATION: THE LEFT-BEHIND HUSBANDS

This chapter looks into the impact of female migration on the left-behind husbands. The basic research questions pursued here are: how do these men manage the new role and what costs do they pay in performing this new role? While performing this role what kind of agency develops among the male left-behind spouses? Does the new role pursued by the left-behind husbands have the capacity to change the notion of masculinity and femininity? The chapter is divided into four sections. Section one presents how the left-behind husbands perceive the social cost of migration of their wives; section two presents the current arrangement of managing the household in the absence of the migrant wife; section three explores changes, if any, in the decision-making system of the household and the final section analyses the potential of migration to change perceived notions of femininity and masculinity. This chapter only covers the left-behind husbands of the international migrants. This is because in the study area only 2 cases of the left-behind husbands of the internal migrants have been found²¹. The case number is not sufficient to make any meaningful analysis. However, this by itself is a finding. This demonstrates a situation in which the husband stays back in the village while the wife goes to the city for work is less common. Internal migration has not been successful in breaking the gendered notion of who is the breadwinner. However, the presence of the left-behind husbands

²¹Female migrants mostly originate from Faridpur, Narayanganj and Gazipur. In-depth interviews, therefore, are mostly from these three areas.

of the international female migrants, and them residing in a nuclear household setting indicates that some of the gendered division of labour is about to change.

4.1 Perceived Social Cost of Migration

The review of literature shows that loneliness, lack of companionship, additional household responsibilities, loss of grip over the process of child rearing, societal perception of failure as the breadwinner, psychosocial stress and emotional breakdown are some of the major social costs that the left-behind husbands face. In the context of Bangladesh, the left-behind husbands experience similar social costs. Along with these, conflicts between husband and wife, dissolution of marriage, fear of physical and sexual insecurity of the wife in the country of destination, sickness of the children, and physical absence of a partner for a long period of time are some of the costs identified by the left-behind husbands. This section is based on both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data mostly provides information on the number and type of social costs identified by the left-behind husbands.

Number and Type of Social Costs

Table 4.1.1 describes the types of social costs identified by the left-behind husbands. Loneliness and lack of companionship are the two most commonly identified social costs. As high as 92 percent of the left-behind husbands feel lonely in the absence of their wives. Eighty-three percent of the left-behind husbands identified lack of companionship as a major cost of their wives' migration.

Salam Fakir (38) from Chor Hajiganj union of Faridpur district got married 22 years ago. He represents a nuclear family, consisting of his wife, himself, a son and a daughter. His wife migrated twice: the first time to Jordan and the second time to Saudi Arabia. Fortunately, she never had a bad experience abroad. The family is doing well as his wife regularly sends money. Salam appreciates the contribution of his wife to the family coffer, but it is still difficult

for him to cope with her absence. In his words, “Although she earns well and sends money that we need for our survival, it is tough to live without her. I miss her very much. She has taken my joy with her. I will find peace only when my wife returns”. Ashfakul Sheikh (45) from Chor Hajiganj union of Faridpur district expressed his loneliness in a single sentence - “I feel lonely even though I am surrounded by people around me”.

Table 4.1.1: Social costs faced by the left-behind husbands

Type of costs	Left-behind husbands (%)
Loneliness	91.7
Lack of companionship	82.7
Overburdened with additional responsibilities	60.2
Loss of grip over the process of taking care of children	27.1
Societal perception of failure as breadwinner	75.2
Psychosocial stress	49.6
Emotional breakdown	7.5
Conflict between husband and wife	19.5
Dissolution of marriage	3.0
Fear of physical and sexual insecurity of wife in destination	58.6
Absence of the wife for a long period	41.4
Stress during sickness of children	46.6
Others ²²	11.3
Total no. of cases	133

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Seventy-five percent of the left-behind husbands fear being perceived as living on the money earned by their wives, being “not good enough” as a man, and being viewed as incapable of performing their responsibilities as the breadwinner in society. Arafat Pramanik (50) from Chor Hajiganj union of Faridpur district is living with his two sons. His wife has been working in Dubai for

²² Others include inability to spend time with friends at tea stores, not being able to stay out at night, feeling of frustration with the adolescent daughter, unruly children, difficulty in taking care of the disabled child and difficulty in taking care of the bedridden mother.

the last two years. In the absence of his wife, he manages the household chores. He never receives any appreciation from his family and neighbours. Instead, he regularly hears derogatory comments from them. He does not like taking on this role as it hurts his male ego. In his words, “I do not like to do household chores. Those are women’s work. I feel like I have been forced into a situation from which I cannot escape”.

More than 41 percent felt the long absence of a companion in their lives. The feeling of the absence of a wife is both emotional and presumably physical. Sheikh Karim (57) is from Chor Hajiganj union of Faridpur district. His case reflects the emotional and physical cost of staying apart from his wife. With great pain, he says, “I have not seen my wife for the last three years. Once she left, she could not return on holidays. Who can stay calm when his wife is working in an unknown country? People say many things about women who work in Arab countries, but I do not care what they say. I always miss my wife, especially at night”.

As high as 60 percent of the left-behind husbands were overwhelmed with additional workload. Abdul Kalam Khan (34) of Faridpur district states, “Four years ago when my wife left for Saudi Arabia, my eldest daughter was 5 years old and the youngest one was 1 year old. Ever since she left, the responsibility of taking care of the girls fell upon my shoulder. I do not have any additional help from my family; neither can I afford a domestic worker. I do everything myself, including cooking, feeding, cleaning etc, even though I am not physically very fit”.

Three percent of the left-behind husbands confessed that their marriages are on the verge of collapse and in 2 cases it is already over. Yusuf Molla (35) from Faridpur district was working in a plastic factory in Dhaka. His wife and daughter stayed with his parents in the village. He says, “Without consulting me, my wife went to Jordan for work. I had to quit my job and come back home for my daughter. Initially she was in touch with us, but gradually

she stopped calling. She no longer shows any concern for our daughter”.

The story of Monowar Hossain (45) of Lakshmipur district is quite baffling. When his wife wished to migrate for the economic betterment of their household, Monowar sold his property to bear the migration cost. However, just a few days before departing to Dubai, his wife divorced him by claiming that the recruiting agency would not release her visa document if she is married. His wife has not contacted him or their children since she went to Dubai. He is still confused about whether his wife had tricked him and left, or if she is in real danger.

Faruk Mia (38) of Manikganj district is a truck driver by profession and has married twice. He divorced his first wife when she migrated abroad, leaving his children in the care of his mother. His second wife, Natasha, also migrated to Lebanon without his consent. But this time he did not divorce his wife. In fact, they had been in regular contact. Even though Natasha sent all her remittances to her mother, it did not bother Faruk. After staying in Lebanon for two years, Natasha has returned last month. Currently, she is staying with her mother, rather than returning to Faruk. She is not interested about the children. Therefore, Faruk thinks he has to pay a huge cost for his wife’s migration. His story indicates that the social cost Faruk has borne may have been a gain for his wife. It may very well be that their marriage was already in trouble and migration has provided his wife an option to move out of an unhappy marriage.

Joynal Molla (43) of Manikganj district used to provide for his family through agricultural work. When the children started going to school, the cost of living, particularly of education, was becoming unbearable. In 2014, he and his wife jointly decided for her migration to Oman. His wife’s migration helped him better manage the household. However, after a few years, Joynal developed a relationship with another woman. He managed to keep the whole issue secret as he thought he would be able to come out

of it. But at the end he failed to keep control of the situation and married the other woman.

For 47 percent of the left-behind husbands, stress levels become unmanageable when their children fall sick. Mohammad Salman (28) is from Faridpur district. His daughter was diagnosed with a tumor in the head, for which she had to be operated. “Before the operation took place my daughter was frantically looking for her mother. I could not give the same comfort that she could have received from her mother. This is the biggest price that we paid for migration”.

About 59 percent of the left-behind husbands confessed that at the back of their mind, there is a constant underlying tension. They fear that their wives could be physically or sexually harassed at the workplace. This is more prominent in case of the left-behind husbands whose wives work as domestic workers. Mohammad Salman (28) from Faridpur district became traumatized when his wife informed him that she was physically and verbally tortured by both the male and female employers of the house where she worked. He could not bear it anymore and brought her back. He is yet to recover from his nervous breakdown.

From the above discussion, it appears that social costs of migration experienced by the left-behind husbands are diverse and they differ on the type of family they are living in. There is a complete lack of understanding in the wider society about the challenges that the left-behind husbands face. On many occasions, gendered societal norms further inflict different types of stress on them. There is hardly any appreciation of their contribution in making the migration endeavour of their wives. Again, it is understood that change in patriarchal societal value system can contribute to reducing some of the harmful social costs.

4.2 Strategy to Manage Households

In the absence of wife, management of household requires adopting new strategies. This may include dissolution of the household and staying with other families, taking support from extended family members, substitution of a mother's role by the daughters, shouldering of additional responsibilities by the left-behind male spouse etc. (Siddiqui, 2001). An analysis of the nature of a household before and after the departure of a migrant wife will provide an understanding of how the left-behind husbands manage without their wives. The reason for looking at the type of households is to find out if the left-behind husbands have attempted to manage the households by changing its nature. In other words, the study wanted to see following the migration of women if the nuclear households became joint households or vice versa. Later, it explains the changes that have occurred in managing various household functions as well as taking important decisions in the absence of the female migrants.

Type of Residence

Prior to migration of their spouses, about 73 percent of the left-behind husbands of the female migrants have been living together with their wives in a nuclear family. The rest were living with in-laws or with their parents. Currently, the number of households who are staying in a nuclear family has increased by 3 percent. This indicates that those who have been staying in a nuclear family are more or less maintaining their nuclear family status. Another 3 percent who used to live with their parents or in-laws are now living separately as a nuclear family.

Before migration, 17 percent of the left-behind husbands lived with their parents, while 9 percent lived in the home of their in-laws. After migration of the wife, living with the parents and with in-laws has decreased by about 2 percent and 1 percent respectively. Earlier studies have found that one of the strategies of maintaining the households by the left-behind husbands has been merging their

households with others. It seems situation has changed over the years and the left-behind husbands keep on living the way they did before their wives' migration. This means that at least half of these households do not have support from the extended family to share the workload as well as to assist the left-behind husband in ensuring the early childhood mental development of the young members in the absence of mothers.

Table 4.2.1: Type of residence before and during migration (%)

Type of residence	Left-behind husbands		Non-migrant husbands
	Before	During migration	At present
Nuclear family/own house	73.0*	76.0**	81.8
In-laws' home	9.0	8.3	1.8
Parents' home	17.3	15.0	11.2
Others	0.8	0.8	1.4
Total no. of cases	133	133	285

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

* Before migration, husband and wife stayed together in a nuclear family.

** During migration, left-behind husband stays only with his own children in a nuclear setting.

Role Substitution by Other Immediate and Extended Family Members

Siddiqui (2001) finds that very rarely do the male spouses take over all the responsibilities of their female partners. If women migrate, the husbands cannot manage the households and often, bring in someone to perform the duties of the wife. Table 4.2.2 shows 18 years later, the migrant families are using role substitution techniques at a much reduced scale. Forty-seven percent of the left-behind husbands stay with the children without taking any support from the extended family. Eight percent of the left-behind husbands do not have any children and stay on their own without taking any support from the extended family. Twenty-one percent of the left-behind husbands stay on their own with the children by bringing in members from the extended family. Twenty-four percent of the left-behind husbands stay in joint families, where support from the extended family is already available.

Table 4.2.2 Management structure of HHs of the left-behind husbands

Type	Left-behind husbands (%)
Stays on his own with children without support from extended family	46.5
No children, stay on his own without support from extended family	8.3
Stays on his own with children by bringing in members from extended family	21.1
Stays in join family where support is available	24.1
Total no. of cases	133

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Table 4.2.3: Role substitution in HH work in the absence of migrant wife

Person who substituted	Left-behind husbands (%)
LBH's mother	25.0
LBH's father	0.0
LBH's siblings	17.9
Female migrant's mother	25.0
Female migrant's father	0.0
Female migrant's siblings	17.9
Son/daughter-in-law	0.0
Daughter/son-in-law	7.1
Servant	0.0
Others	7.1
Total no. of cases	28

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBH = Left-behind Husbands

Table 4.2.3 also looks into the relationship between the left-behind husband and the person who has been brought to perform some of the functions initially performed by the migrant wife. Parents (25%) and in-laws (25%) are used equally to substitute the role of the migrant wife in maintaining the households and looking after the kids. Also, 18 percent of the left-behind husbands have brought their brother/sister in-laws. Another 18 percent of the left-behind husbands brought siblings as substitution following their wife's migration.

The left-behind husband appreciates the role of additional member. Thirty-two percent appreciated the help in cooking. Eighteen

percent used the help for other household chores. Twenty-one percent appreciated the role in overall maintenance of the household. Twenty-five percent of the respondents highlight the positive effect on the psychological well-being of the child. This includes giving the children affection and helping them cope with the absence of their mother. The left-behind husbands did not see much of a problem in having a substitute. However, a few of them have found this to be a financial burden.

Table 4.2.4: Services provided by substitute member in the absence of migrant wife

Service	Left-behind husbands (%)
Cooking	32.1
Psychological wellbeing	25.0
Household chores	17.9
Maintenance of the household	21.4
Reduce expenditure	3.6
Total no. of cases	28

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Management of Household Functions

This section looks into how the left-behind husbands maintain and manage their households in the absence of their wives. Pallikadavath et al. (2015) find that a large number of the left-behind husbands become domesticated as a result of the migration of their wives. A section of the husbands who have no previous experience of undertaking household duties, have taken charge and they are often responsible for cooking, washing, and cleaning the house. Decades ago, Siddiqui (2001) found that gender division of labour within the household remained the same even after the migration of wives in respect to jobs which are performed by women such as cooking, cleaning and washing. She showed that in an overwhelming number of cases it was the mother or mother-in-law of the left-behind husbands who had taken care of these jobs. It seems after 20 years, there have been some major changes in respect to performance of these jobs. The following section discusses all the activities needed for running a household and it attempts to locate who has been performing those jobs before and

after migration as well as the situation following the wife's return.

Cooking: Siddiqui and Perrera (1999) found that although the left-behind husbands took some responsibility in respect to education; cooking and cleaning were perceived as female job and almost none of the male spouses performed these tasks. Gendered division of labour in respect to cooking and cleaning was non-negotiable.

Table 4.2.5: Person in charge of cooking (%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife return
Left-behind husband (LBH)	5.3	22.1	7.6
Female migrant	83.5	0.0	75.8
Both LBH and female migrant	0.0	0.0	0.0
Son	0.0	2.3	0.0
Daughter	1.5	18.0	6.1
LBH's father	0.0	0.0	0.0
LBH's mother	6.0	31.3	4.5
LBH's siblings	0.8	3.0	0.0
Female migrant's father	0.0	0.0	0.0
Female migrant's mother	2.3	12.1	1.5
Female migrant's siblings	0.0	1.5	0.0
Relatives	0.0	4.5	3.0
Others	0.8	5.2	1.5
Total no. of cases	133	133	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Under the current study which has taken place after almost 20 years, 22 percent of the 133 left-behind husbands have taken the responsibility of cooking in the households after the migration of their wives. Interestingly, 5 percent of the left-behind husbands have been involved in cooking even before the migration of their wives. However, the study did not inquire if some of these husbands have been residing separately in other locations before the migration of their wives and preparing their own food. Nonetheless, in cases of other 78 percent left-behind husbands, the traditional gendered role differential in respect to cooking remains strongly embedded. In 78 percent cases, other members of the household have taken over this responsibility, or even before the migration of the wife, other members have been involved. These are the left-behind

husband's mother (31%)²³, female migrant's mother (12%), daughter of the female migrant (18%), other relatives such as aunts, cousins etc. (5%) and domestic workers and others (5%). Nonetheless, participation of 22 percent of the left-behind husbands in day-to-day cooking is a major departure from earlier research findings.

Cleaning: In case of the left-behind husbands, 5 percent of them have been helping with cleaning even before the wife migrated. In the absence of their wives, this has increased by 23 percent for the left-behind husbands. In 22 percent of cases, it is the daughter and in 27 percent of cases it is the left-behind husband's mother who does the cleaning. This is in conformity with Siddiqui (2001) where she finds, in the absence of the wife, other female members take up some of the jobs, such as cleaning that used to be performed by the wife before her migration.

Table 4.2.6: Person in charge of daily cleaning (%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	4.5	27.5	6.0
Female migrant	68.2	0.0	64.2
Both LBH and	5.3	0.0	1.5
Son	0.0	3.8	0.0
Daughter	5.3	21.6	13.4
LBH's mother	11.3	27.2	6.0
LBH's siblings	0.8	1.5	0.0
Female migrant's mother	3.8	10.1	4.5
Female migrant's siblings	0.0	2.3	0.0
Servant	0.0	0.8	0.0
Relatives	0.0	1.5	3.0
Others	0.8	3.7	1.5
Total no. of cases	132	131	67

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

²³ This includes both who stay in the extended family and those who stay in nuclear family.

Purchasing Household Utensils: Earlier, household utensils were mostly purchased by the left-behind husband. Following migration of the wife, it has increased by another 11 percent. The father of the left-behind husband is another person involved in this job. This has increased 3 percent from pre-migration to current period. Along with the father, the sons as well as the daughters have become involved in this task.

An important change is observed in case of participation of the migrant wife in the purchase of homestead utensils. Once the migrant wife returned after finishing her migration, her participation in purchase of household utensils has almost doubled. This indicates that she has gained self-confidence and been able to create her space to participate in household activities which involves interaction with the market. This can also be explained to some extent with the social change that Bangladesh is experiencing over the years.

Table 4.2.7: Person in charge of purchasing HH utensils (%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	64.7	75.2	51.5
Female migrant	16.5	0.0	30.3
Both LBH and female migrant	8.3	0.0	6.1
Son	1.5	3.8	4.5
Daughter	0.8	3.8	0.0
LBH's father	6.0	9.0	7.6
LBH's mother	1.5	1.5	0.0
Female migrant's mother	0.8	3.8	0.0
Others	0.0	3.0	0.0
Total no. of cases	133	133	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Entertaining Guests: Table 4.2.8 shows how these houses manage the task of entertainment of guests. Before migration, the international female migrants had mostly been in charge of entertaining guests. In her absence, the responsibility of the husband has increased but at the same time other members of the household are also involved in performing this duty. Along with the husband, the father, mother, in-law and children are also involved.

Table 4.2.8: Person in charge of entertaining guests (%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	8.3	37.8	9.1
Female migrant	47.4	0.0	47.0
Both LBH and female migrant	24.8	0.0	19.7
Son	0.0	4.8	1.5
Daughter	5.3	14.5	9.1
LBH's father	3.8	13.8	4.5
LBH's mother	6.0	13.0	4.5
Female migrant's father	0.0	0.8	0.0
Female migrant's mother	3.8	11.5	4.5
Others	0.8	3.8	0.0
Total no. of cases	133	133	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Health Care: Before migration, in 42 percent cases, the left-behind husband was in charge of taking children to the doctor and in 32 percent cases, the wife did the same. Following the migration of the wife, in 73 percent cases the left-behind husbands perform the duty. This means that there has been a 31 percent increase of workload in this area. Again, in 6 percent and 5 percent cases it is the father and mother of the left-behind husbands who take the responsibility on their shoulders.

Earlier, in 59 percent cases, the husband was in charge of taking the elderly members to the doctor and in 14 percent cases, the wife did the same. Following the migration of the wife, the responsibility has increased by 12 percent for the left-behind husbands. Currently, 71 percent of the left-behind husbands are in charge of taking the elderly members to the doctor.

Traditionally the wife mostly performs the function of ensuring medicine intake of the children and the elderly of the household, according to the prescription. In the absence of the wife, the left-behind husbands have mostly taken over the responsibility. Earlier, 15 percent of them were involved in this, but it has increased to 53 percent following the migration of the wives. In 10 percent cases, it was the husband's mother, and in 3 percent cases it was the daughter who used to perform this job. After the migration of the

wife, in 21 percent cases it is the mother of the husband and in 8 percent cases it is the daughter who has been taking care of this responsibility.

Table 4.2.9: Person in charge of taking children and elders to the doctor

Person in charge	Before (%)		During migration (%)		After wife returns (%)	
	Children	Elders	Children	Elders	Children	Elders
Left-behind husband (LBH)	42.1	58.6	72.9	70.7	39.4	56.1
Female migrant	31.6	14.3	0.0	0.0	31.8	13.6
Both LBH and female migrant	15.8	6.0	1.5	0.0	15.2	6.1
Son	0.0	1.5	2.3	3.8	0.0	1.5
Daughter	0.8	0.8	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0
LBH's father	4.5	5.3	6.0	4.5	7.6	6.1
LBH's mother	2.3	0.8	5.3	0.8	1.5	0.0
LBH's siblings	0.0	0.8	1.5	1.5	0.0	1.5
Female migrant's father	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0
Female migrant's mother	1.5	1.5	5.3	3.8	1.5	0.0
Others	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
No sick children/elderly members	1.5	10.5	2.3	12.8	3.0	15.2
Total no. of cases	133	133	133	133	66	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Purchase of medicine is usually done by the male members of the households, but women also have a role to play. Before and after the migration of wife, purchase of medicine is mainly done by the left-behind husbands. Currently, 84 percent of the left-behind husbands do this job while it was 74 percent prior to the wife's migration. The husband's father does this job in 6 percent cases.

Table 4.2.10: Person in charge of feeding and buying medicine

Person in charge	Before (%)		During migration (%)		After wife returns (%)	
	Feeding	Buying	Feeding	Buying	Feeding	Buying
Left-behind husband (LBH)	15.0	74.4	53.4	84.3	13.6	69.7
Female migrant	66.9	14.3	0.0	0.0	63.6	13.6
Both LBH and female migrant	2.3	2.3	0.0	0.0	3.0	1.5
Son	0.0	0.8	0.8	2.3	0.0	4.5
Daughter	3.0	0.8	7.5	1.5	4.5	0.0
LBH's father	0.0	5.3	0.0	6.0	0.0	9.1
LBH's mother	9.8	0.8	21.0	0.8	9.1	0.0
Female migrant's father	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0
Female migrant's mother	2.3	1.5	9.0	3.0	4.5	1.5
Relatives	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0
Others	0.8	0.0	6.8	0.8	1.5	0.0
Total no. of cases	133	133	133	133	66	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Homestead Construction and Repair: Looking after the construction or repair of the homestead is usually considered to be a masculine job. For around 35 percent of the left-behind husbands, this job is not relevant as these households have not constructed or repaired their homestead before or even during migration of their wives. Table 4.2.11 shows that 41 percent of the left-behind husbands had looked after construction work before their wives migrated. During migration of the wife, 47 percent of the left-behind husbands are involved in looking after the construction. This may indicate that migration of the wife has enabled more households to construct houses. It also shows that before their wife migrated, 60 percent of the left-behind husbands did the repairing. Following the migration of wife, it has increased by another 6 percent. Prior to migration, 9 percent of them shared some construction-related responsibilities. Naturally it reduced during the migration period of the wife. Interestingly, 12 percent of the households where the female migrants have returned now jointly look after house repairing and construction.

Table 4.2.11: Person in charge of construction and repair of the house

Person in charge	Before (%)		During migration (%)		After wife returns (%)	
	Construction	Repair	Construction	Repair	Construction	Repair
Left-behind husband (LBH)	40.6	60.2	47.4	66.2	42.4	62.1
Female migrant	6.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	3.0	7.6
Both LBH and female migrant	9.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	12.1	12.1
Son	0.0	0.0	2.3	2.3	1.5	1.5
Daughter	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
LBH's father	6.0	6.8	6.8	9.0	9.1	7.6
LBH's mother	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.5	0.0	0.0
LBH's siblings	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0
Female migrant's father	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.0	1.5	0.0
Female migrant's mother	0.8	3.0	0.8	3.0	0.0	3.0
Relatives	0.0	0.0	2.2	3.0	0.0	0.0
Others	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.3	0.0	0.0
Not applicable*	36.1	12.0	35.3	12.0	30.3	6.1
No. of cases	133	133	133	133	66	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

* Not applicable implies that household concerned have not under-taken any construction or repair work.

Payment of Bills and Annual Taxes: It was largely the left-behind husband who used to take care of payment of bills and annual taxes and this trend remained the same following the migration of the wife.

Again, the son becomes more involved following the migration of the wife. In 9 percent cases, the son takes care of this responsibility. Around 6 percent of households did not have to pay any bills.

Table 4.2.12: Person in charge of paying bills (%)

Person who does	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	78.2	74.4	75.8
Female migrant	3.0	0.0	1.5
Son	3.0	9.1	9.1
LBH's father	6.0	6.8	7.6
LBH's mother	0.8	0.8	0.0
LBH's siblings	0.8	0.8	1.5
Female migrant's mother	1.5	2.3	3.0
Do not pay any bill	6.8	6.0	1.5
Total no. of cases	133	133	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Participation in Social Work: Social work involves being active in local schools, clubs, libraries and community activities such as organizing sports, village fairs, fund-raising for schools, mosques, match-making and washing dead bodies. Almost 38 percent of the households have never been involved in social work. More than 45 percent of the left-behind husbands were involved in one kind of social work or the other. Following migration of the wife, 49 percent of them are involved. As the information was taken from the left-behind husbands, they have not mentioned women's involvement in that. About 7 percent of these men identified women's participation in social work before they migrated.

Table 4.2.13: Person in charge of social work (%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	45.1	48.9	43.9
Female migrant	6.8	0.0	7.6
Son	0.0	0.8	1.5
Daughter	0.0	0.8	0.0
LBH's father	9.0	9.0	7.6
LBH's mother	0.8	0.8	0.0
Female migrant's mother	0.8	2.3	0.0
Do not participate	37.6	37.6	39.4
Total no. of cases	133	133	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Education of the Children: Education is considered as the ladder for the upward mobility of the family. Therefore, it is treated with

utmost importance irrespective of urban or rural setting. Usually it is a joint responsibility for the husband and wife. The mother makes sure that her children are going to school regularly, doing their chores and studying. The father's role is more disciplinary i.e. someone who sets the rules and imposes consequence if rules are violated. The situation prior to migration shows a similar scenario of job sharing between the husband and wife concerning the children's education (the wife 41 % and the husband 27%). However, once the wife left for overseas employment, the left-behind husband has been shouldering a greater role (55%) in the children's education. Nonetheless, in a handful of cases, the wife is still playing the key role in ensuring the children's education by taking the advantage of communication. Again, in 6 percent cases it is the father and in 7 percent cases the mother of the left-behind husbands who share this responsibility following the migration of the wife.

Table 4.2.14: Person in charge of looking after children's education(%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	26.7	55.3	27.3
Female migrant	40.5	1.5	39.4
Both LBH and female migrant	11.5	2.3	9.1
Son	0.8	2.3	3.0
Daughter	0.8	0.8	0.0
LBH's father	3.1	6.1	1.5
LBH's mother	3.1	6.8	3.0
LBH's siblings	0.0	0.8	0.0
Female migrant's father	0.0	0.8	0.0
Female migrant's mother	1.5	4.6	1.5
Female migrant's siblings	0.0	1.5	0.0
No school going children	12.2	17.4	15.2
Total no. of cases	131	132	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Perception about Gendered Division of Household Work: Seventy-nine percent of the left-behind husbands took over new responsibilities when their wives migrated. Twenty-one percent of them have not shouldered any new role when their wives migrated

as there were other members within the household to perform those jobs. An important issue that has been probed in this study is whether they considered the newly-shouldered jobs to be female specific. Table 4.2.15 shows that 43 percent do not think that those jobs are women specific. Only 14 percent of them, however, do not feel comfortable performing those new responsibilities. Another 16 percent also have an impression that these jobs are for women; however, men can shoulder those responsibilities when situation arises. This table, therefore, demonstrates that only 14 percent of the left-behind husbands strongly believe in gender division of labour; 16 percent have accommodated some change in their perception and 43 percent of them are paradigmatic new men. They perceive things differently.

Shafi Uddin (38) from Narayanganj thinks that his wife has migrated for the greater interest of the household. Therefore, in his words, "It is natural that I have to play some of her roles. Those who do not want to understand this reality are merely jealous of our good fortune".

Table 4.2.15: Perceptions of the left-behind husbands about their new domestic role

Perceptions	LBH (%)
"Some jobs are for women"	13.6
"I do not see these functions as only female job"	43.2
"These are women's jobs, but men can also shoulder them when need be"	16.1
"Family members perform those tasks"	21.0
"Women's jobs are more difficult"	6.1
Total no. of cases	132

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Abdul Kalam Khan (34) from Faridpur district suffers from poor health condition; so his wife migrated to earn a living for the family. In his words, "After she left, I have to look after my daughters. I have raised them so far. I have not brought anyone else into the house to look after them. I do everything myself, for example, taking care of the children and cooking. I suffer from sickness most

of the time. Soon my daughters will hit puberty, and there are certain needs of young girls that I cannot handle and sometimes I am completely lost. Some jobs are definitely meant for the women”.

4.3 Family Decision-making

This section looks into the family decision-making dynamics of the households of the left-behind husbands. Decision-making procedure is observed in 5 areas. These are: uses of remittance, maintaining savings, agriculture, children's future and marriage. Some earlier studies find that the female migrants were left out of some important decisions within the family because of her absence from the household. Some other studies find greater role of women in family decision-making because of her increased contribution to family income through remittance.

Remittance

The following table presents the identity of the remittance receiver and the decision-maker on the use of remittance. Table 4.3.1 shows that 71 percent of the female migrants send remittances to their left-behind husbands.

Table 4.3.1: Receiver and decision-maker of remittance sent by female migrants(%)

Relationship	Receiver	Decision-maker
Left-behind husband (LBH)	71.0	40.8
Female migrant	2.3	8.5
Both LBH and female migrant	0.0	34.6
Children	8.4	3.8
Female migrant's father	3.1	2.3
Female migrant's mother	7.6	3.1
Female migrant's brother or other relatives	3.8	3.9
Others	3.8	3.0
Total no. of cases	131	130

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Eight percent send remittances to their children. About 8 percent and 3 percent send remittances to their mother and father respectively. Only 2 percent of the female migrants send their

remittances to their own bank account. This may indicate that these migrant households look at the remittance only as an avenue of earning for maintaining household. It may also mean that the majority of the female migrants are yet to internalize the need of savings or keeping control over remittances.

In 41 percent households, the left-behind husbands take decisions on how to spend remittance sent by their wives. In 35 percent cases, it is the migrant wife and the left-behind husband who jointly decide on the use of remittance. In 9 percent cases, the female migrant decides on her own. In 4 percent cases, the female migrant's brother plays a role in receiving as well as in deciding on the use of remittance. This may indicate that these female migrants do not fully trust their husbands in respect to the efficient use of remittances.

Maintaining Savings

Table 4.3.2 presents findings on the procedure of maintaining savings. About 49 percent of the migrant households have savings. Some of these households had savings prior to migration of the wife (female migrant).

Table 4.3.2: Person in charge of maintaining family savings (%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	16.5	30.8	9.1
Female migrant	14.3	3.0	12.1
Both LBH and female migrant	15.8	10.5	18.2
Daughter	1.5	1.5	1.5
LBH's father	0.8	1.5	1.5
LBH's mother	0.8	0.8	0.0
Female migrant's mother	0.8	0.8	0.0
Do not have savings	49.6	51.1	57.6
Total no. of cases	133	133	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Before migration of the wife, 17 percent of the left-behind husbands used to maintain the family savings and 14 percent of the wives maintained savings. During migration of the wife, 31 percent of the

left-behind husbands are maintaining savings by themselves. About 3 percent of the migrant wives still continue to maintain savings. This implies that for the female migrants, keeping control over savings or earning becomes difficult when they are working abroad. Policy consideration is required in respect to mandatory savings account opening for the female migrant before migration.

Decision on Agriculture

Decision-making over agricultural issues generally falls in the male domain and it remains so before and after migration of the wife (female migrant). Decisions on agriculture involve leasing in or out land, purchasing seeds, water, insecticides, employment of workers during sowing and harvesting seasons, etc. For 75 percent of the families, no decision has to be taken on agriculture since they are not involved in farm or off-farm agriculture.

Table 4.3.3: Person in charge of making decision on agriculture (%)

Person in charge	Before	During migration	After wife returns
Left-behind husband (LBH)	20.3	19.5	15.2
Female migrant	0.8	0.8	0.0
LBH's father	2.3	2.3	3.0
LBH's mother	0.8	0.8	0.0
Female migrant's father	1.5	1.5	3.0
Not involve in agriculture	74.4	75.2	78.8
Total no. of cases	133	133	66

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Before the wives migrated, 20 percent of the left-behind husbands and 2 percent of the husband's father used to decide on this issue. It remains the same after the wife's migration. The next chapter on the left-behind wife shows that the husbands who are currently abroad, guide the left-behind wives in respect to agricultural activities of the households through mobile conversation. However, this section on the left-behind husbands demonstrates that the female migrants who are currently abroad do not take part in such decisions even though

her remittances are used in agriculture production. So, one can argue that outcome on household decision-making vary significantly on the basis of the sex of the migrant as well as on type of activities.

Table 4.3.4: Person in charge of making decision about children's future and marriage (%)

Person in charge	Before		During migration		After wife returns	
	Future	Marriage	Future	Marriage	Future	Marriage
Left-behind husband (LBH)	6.0	5.3	9.8	6.0	1.5	2.9
Female migrant	5.3	3.8	5.3	5.3	7.6	5.9
Both LBH and female migrant	79.7	69.2	75.9	68.4	84.8	72.1
LBH's father	3.0	1.5	3.8	1.5	4.5	2.9
LBH's mother	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0
Female migrant's mother	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0
No children/too young children	4.5	18.8	3.8	17.3	1.5	16.2
Total no. of cases	133	133	133	133	66	68

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Children's Future and Marriage

Almost 80 percent of the international migrant households' decisions about the children's future used to be taken jointly by the husband and wife (female migrant). It decreased by 4 percent during the period of wife's migration. A large number of the female migrants do not have access to mobile phones; they are unable to participate in day-to-day decisions. However, when important issue arises, they do communicate with the husband and discuss. In cases where the international female migrants (wives) have returned, joint decision-making in respect to the children's future has increased by 9 percent compared to the period when the wife was abroad. This is again 5 percent higher than the level of joint decision before she migrated. This may indicate that migration creates a certain degree of agency among women that make them more active in decision-making.

4.4 Agency in Overcoming Social Cost

In this study, agency is defined as the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. It is the capacity to challenge the societal norms of looking at things and reshape those outlooks by going against the status quo to create new norms and relationships. In this section, the study attempts to identify the harmful issues that a left-behind husband encounters and how a section of the left-behind husbands have developed their own agency to overcome some of the psychological pressure imposed on them by the wider society as well as his own perception on his role at a household and societal level. Negative comments by other family members, relatives, neighbours and friends have been identified as one of the areas that harm them. Interestingly, quantitative data does not reflect this. Table 4.4.1 shows that 54 percent of the left-behind husbands of the international female migrants have experienced derogatory comments from different quarters. Twenty-six percent of the left-behind husbands have not received any derogatory or positive comments from the family members, relatives, neighbours and from the wider community, whereas 21 percent received supportive comments.

Table 4.4.1: Social scrutiny of the left-behind husbands' role

Type of comment	Left-behind husbands (%)
Supportive comments	20.5
Derogatory comments	53.8
No comments	25.8
Total no. of cases	132

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Derogatory Comments: In the quantitative data, among those left-behind husbands who endured derogatory remarks, around 23 percent stated that people taunted them because their wives have gone abroad; seventeen percent have been teased for their inability to provide for the families and 20 percent were mocked being dependent on their wives' income. Around 11 percent of the left-behind husbands received comments on why they have allowed their wives to work abroad and the similar percentage also heard

that their wives were involved in immoral work abroad and 5 percent left-behind husbands faced criticism for being incapable and lazy. In the following, some statements of the left-behind husbands are presented that convey the impact of derogatory comments directed towards them.

Sheikh Karim (57) is from Chor Hajiganj union of Faridpur district. His wife Rokeya Begum is a domestic worker in Dubai. He states, "In the last 3 years, she has not come to Bangladesh even once. Since my wife is staying abroad, people say many things. They tease me and ask why I have allowed my wife to stay abroad, as things may go wrong. I do not pay heed to what they hint at but still those statements hurt my feelings. I have my own way of dealing with such comments. In order to cope with loneliness, I try to remain busy with work during those times of the day that I used to spend with my wife. While she is working hard, I am also trying to do the same in Bangladesh so that we can meet our target of extra earning and she can come back sooner".

Table 4.4.2: Type of derogatory remarks about the left-behind husbands' role

Type of negative remarks	Left-behind husbands (%)
Good for nothing	16.7
Spends wife's money	19.7
Women should not go abroad	10.6
Incapable and lazy man	4.5
Teased on wife's staying abroad	22.7
Does immoral work in abroad	10.6
Does not follow religious dress code	1.5
Other	13.6
Total no. of cases	71

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Mohammad Salman (28) from Faridpur district is incapable of coping with the negative views of the society. In his words, "My life has become miserable after she left. No one appreciates the amount of work I have to do in her absence. They have no mercy

when they try to hint that her dignity could be at risk. Some taunt me saying she is too young to be working abroad. Others even suggest that she could be willingly indulging in unethical work. In their eyes, I am a greedy person and that is why I have sent my wife abroad despite having a toddler. I do not have the mental strength to counter them”.

Arafat Pramanik (50) from Faridpur district developed his own rationale in countering people’s aspersions. He says, “I am unable to work due to sickness. Twice I suffered from heart attacks and I am highly diabetic. I live in other people’s houses with my 2 sons. Since my wife migrated, people insult me by saying that I am dependent on my wife’s earning. I pretend not to hear what they say. If I listen to them, my sons and I will die of hunger. The money that she sends is being used for running the family as well as for buying my medicines”.

Ashfakul Sheikh (45) from Faridpur district has certain unresolved issues within himself. He does not like his wife working abroad, but knows he must accept this, as he has plans to buy a piece of land and build a house. “After she went abroad, I feel lonely even amidst large crowds. I have never done anything wrong, such as getting closer to other women. I do not want people belittle my children because of me. Nonetheless, I constantly worry about whether things will be the same once she returns home. What if she does not want me anymore?”

Abul Sardar (45) is from Faridpur district. His wife has been working in Saudi Arabia for the past few years. Abul developed his own mechanism of coping with the insecurity that he suffers since his wife migrated. “I cope with the situation by interacting with my children and my parents. Unlike many others, I do not spend idle time chatting with my friends in local tea stalls. I am happy that my two daughters are going to school. The joint income of the family allows me to provide decent food to my daughters and my parents”.

These statements show the pain endured by the left-behind husbands. Instead of highlighting their contribution in household management, they are demeaned by the broader society, and in some cases, even by the extended family. Perhaps the problem also lies with the terminology. The terminology ‘left-behind husband’ brings in a certain sense of patronization. Perhaps they should be termed as ‘left-in-charge’ husbands.

Appreciation of the Role of the Left-behind Husband

Some of the left-behind husbands have received positive reinforcement from the society in dealing with the absence of their wives. Table 4.4.3 presents the type of reinforcement received by the left-behind husbands during the absence of his migrant wife. Around 76 percent of the comments were around the financial contribution of the migrant wife to the family. Another 24 percent of the comments are related to better educational opportunities and improved nutrition of the children in the household.

Table 4.4.3: Type of supportive comments received by the LBH

Type of supportive comments	Left-behind husbands (%)
Financial contribution to the family	34.5
Increased family income	34.5
Quality education and better nutrition of children	24.1
Reduction of household poverty	6.9
Total no. of cases	29

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Jahangir (36) of Manikganj district found his family, particularly his parents supportive of the decision of his wife’s migration. According to him, “My parents acknowledge her struggle and they always say she is a fighter. This makes me proud and inspires me to carry on the responsibility of my children. I have become both their mother and father”. Jahangir’s case shows that supportive comments by friends and family help the left-behind family members to move on despite the changes, such as increased workload and loneliness. This case also demonstrates how harmful social costs of the wife’s migration can be reduced through

appreciation of migration outcomes by the household members.

Communication as a Method of Increasing Agency

Earlier literature provides ample evidence of the migrants losing touch with their near ones due to difficult and time-consuming communication methods²⁴.

Table 4.4.4: Method of communication with the migrant wife

Method of communication	Left-behind husbands (%)
Mobile phone	95.3
IMO	63.3
WhatsApp	0.8
Viber	0.8
Messenger	0.0
Skype	0.0
VOIP	0.8
Letter	0.0
Others	1.6
Total no. of cases	128

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Table 4.4.5: Frequency of communication with the migrant wife

Frequency of communication	Left-behind husbands (%)
Almost everyday	35.7
Once a week	32.6
Once a month	24.0
Once in three months	3.1
Currently not in contact (above 3 months)	3.1
Others	1.6
Total no. of cases	129

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Even in the late 1990s, methods of communication have been letters, fax, and tape-recorded messages. Over the last 10 years, internet-based communication has created scope for regular audio

²⁴Shahidullah Kaiser's novel, *Shareng Bou*, written in the mid-1960s' is a classic example of inability of the migrant husband to communicate with his left-behind wife which resulted in incurring major social cost both by the husband and wife.

and video communication. Mobile phone has been the most popular means of communication for the left-behind husbands with their migrant wives. Around 95 percent of the left-behind husbands communicate with their wives via mobile phone. The online messaging app *IMO* is mentioned as the second most popular method of communication as 63 percent of the left-behind husbands use this to communicate with their wives.

About 36 percent of the left-behind husbands communicate everyday with their migrant wife and 33 percent communicate at least once in a week. Twenty-four percent communicate with their wife once in a month and 3 percent communicate once in three months. Around 3 percent of the left-behind husbands have not been able to contact their migrant wife over a period of three months. These types of cases include situations where the wives are traceless either willingly or unwillingly or, they may not have any access to mobiles, neither are they allowed to go outside the home to use public telephones.

Salam Fakir (38) from Chor Hajiganj union of Faridpur district stated that *IMO* comes in very handy to console himself against the rude remarks of people surrounding him. He can phone his wife during certain times of the day and talk to her to convince himself that his wife is okay. Access to communication between him and his wife helps him solve many of the problems that he faces in household maintenance as well.

Sujon Dhar (30) of Narayanganj also regularly communicates with his wife. He feels he would not have succeeded in staying separated or be able to manage his life back home if there was no option to receive regular suggestions and input from his wife. In his own words, "The pain of physical distance reduced to some extent since we started using *IMO*".

Shahjahan (41) of Cumilla, on the other hand, has gone through major hardship as the employer of his wife does not allow her to talk with her husband regularly. According to the female head of the

household, this can hamper her performance at work. There have been some emergency situations during which he has not been able to talk to his wife. His father-in-law had a stroke and it was a near death experience, but he could not inform his wife. To him, it is a major cost of his wife's migration.

Some of these in-depth interviews show that regular communication helps the left-behind husbands to overcome loneliness, fight social stigma, allows them to receive tips about management of household chores and overcome the pain of physical distance. The other in-depth interviews show how restriction on communication creates insecurity, increases the pain of distance etc.

Frequency of Coming Home

Twenty-one percent of the female migrants have never come home in the past 3 years or more. The rest of the 79 percent did come to Bangladesh on holidays or have returned for good. Around 69 percent visited their home once during the past 3 years.

Table 4.4.6: Frequency of female migrant's visit to home in the last 3 years

Frequency	Left-behind husbands (%)
Never came on holiday	21.3
1	69.3
2	9.3
2+	1.3
Total no. of cases	75

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Table 4.4.7 shows that during the last visit, major discussions between the husband and wife circulated around the dream of a better house and the future of their children. They were requested to identify the most important topics of conversation. About 40 percent of the left-behind husbands thought that building a new house and purchasing land dominated their discussion. About 23 percent discussed their children's future and education. Household management holds major importance for the left-behind husbands. About 19 percent discussed issues of day-to-day household

management.

Deriving Satisfaction from the New Responsibilities

More than half of the left-behind husbands have not derived any satisfaction in performing new responsibilities in the absence of their wives. Twenty-three percent respondents, however, have derived major satisfaction by engaging in new responsibilities in the absence of their wives. Interestingly, 21 percent mention that they have not been involved in performing any work that earlier used to be performed by their wives before they migrated. Salam Fakir (38) from Faridpur, whose wife has been working in Saudi Arabia, states that in the absence of his wife he is looking after his two daughters and mother. It is a big burden which has reduced his capacity to get involved in outside work. On the other hand, Abu Sattar (34) of Manikganj feels that it is a new life altogether. Earlier he did not have any steady job. He used to spend time in tea stalls just discussing TV drama, life of cinema stars, sports etc. Initially when his wife migrated, he was not very happy with the much increased workload that fell on his shoulder. But over the years while interacting with the children, he enjoys life again, although he dearly misses his wife.

Table 4.4.7: Topic of discussion with wife during last visit

Topic of discussion	Left-behind husbands (%)
Children's future and their education	23.1
Building new house/ buying land	40.0
Household management	18.5
Marriage of children	13.8
Health	6.2
Usual talk of husband and wife	16.9
On paying debt	4.6
Taking another child/ family planning	3.1
Others	1.5
Total no. of cases	65

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

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after his two daughters and mother. It is a big burden which has reduced his capacity to get involved in outside work. On the other hand, Abu Sattar (34) of Manikganj feels that it is a new life altogether. Earlier he did not have any steady job. He used to spend time in tea stalls just discussing TV drama, life of cinema stars, sports etc. Initially when his wife migrated, he was not very happy with the much increased workload that fell on his shoulder. But over the years while interacting with the children, he enjoys life again, although he dearly misses his wife.

Table 4.4.8: Deriving satisfaction by doing new work in the absence of wife

Opinions	Left-behind husbands (%)
Does not perform any new work	20.5
Enjoys it	22.8
Does not enjoy it	56.7
Total no. of cases	127

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter began with exploring the social costs of the wife's migration on the left-behind husbands. Those husbands have identified loneliness, lack of companionship, being overburdened with additional responsibilities, loss of grip over the process of child-rearing, societal perception of failure as breadwinner, psychosocial stress, conflict between husband and wife, dissolution of marriage, fear of physical and sexual insecurity of wife in destination, sickness of children, and absence of the wife for a long period and emotional stress as some of the major social costs of their wives' migration.

In day-to-day management of the households, the migrant families have become more strategic. Dissolution of family unit as part of household management has reduced significantly over the last 20 years. Now most households remain a household unit and the majority of the households do not bring in additional help. The left-behind husbands shoulder additional responsibilities, particularly in

cooking (22%), attending medical care (53%), ensuring elderly care (71%) etc. The left-behind husbands take support from the female children of the family in performing some duties such as cleaning and looking after the younger children of the household. They also take support from the boy children in paying bills and shopping. Nonetheless, the majority of the men have successfully managed household activities in the absence of the wives.

Mixed results have emerged in respect to the perception about gendered division of labour in the household. As high as 43 percent do not feel that some of the new responsibilities taken by the left-behind husbands are female-specific jobs. Only 14 percent still strongly feel that they are performing certain jobs which should not be performed by men and they do not feel comfortable doing these jobs.

In respect to the family decision-making in areas specific to the children, a major shift is visible. Compared to the past, more and more joint decision-making is being practiced in the families of the international migrants. In around 68 to 76 percent cases, decisions regarding the children's education, marriage and their futures are taken jointly by the left-behind husband and the migrant wife. In 75 percent cases, these families are not involved in agricultural production. However, investment decision is mostly taken by the men in those families who are involved in agriculture. In case of use of remittance, 35 percent of the decisions are taken jointly by the husband and wife. In 9 percent cases, the women decide on their own and in 41 percent cases the husbands are the major decision-makers. Increased role of the husband is explained by the fact that a large portion of the remittance is used in the day-to-day maintenance and consumption. It is the left-behind husbands who are performing these duties. Therefore, he decides on where to prioritize spending.

Migration of the wife creates loneliness among the men. Societal lens of scrutiny on their wives' "sexual and physical insecurity" and

perception about them as “not man enough” affect their mental well-being. Participation in certain types of household work overwhelms them. However, some of these men creatively address those challenges. Maintaining regular contact with the migrant wife, associating themselves with people who appreciate the left-behind husbands’ suffering and contribution, immersing themselves with work and spending more time with the children are some of the avenues innovatively used by them. This study defines these mechanisms as agency of the left-behind husbands.

This chapter demonstrates that due to necessities, some of the left-behind husbands have redefined their masculine role by incorporating new forms of activities which were traditionally seen as feminine. Whether such changed perceptions of manhood will be sustained once the wives return is not clear; yet, the mental exercise that the left-behind husbands go through instills agency in them that force them to look at relationships from a different perspective. Therefore, it is evident that migration exposes the left-behind husbands to a situation that generates certain transformation of values and redefines gendered division of labour.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL COST OF MIGRATION: THE LEFT-BEHIND WIVES

This chapter concentrates on the impact of male migration on the left-behind wives. The basic research questions pursued here are: what social costs are borne by the left-behind wives due to migration of their husbands? How do the left-behind wives cope with new roles and what cost do they pay in performing such roles? What type of agency do they develop in doing so? Does the changed role of the left-behind wives redefine the social norms of masculinity and femininity? The chapter is divided into four sections. These are perceived social costs of migration of the husbands over the left-behind wives, management of household functions in the absence of the migrant husbands, household decision-making mechanisms and agency of the left-behind wives.

5.1 Perceived Social Cost of Migration

The left-behind wives have identified various types of social costs that they undergo due to migration of their husbands. Additional work responsibilities, being overwhelmed with problems of the adolescent children, conflict with the husbands, losing the husband altogether, control by the in-laws, physical, mental and sexual insecurity including those of their daughters, mental agony of separation etc. are some of the social costs cited by the 1094 left-behind wives.

About 70 percent of the left-behind wives expressed their agony of staying without a husband. A section of the left-behind wives was

married off to the male migrants who returned home on holidays. In other cases, the husbands themselves, or the husband and wife jointly decided about migration. In both the cases, the partners have to forego certain mental and physical needs. What they missed the most is the companionship of the husband. Aleya Begum (41) of Chattogram district was married off to Anwar Kabir when she was only 15 years old. She recollects her wonderful conjugal life during the first two years of marriage. Then her husband went to Oman. For the last 24 years, she has been staying initially with her in-laws, and later on her own along with her children but without her husband. In her words, “Due to my husband’s migration, we live in a concrete house. My eldest daughter is doing Masters at Chattogram Government College and the second one is finishing her degree at Nizampur College. The youngest one is a student of Class VIII. After weighing all the options my husband and I have chosen this life. However, nowadays I feel that I have lived my life like a Yogi (hermit) even though technically I have a husband”.

Table 5.1.1: Social costs faced by the left-behind wives by migration type

Type of social costs	Internal (%)	International (%)
Overburdened with additional responsibilities	49.51	66.91
Control over movement	21.29	33.69
Loneliness	29.98	69.63
Control by migrant husband	4.56	13.24
Lack of autonomy	16.35	13.48
Psychosocial stress	35.12	34.66
Societal scrutiny	3.12	40.43
Fear of physical and sexual harassment	27.38	46.81
Conflict between migrant husband and LBW	4.56	11.43
Conflict over decision-making	17.87	20.82
Occasional nervous breakdown	0.00	16.85
Overwhelmed with problem of children of different ages	6.46	29.72
Others	7.22	4.33
Total response	263	831

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Costs of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total response.

Shujola Khatun (30) is from Munshiganj. Her husband migrated 10 years ago. Since then she has been living with her in-laws and two children. For the last 6 years, her husband has not come home; neither does he contact the family on a regular basis. More importantly, he has stopped sending remittances. A fellow villager informed her father-in-law that his son has married someone in Malaysia. In her words, “Our aim was to ensure a better future for the family and that’s why he migrated. I had no inkling that migration would snatch away my husband”.

Rumi Akhter’s (23) story explains the struggle of coping with the deprivation of conjugal life. She is from Laxmipur. Her husband has been working abroad for nearly five years. She says, “In these five years of married life, I only spent a week with my husband. My four-year-old daughter is yet to see her father. How can I be happy? Ok, forget about me, what about a four-year-old daughter who has never seen her father. Nowadays, I sometimes get edgy when my daughter or mother-in-law asks about my husband’s wellbeing. It seems I have lost my husband in exchange of foreign money”.

Shahana Akhter of Tangail district is hardly in her twenties. She got married when she was only 16. Shahana says, “My two years old son has not seen his father yet. Although we are managing with my husband’s income, I feel like I am locked in a cage, where I find everything except myself. I am hesitant if he also feels the same way as he hardly knew me”.

It is obvious that in the absence of the migrant husbands, workload of the majority of the left-behind wives increase manifold. Increase in workload is identified more by the left-behind wives of the international migrants. Sixty-seven percent of them mentioned this. Fifty percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants have also felt overburdened with work. Increase in workload is again experienced by both groups: the left-behind wives who stay with the in-laws and those who stay in nuclear family setting. The areas where workload increases differ among the two groups. Those who

stay with the in-laws have to take care of cooking and cleaning of the entire household. Along with household chores, the women staying in nuclear families have to take care of some of the public sphere jobs. In some instances, taking care of all the responsibilities can be overburdening. Those who stay with the in-laws have to take care of the extended family members and also oversee the need of children of their own. The following in-depth interviews reveal the diverse nature of work burden borne by different groups of the left-behind wives.

Sharifa Begum (29) is from Dakkhin Khajuria of Mirsarai. She is a mother of two boys and a girl. Her husband is staying in Oman for the last five years. Before that he has been working in Saudi Arabia. Her mother-in-law stays with her. In the absence of her husband, she is the only working age adult in the house. She has to manage the household, take care of the children’s education and ensure day-to-day shopping. A few years ago, they constructed a new house. In the absence of her husband, she looked after its construction. She took her brother-in-law’s help during big purchases. She has not been that enthusiastic about her multi-tasking role. She states, “I sometimes feel that I am Ma Durga (Hindu Goddess). I have to perform all the tasks as if I have ten hands”. Nazma (28) from Dhamgor union of Cumilla district mentions, “Since my husband left for Oman, I feel like I become a machine. I have no time. Sometimes I get very upset, but when I think of my husband who is also working day and night for us, I come to terms with it. Honestly, I do not like doing these work all by myself. However, to reap the fruit of migration both of us need to make sacrifice, both of us need to work more than usual”.

Lack of autonomy and control by husband’s family are experienced particularly by the left-behind wives who stayed with in-laws. Rumana Begum (30) of Cumilla district feels that migration of her husband made her monetarily completely dependent on her in-laws. She says, “Even my pocket money comes via my mother-in-law. During *Eid* shopping, my in-laws decide which *sari* I should buy.

They do not want me to dress as I wish as my husband is not here. I sometimes feel stifled”.

Bisnu Debi (29) is from Lakshmipur district. Her husband has been working in Oman for two years. Her brother in-law did not even provide a decent room in the homestead for her and her children to stay. In her own words, “I am told that my husband is working abroad; my husband should construct a room for me and my children. I feel that my husband’s extended family treats me like a domestic help who is supposed to work for the whole day for the household but do not have any say in any matter”.

Thirty-five percent of the left-behind wives of the internal as well as international migrants go through different types of psychological stress. They regularly encountered societal perception that they are leading a comfortable life by spending their husbands’ hard earned money. Majeda (32) is from Cumilla. She has moved out of her in-law’s place in Raytola to a new house close to Dhamgor union for her children’s education. She states, “My mother-in-law was not happy with my decision. She tells her relatives that I am an idle person. I do not do anything but waste her son’s money. She also says that I left her house because I did not want to look after the in-laws. At least she does not say that I maintain other relationship!” Rumana Begum (30) of Cumilla says, “Since my husband started working in Saudi Arabia, I have to decide all kinds of things, ranging from children’s education to making a new toilet to buying new lands. My in-laws do not see it positively. They think I like bossing around! Because I have bought new furniture for the house, they say that I indulge in unnecessary expenditure. They continuously try to put me down in front of the extended family”.

All these cases demonstrate that the negative portrayal of women is taking place because the society would like to continue status quo in respect to male and female role in household management. Schoen (2015) rightly analyses that dominant social and cultural norms would like to continue with the system of gender barrier; therefore,

they try to bring aspersions upon those who are performing functions beyond traditional gendered division of labour.

At least 45 percent of the left-behind wives felt insecure psychologically, physically or sexually. Psychological insecurity is faced by the women of all ages due to being in long distance relationships and fear of infidelity of the husbands or pressure from the in-laws. Whereas physical insecurity is reported more by those who have assets such as land and homesteads. The young left-behind wives or those who have teenage daughters have been worried that in the absence of their husbands they can be sexually harassed. Jhuma (46) of Dohar lives with her three children and faced robbery a couple of times. According to her, “I know the robbers; they are not outsiders, rather my neighbours. But I have not taken any action against them as I live alone with my children. We have money but we are unsecured”.

Aleya Begum (41) from Chattogram whose husband has been working in Oman for 24 years faces similar problem. Two months before the interview, the robbers have taken away gold, money and other valuables. She has pretended as if she has not recognized the robbers, indeed they are known to her. She says, “I feel insecure with my four daughters. If I disclose their identities, my daughters could be sexually harassed on the way to their school or college”. Sajeda Begum (43) is from Gazipur. Her source of insecurity is also from her neighbour. Her neighbour has encroached on her homestead land boundary and planted trees taking some of her land on their side. At that time, Sajeda was trying to have an arranged-marriage for her daughter. She has been pursuing proposals with a few families. Whenever discussions between the families started to progress, Sajeda’s neighbour spread rumors about the girl’s character thus ending the discussions from proceeding ahead. Her neighbour is politically connected. Her husband has been working in Qatar for the last 20 years. Managing the household and taking care of three daughters alone has been challenging but she has successfully faced those challenges. The current situation of ill doing of the neighbours in respect to her daughter’s marriage

proposals is something she cannot handle. She thinks she is on the verge of mental breakdown. She wants her husband by her side in facing such challenge.

A section of the left-behind wives felt overwhelmed as they faced long distance control from their husbands. Their husbands would ask them to do certain tasks and then over telephone would like to control the process of how those should be done. If performing those tasks takes longer, then the husband would show his anger without realizing that there can be some genuine problem in pursuing those tasks. Rozina Begum (36) from Lakshmipur has been managing herself and her children on her own for the last 16 years. Around 6 to 7 years ago they constructed their own house in her father-in-laws' property. For the last couple of years, her husband has showed his interest in buying a piece of agricultural land. She has managed information of five sources who would sell land. Her husband has become impatient and wants her to go to land office and check if the papers are right. He also wants her to check if the owners are paying taxes. She has never done this type of work and therefore it is taking time. In her words, "This is the negative side of owning a mobile phone. My husband wants quick action without realizing that things do not move as fast".

Thirty percent of the left-behind wives of the international migrants are overburdened with problems of rearing children of different age. Being single mothers, most of the left-behind wives face challenge in rearing their children. It is even harder when the child is especially able. Shimu Akhter (26) of Dohar has been struggling with her daughter with disability. She narrates, "Sanjida is already 9 years old but still cannot walk. She always remains inside the house, so I cannot go anywhere leaving her alone. Because of her illness, I have to visit the hospital frequently. Since she is different, people become inquisitive. It is a huge burden to shoulder alone". Keeping the adolescent children's education on track is another area of concern. Dilruba (32) from Manikganj believes her son is mixing with a wrong crowd and his education is suffering. If his father was

here, it could have been avoided as he listens to his father and also his father could keep an eye on him. According to her, "It was okay when he was little. Now that he is growing up, I need his father by my side".

Parvin Akhter (47) from Faridpur is a mother of a physically challenged son and wife of an internal migrant. She says, "Work has no gender face" and she continues, "Since my husband is in Dhaka, I look after the family. When I do these works, I never feel that these are the men's works. My husband sends money to me and I use that frugally. Most of the time he does not interfere but occasionally he does. I do not face much difficulty in performing most of the tasks that he used to do when he was here".

One-third of the left-behind wives have complained about social scrutiny. Since their husband left, they are judged by their in-laws, neighbours and others continuously. Rohima (40) of Faridpur met her husband in Malaysia and they got married there. After certain years, she and her husband returned to her husband's village. Her husband went back to Malaysia and she stayed back to rear the children. According to Rohima, "I was never welcomed by my in-laws. Some fellow villagers in collaboration with my in-laws call my husband and report that they have seen me with other men. It seems my in-laws would be happy if I leave my husband. Along with looking after the children and cooking for the entire household, my additional job has become to convince my husband over the phone that my in-laws are not right". Sharmin Akhter of Chattogram is only 21 years old. She stays with her parents in-law while her husband is working in Malaysia. According to Sharmin, "My father-in-law never allows me to leave home alone. Whenever I talk to an outsider, he always stays around or makes sure someone else is with me. His words are final in the family. Sometimes I feel like I am here only to take care of my 4 years old son and my parents in-law. There is no life beyond that".

Sumi Akhter (34) of Sunamganj expressed her discomfort on watchdog role of the society. She says, “People of all ages come to advise me on anything and everything. Since my husband left for work, everyone in the village has become my father-in-law”.

A comparison of the internal and international left-behind wives indicates that the burden of social cost is faced more by the latter. The left-behind wives of the international migrants who stay with the in-laws complain that their workload is more as on one hand they have to look after the cooking and other responsibilities of a joint family, at the same time, looking after the education and other needs of the children alone. Nonetheless, in the joint family setting, the left-behind wives of the migrants do not have to perform outdoor tasks. Those who stay in a nuclear family setting may not have to look after a large joint family; however, they have to perform both indoor and outdoor functions of the households. Therefore, the extra burden of work is felt more by the left-behind wives of the international migrants. Cases of occasional loose temper or nervous breakdown of the left-behind wives of the international migrants are as high as 17 percent whereas none of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants mentioned that. This can be explained from the fact that the migrant husbands of the internal left-behind wives return home regularly, whereas the left-behind wives of the international migrant husbands do not get to see their husbands for years.

This section demonstrates that social costs faced by the left-behind wives are diverse. It is difficult to make any generalization about them. However, the types of social costs faced by the young newly married wives are different from the costs faced by the relatively older left-behind wives. A section of the young left-behind wives suffer from strict control by the in-laws on her movement and some of them are also dependent on the in-laws for day-to-day financial needs. The older women face challenges managing the adolescent children and are burdened with too much responsibility. Social costs also vary on the basis of types of the households. The left-behind

wives staying in an extended family structure faces one kind of problems, whereas the left-behind wives staying in a nuclear family face other type of problems. Experience of social costs also varies between the left-behind wives of the internal and international migrants. Nonetheless, all of them are lonely and overburdened with work. Society hardly acknowledges their contribution in making the migration of their husbands successful.

5.2 Strategy to Manage Households

A large number of the left-behind wives manage day-to-day functions of the family by adopting different innovative strategies. Those include: merger of the migrant households with others, living in extended families and redistribution of household responsibilities among household members. Often, the close relatives are also asked to support in carrying out certain responsibilities. Shouldering responsibility alone is also a strategy for some left-behind wives as they do not want interference of the elderly members of the extended families.

Type of Residence

De Haan’s study (2006) shows that it is considered unusual for the women to live alone and husbands’ migration may be feasible only if the young women are able to live with other family members. In the Bangladeshi context 20 years back Siddiqui (2001) found a similar scenario. However, it seems that the socio-economic as well as the cultural context of Bangladesh has transformed significantly. Table 5.2.1 shows the left-behind wives of about 41 percent of the internal migrants and 28 percent of the international migrants have been living in a nuclear family before the husbands left for work. Currently, the percentage of nuclear family has increased a little in both cases of the internal and international migrants. The left-behind wives are staying on their own with their children in 44 percent of the internal and 36 percent of the international migrant households. Eight percent increase of the nuclear family in case of the international and 3 percent increase in case of the internal

migrant households may indicate that over time family has grown. Children's educational needs receive high priority and the left-behind wives start staying close to school as an independent family unit. It may also be the case that these women would have stayed on their own, but in the past failed to do so due to lack of enough income of the husbands. Now that the incomes of the husbands increase, they can afford to move out. Table 5.2.2 again shows that 65 to 73 percent of those left-behind wives who are up to age of 30 years live with their in-laws. Around 50 percent of those who belong to the age group 31 to 50 live on their own. These figures have to be considered in the context of who this study considers the young left-behind wives. The left-behind wives who are up to 25 years of age have been considered as young (Chapter II, Table 2.2.4).

Table 5.2.1: Managing left-behind HHs through changing residence(%)

Type of household	Before migration		During migration		At present
	Internal	International	Internal	International	Non-migrant
Nuclear family	41.0	28.4	43.7	35.8	49.7
Joint family	59.0	71.6	56.3	64.2	50.3
No. of cases	263	828	263	831	382

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Table 5.2.2: Type of residence of the left-behind wives by age (%)

Place of residence	Age				
	Less than or equal to 25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Own home	23.3	29.0	47.7	51.6	73.3
Paternal house	2.9	5.2	2.5	2.1	0.0
In-law's home	73.1	65.2	48.7	46.3	26.7
Others	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.0	0.0
No. of cases	275	310	398	95	15

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Khaleda Begum (37) is from Sunamganj. Her husband has been a migrant in Saudi Arabia for the last 10 years. Three of her sons are studying. When her husband left for the first time, she used to live with her in-laws. She had to look after the kitchen of the joint family along with making sure that her children are studying

regularly. She realized that if she stays with the in-laws and keeps on performing all the duties as the elder son's wife, then her children's education would suffer. She along with her husband decided to move to a house close to the school. She thinks she has taken the right decision. Private coaching for children is also easier from their new house. Her eldest son got GPA-5 both in SSC and HSC. The other two sons are also doing well at school.

Twenty-three percent of the left-behind wives of the international migrants and 33 percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants who have been interviewed belong to this age group. This indicates that the young wives have a propensity in staying with the in-laws compared to the older ones. It is also interesting to note that a majority of the left-behind wives, who are residing in joint families, live with the in-laws. Only 3 percent left-behind wives live in their parental house. Perhaps the relatively young husbands feel more secured about their wives' chastity when they are living with husband's family.

Role substitution by other immediate and extended family members

Contrary to the earlier literature, this study finds that the left-behind wives of 98 percent of the internal migrants and 92 percent of the international migrants have not brought anyone from the extended family to substitute the household works performed by the husband before he migrated (Table: 5.2.3). Probable reasons can be: the migrant families are more aware of financial liabilities of an extra person, unavailability of relevant family members, less need for keeping an eye on the wife etc.

In cases where additional members are brought into the international migrant households, 50 percent of them are the parents-in-law of the left-behind wives, 17 percent of them are the brother/sister-in-law and only 6 percent of them are the parents of the left-behind wives and 11 percent of them are the siblings of the

wife. In the 2 cases of the internal migrants, 50 percent is parent-in-law and the other 50 percent is sister-in-law.

Table 5.2.3: Role substitution in HH works in the absence of migrant husband

Role substitution		Internal (%)	International (%)
No		98.1	92.4
Yes		1.9	7.6
Total no. of cases		108	235
Person who substituted	LBW's parents	0.0	5.6
	Male migrant's parents	50.0	50.0
	LBW's siblings	0.0	11.1
	Male migrant's siblings	50.0	16.7
	Son/daughter-in-law	0.0	0.0
	Daughter/son-in-law	0.0	0.0
	LBW's nephew/niece	0.0	11.1
	Male migrant's nephew/niece	0.0	0.0
	Others	0.0	5.6
	Total no. of cases	2	18

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: LBW = Left-behind Wives

Forty percent of the left-behind wives have felt that the additional member have helped them to cope with loneliness and also ensured their security. Sixty percent of them, however, have reckoned that the additional member has exposed them to scrutiny and control. This includes expression of dissatisfaction on the style of performing a particular job, going outside the homestead, level of contacts with their parental home and friendship with neighbours etc.

Aklima (30) from Sunamganj is the wife of an internal migrant and she feels having her father-in-law at home is having an umbrella over her head. According to her, "I do not feel any discomfort in performing the extra responsibilities that I have to do in the absence of my husband. In all of my work, my father-in-law helps me. He helps me with grocery shopping, taking care of daughters' study and accompanies my daughters to school. He is like an umbrella to me who protects all of us from every trouble". Rumana Begum (30) from Cumilla explains, "My husband brought his mother to stay

with me when he went abroad. She has made my life miserable and tries to control every single step I take".

Management of Household Functions

This section looks into different functions of the household and finds out who performed those tasks earlier and who performs the same after migration and upon return of the migrant. The purpose is to see if the absence of the male migrants can change some of the gender stereotyping of household functions.

Cooking: Eighty-four percent of the left-behind wives of the international migrants have been in charge of cooking before their husband's migration. The left-behind wife's mother-in-law and husband have been in charge of cooking in 11 percent and 2 percent cases respectively. Following migration of the husband, the percentage share of the mother-in-law reduced and the wife's share increased. In 95 percent cases, it is the left-behind wife who manages cooking while it has dropped from 11 percent to 3 percent for the husband's mother. The increase of the wife's participation is due to the fact that 7 percent of the households which have been part of joint family, have transformed into nuclear family after the husband's migration (Table 5.2.1).

Table 5.2.4: Person in charge of cooking (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	2.3	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.7	1.5
Left-behind wife (LBW)	84.4	84.4	93.2	94.9	91.1	93.2
Both male migrant and LBW	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.3
Son	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Daughter	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.9
LBW's mother	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.1	0.4	0.0
Male migrant's mother	11.4	11.3	4.9	3.2	5.5	3.6
Servant	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.0
Others	0.8	1.7	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.5
Total no. of cases	263	831	263	831	236	584

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Similar trend is visible in case of the left-behind wives of the

internal migrants. It is seen in the section on the left-behind husbands that the underage daughters take some of the responsibilities of the female migrants.

However, if the mother is present at home, the daughters hardly get involved in cooking. In other words, the mothers can manage on their own without involving the young daughter in a major way.

Cleaning: Nearly 82 percent of the left-behind wives of the international migrants have been in charge of cleaning before their husbands' migration. In 12 percent cases, it is the husband's mother who has been in charge of cleaning. A small percentage of the males (4%) did some of the cleaning before migration.

Table 5.2.5: Person in charge of daily cleaning (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	1.5	3.5	0.4	0.0	2.5	3.8
Left-behind wife (LBW)	81.7	81.6	88.6	92.3	87.3	88.9
Both male migrant and LBW	1.9	0.7	0.4	0.0	2.1	1.0
Son	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.3
Daughter	2.3	0.4	3.8	1.4	2.5	1.0
LBW's mother	0.8	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.3
Male migrant's mother	11.1	12.1	5.7	4.4	4.7	3.0
Servant	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.9
Others	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.7
Total no. of cases	263	831	263	831	236	584

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Following the migration of the husband, it has further increased by 11 percent for the left-behind wives while it has decreased by 8 percent for the husband's mother. Similar trend is visible in case of the internal migrant households. While 82 percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants did the cleaning before migration, it has increased to 89 percent following the migration of the husband. This is perhaps also because a small percentage of the households became nuclear from joint.

Purchasing Household Utensils: Household utensils include pots, pans, glasses, plates, spoons, bucket etc. Fifty-nine percent of the international male migrants have been in charge of purchasing household utensils before they migrated. In 16 percent cases, it was the wife who used to do the same. In 5 percent cases, it has been a joint responsibility of both husband and wife. The husband's father has been responsible in 11 percent cases. Following the migration of the husband, it has increased by almost 49 percent for the left-behind wives. In 13 percent cases, the husband's father helps with purchasing and the migrant's son does the same in 7 percent cases.

Table 5.2.6: Person in charge of purchasing HH utensils (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	55.9	58.9	11.8	0.0	61.9	63.7
Left-behind wife (LBW)	18.3	15.7	51.3	64.6	19.1	19.7
Both male migrant and LBW	5.3	4.9	3.4	0.0	7.2	5.7
Son	0.4	0.2	9.1	6.5	2.5	1.7
Daughter	1.1	0.0	1.5	0.7	0.8	0.3
LBW's father	0.0	0.7	1.1	1.6	0.0	0.2
LBW's mother and siblings	0.4	0.4	1.6	0.7	0.4	0.2
Male migrant's father	12.5	11.1	12.5	12.9	5.9	5.0
Male migrant's mother	4.9	5.3	4.9	5.8	1.7	2.6
Male migrant's siblings	0.8	1.8	2.3	6.4	0.4	1.0
Others	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.0
Total no. of cases	263	831	263	831	236	584

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Table 5.2.7: Person in charge of grocery shopping (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	67.7	69.8	6.1	0.0	77.1	80.0
Left-behind wife (LBW)	5.3	3.9	37.6	39.3	3.4	3.9
Both male migrant and LBW	1.5	0.5	1.1	0.0	1.3	1.2
Son	0.8	1.7	17.1	14.9	3.4	3.1
Daughter	0.8	0.0	1.1	0.2	0.4	0.0
LBW's parents and siblings	0.8	1.5	3.4	4.1	1.2	0.3
Male migrant's father	19.0	15.5	22.1	21.8	10.6	8.4
Male migrant's mother and siblings	3.0	6.4	9.5	15.6	1.7	2.7
Others	1.2	0.7	1.9	3.9	0.8	0.4
Total no. of cases	263	830	263	830	236	584

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

The trend is quite the same in case of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants. This gives a clear example of the left-behind wives entering into the male dominant areas of work in the absence of the migrants. Another important finding of this table is that in a number of cases even when the left-behind wives of the migrants live separately, they are in good relationship with the in-laws and take their help in outside works.

Table 5.2.8: Person in charge of entertaining guests (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	3.0	5.3	1.1	0.0	2.1	3.4
Left-behind wife (LBW)	65.4	55.5	85.9	85.3	65.7	60.9
Both male migrant and LBW	16.7	20.3	2.3	0.0	21.6	25.3
Son	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.3
Daughter	0.4	0.1	0.8	0.5	0.0	0.5
LBW's mother	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.3	0.5
Male migrant's father	1.9	3.4	2.3	4.0	2.1	2.2
Male migrant's mother	9.5	12.0	6.5	5.9	6.4	5.3
Male migrant's siblings	1.5	1.6	0.4	2.0	0.8	0.7
Others	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.9
Total no. of cases	263	831	263	831	236	585

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Entertaining Guests: Entertaining relatives is a typical task of the women of the household in Bangladesh. The men are also involved in entertaining guests, but they mostly take care of the formal male guests not necessarily relatives. In 56 percent cases, the left-behind wives of the international migrants performed this role before migration of their husbands. In 20 percent cases, it used to be managed jointly by the husband and wife before migration. In 12 percent cases, the husband's mother used to do this before migration. During the period of the husband's migration, the left-behind wife's responsibility of entertaining guests increases by another 30 percent. Participation of the husband's mother has dropped to 6 percent. In case of the internal migrant households, 86 percent of the left-behind wives host the guests in the absence of the migrant husbands, while it was 65 percent prior to the husbands' migration. Due to nuclearisation of a section of the migrant

households, the mother-in-laws are not there to share. Once the husband returns, joint guest entertainment again become common.

In charge of taking to doctors: In case of the international migrant households, both husband and wife take the children to the doctor even prior to migration. Around 36 percent male migrants have taken their children to the doctor before migration and 29 percent left-behind wives have performed the same even prior to their husbands' migration. In 16 percent cases, both husband and wife have jointly taken their children to the doctor. Following the migration of the husband, the responsibility of the left-behind wives has significantly increased. Around 77 percent of the left-behind wives are responsible to take their children to the doctor while the husband is abroad.

Table 5.2.9: Person in charge of taking children to the doctor (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	33.5	36.0	2.3	0.0	36.4	35.2
Left-behind wife (LBW)	35.4	29.0	74.4	77.4	34.3	32.5
Both male migrant and LBW	15.2	15.5	4.2	0.0	20.3	23.9
Son	0.0	0.2	1.1	1.3	0.0	0.5
LBW's father	0.4	1.0	1.9	2.4	0.4	0.5
Male migrant's father	6.1	4.3	7.3	7.6	3.0	2.6
Male migrant's mother	1.9	2.9	3.4	3.2	2.1	0.9
Male migrant's siblings	0.0	1.3	1.1	4.4	0.4	0.3
Others	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.7	0.0	0.3
No sick children	7.6	9.6	3.4	3.0	3.0	3.2
Total no. of cases	263	830	262	831	236	585

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Before migration, in 4 percent cases the international migrant's father also used to take the children to the doctor. It has increased to 8 percent once the migrant has gone abroad. In case of the internal migrants, 35 percent of the wives have taken their children to the doctor before their husbands migrated. Following the migration of the husband, it has increased to 74 percent. In the remaining cases, the children either have not sought medical attention, or have been attended by other relatives such as the in-laws of the left-behind

wives. A section of the left-behind wives also do not have any children.

In case of the international migrant households, it has been mainly the migrant husband who took the elderly family members to the doctor prior to the migration. Around 48 percent male migrants took their elderly parents to the doctor before migration and 16 percent left-behind wives have done the same prior to their husbands' migration. In 8 percent cases, it has been both the husband and wife who have taken their children to the doctor.

Table 5.2.10: Person in charge of taking elderly to the doctor (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	49.0	47.6	4.6	0.0	50.4	44.7
Left-behind wife (LBW)	17.9	15.9	54.4	57.8	15.7	14.9
Both male migrant and LBW	6.1	8.2	1.9	0.0	7.2	13.9
Son	0.4	0.7	2.7	2.4	0.4	1.0
Daughter	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.0
Male migrant's father	9.1	7.3	10.3	8.6	8.1	4.3
Male migrant's mother	1.9	1.2	2.7	1.4	2.1	0.2
Male migrant's siblings	3.4	6.0	6.8	13.6	3.8	5.5
Others	1.9	1.4	4.2	2.2	0.4	1.2
No sick elderly relative	10.3	11.6	12.2	12.7	11.4	14.4
Total no. of cases	263	830	263	828	236	584

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Following the migration of the husband, the role of the left-behind wives has increased significantly. Around 58 percent left-behind wives are responsible to take their elderly family members to the doctor while the husband is abroad. In 14 percent cases, the brothers/sisters in-law take the responsibility. Eighteen percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants earlier have performed the same duty. However, it has increased to 54 percent following the migration of the husband. According to the left-behind wives, greater participation of the women in availing health care services for the household members has not been seen by the wider society as something that questions social norms. Therefore, they have been able to perform these jobs without much social scrutiny. However,

discussion on such role is important in order to understand the increased span of workload that a left-behind woman is able to handle to make her husband's migration successful.

House Construction and Repair: Sixty-three percent of the international migrant and 71 percent of the internal migrant households did some form of construction and repair work of their own houses. Traditionally construction and repairing houses are considered as a responsibility for the men. The findings of this study show that in cases of both internal and international migrants, it has been mainly the migrant husband who was in charge of looking after the construction and repairing the house prior to the migration. Around 42 percent of the international male migrants and 48 percent of the internal male migrants looked after the construction. In about 3 to 4 percent of the internal and international migrant households, the wives looked after the construction.

Table 5.2.11: Person in charge of construction and repair of the house (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	47.5	41.8	14.4	1.7	50.8	46.4
Left-behind wife (LBW)	2.7	4.1	25.5	26.1	2.1	4.5
Both male migrant and LBW	3.4	3.1	1.5	1.9	4.7	4.8
Son	0.8	0.1	4.9	4.7	1.3	0.7
Daughter	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0
LBW's parents and siblings	1.2	1.2	2.3	2.6	1.6	0.8
Male migrant's father	16.0	13.5	19.0	14.4	10.6	8.1
Male migrant's mother	1.1	1.6	1.5	3.9	0.8	1.0
Male migrant's siblings	0.8	2.3	1.5	7.0	0.8	1.9
Relatives	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.2
Not applicable*	26.6	32.0	28.9	36.7	27.1	31.6
Total no. of cases	263	827	263	825	236	580

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

* Not applicable implies that household concerned have not under-taken any construction or repair work.

The male migrants' father also plays a significant role in building and repairing the house. The fathers of 16 percent internal male migrants and 14 percent international male migrants have been

responsible for construction and repair. Following the migration of the husbands, the role of the left-behind wives has increased significantly in building new houses. Around 26 percent left-behind wives of both internal and international migrants are responsible in building new house. The role of the husband's father remains the same. The son and brother of the migrant also play a role in the absence of the male migrant. Interestingly, 14 percent internal male migrants have been able to take part in construction when they came home on holidays. Around 2 percent of the international male migrants have participated in construction when they came home on holidays.

Table 5.2.12: Person in charge of paying bills (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	57.8	64.9	10.3	0.0	60.2	70.3
Left-behind wife (LBW)	5.7	4.6	28.1	38.1	4.7	6.0
Both male migrant and LBW	0.8	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.8	0.5
Son	1.5	1.8	14.8	13.3	5.9	4.3
Daughter	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.4	0.0
LBW's parents and siblings	2.0	1.7	3.4	3.7	2.1	1.2
Male migrant's father	20.2	14.8	24.3	20.1	14.8	9.4
Male migrant's mother	3.0	2.9	4.6	5.5	2.1	1.5
Male migrant's siblings	0.8	4.3	4.9	12.8	0.8	3.1
Relatives	0.8	0.1	1.1	2.5	0.8	0.0
Do not pay any bills	7.2	4.7	6.8	3.9	7.2	3.6
Total no. of cases	263	831	263	831	236	583

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Payment of Bills: In case of the international male migrants, in 65 percent cases the migrant husband used to pay the bills before migration. In 15 percent cases, it has been the father of the husband who paid the bills. Only in 5 percent cases, it has been the left-behind wives who paid the bills before the husband's migration. Following the migration of the husband, it has increased by almost 34 percent for the left-behind wives. In 13 percent cases, the son does this job and 20 percent cases the husband's father does the same. This finding is quite significant from the perspective of gendered division of labour. Performing this particular job exposes the left-behind wives to a very formal domain of work. Successful

completion of this job implies that the women are capable to access the formal institutions.

Education of the Children: In case of the international migrant households, it has been mainly the left-behind wife who looked after the children's education prior to the husband's migration. Around 44 percent left-behind wives have taken care of their children's education prior to migration of their husbands and in 18 percent cases the husbands have done the same. In 14 percent cases, it has been both the husband and wife who have jointly taken care of this major responsibility. Following the migration of the husband, the role of the left-behind wives has significantly increased. Around 81 percent left-behind wives are solely responsible for their children's education in the absence of their husbands. Forty-five percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants have been looking after their children's education which has increased to 73 percent following husband's migration. This suggests that the women play a significant role in overseeing education of their children in the absence of the husband.

Table 5.2.13: Person in charge of looking after children's education(%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	16.7	18.3	2.3	0.0	18.2	15.0
Left-behind wife (LBW)	45.2	43.7	73.4	80.9	52.1	50.4
Both male migrant and LBW	11.8	14.1	4.2	1.7	14.0	20.7
Older children	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.3
LBW's mother	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.0	0.2
Male migrant's father	4.6	2.0	4.6	1.6	3.0	0.7
Male migrant's mother	2.7	1.7	1.9	0.5	1.7	0.3
Male migrant's siblings	0.0	0.1	0.4	1.3	0.0	0.0
Others	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2
No school going children	18.6	19.2	12.9	12.6	11.0	12.1
Total no. of cases	263	830	263	831	236	585

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

This section attempts to show the extent of additional responsibilities that has to be shouldered by the left-behind wives.

In some cases, such responsibilities have become a burden. However, in the long run, it may have increased their capabilities. The left-behind wives expressed their stress about additional responsibility and at the same time recognised the effect of taking new challenges in increasing their confidence level. They felt that now they are more confident that when need arises they are capable of handling pressure. The left-behind wives' role in the household activities created space where gender roles and relations have been reformulated at least during the period of migration.

5.3 Family Decision-making

Maharajan (2012) finds that male labour migration redefines the women's role in the decision-making of household and public affairs. The women have broadened and deepened their involvement in household affairs by taking household decisions, managing household funds and expanding resources in the absence of the male household heads. Similarly, Iqbal and Mohyuddin (2014) based on their study on Pakistan show that the role and the decision-making autonomy of the left-behind women have changed following the husband's migration. The husband's migration provided with certain autonomy and independence that they never experienced earlier. This section looks into five areas of decision-making-remittance, maintenance of savings, agriculture, children's future and their marriage, matters related to extended family and community.

Remittance: It is important to know who receives the remittance and who decides where it should be spent. Table 5.3.1 gives an idea about receivers and decision-makers of the remittance. In 68 percent cases, the left-behind wives of the internal migrants are the remittance receivers. Five percent of the internal migrant husbands send remittances to their own accounts. The extended family members such as father, mother and brothers of the migrant husband constitute rest of the receivers. Around 2 percent of the remittance receivers are not related, they are neighbours or friends

of the migrant.

The percentage of the left-behind wives of the international migrants who receive remittance is 9 percent less compared to the left-behind wives of the internal migrants. One of the reasons is that the internal migrants mostly remit for the day-to-day consumption of the family members. The international migrants, on the other, remit for various reasons. Along with day-to-day consumption, it is used in loan re-payment, purchase of land, conducting business etc. Compared to the internal migrants, more international migrants send money to their own accounts. The reason is obvious. They want to save some of their income and also, perhaps want to keep some control over their money.

Although in case of the international migrants, 59 percent of the remittance receivers are the left-behind wives, only in 9 percent cases they unilaterally decide where the remittance should be spent. Joint decisions are becoming more popular and in 25 percent cases it is decided jointly by the husband and wife. In 38 percent cases, it is the husbands who decide unilaterally.

Table 5.3.1: Receiver and decision-maker of remittance sent by migrant husbands

Relationship	Internal (%)		International (%)	
	Receiver	Decision-maker	Receiver	Decision-maker
Left-behind wife (LBW)	68.3	10.3	59.2	9.4
Male migrant	4.6	44.1	9.6	38.0
Both male migrant and LBW	0.0	29.7	0.0	24.5
Male migrant's father	8.0	8.0	11.3	14.1
Male migrant's mother	6.5	5.7	7.8	7.7
Children	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.4
Male migrant's brother or other relatives	10.8	2.3	10.1	5.9
Neighbours/ friends	1.5	0.0	1.1	0.0
Total no. of cases	262	263	830	831

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

The international migrant husband's father receives remittances in 11 percent cases, but he takes decision on the use of remittance in

14 percent cases. Eight percent of the remittances are sent to the mother and she decides where to spend that. It is clear that receiving remittance does not mean that they are the decision-makers. In recent time, greater role is played by the migrant husbands in using remittance, either unilaterally or jointly. This has become possible mostly due to their access to mobile phone and different online apps. Earlier, the migrants could hardly monitor the use of remittance as they had to communicate through mail which would take long time. Therefore, by default the left-behind wives had more independence in utilizing remittance.

Janoki Devi's (30) husband Bikash Devnath has been working in Malaysia for the past 5 years. She states, "Initially my husband used to send remittance to his brother, his brother used to keep some of the remittances. Now he sends remittance directly to me through a secret pin number. My husband and I talk over mobile on necessary areas where remittances and other income of the households should be spent and accordingly, and I implement that. Food, other household expenditures and cost of private tutor for my son are regular expenses. However, each month, there are some expenses that change from time to time, such as maintenance of homestead, purchase of seeds, etc. My in-laws are not very happy about this arrangement. They think I misuse my husband's money. My husband sometimes gets upset with me after listening to them, but he understands that it is better I handle it".

Salma Akter (26) of Lakshmipur district is an example of how a left-behind wife makes the best use of remittance sent by her migrant husband. She proudly says, "My husband relies on my judgment for many things. I earned his confidence by single handedly overseeing the construction of our house with his remittances. Initially I was a shy person. I could not think of going to any office. However, when my husband started sending money, I had to go to Islami Bank regularly to receive the remittance. Recently, I met another migrant's wife in the bank who is using the remittance received for innovative cultivation techniques. I got

inspired, discussed the idea with my husband and following her example have started cultivating papaya beside the pond and fish in the pond".

Sharmin (21) from Cumilla is an example of how migration of husband affects young left-behind wives. They may enjoy lesser independence and flexibility compared to the older left-behind wives. Sharmin stays with her in-laws. In her words, "Since my husband left for Malaysia, I have been living with my parent-in-laws. My son, Rafi is 4 years old. My husband sends all his income to my father-in-law Barek Munshi who ultimately decides everything. In any matter, his words are final. If I need anything, I have to ask my father-in-law. I sometimes feel stifled. I am not free to go outside the house without his prior permission. I do not express my feeling to my husband as I do not want to burden him with extra tension. I cope with current situation with the hope that things will change when my husband returns".

These three examples explain three different realities. Janoki and Salma show how the left-behind wives gradually acquired control over remittance. Sharmin's case, on the contrary, highlights how the young left-behind wives have little access to the husband's remittance and how they suffer from the strict control of the in-laws on their mobility.

Maintaining Savings: Table 5.3.2 shows that around 50 percent of the households currently do not have any savings.

Nor did they possess any savings prior to migration of their family member. The migrants' parents although receive remittance, but do not save. On the contrary, when the left-behind wives are receiving remittance, they are thinking in terms of savings. In 14 percent cases of the international migrant households, the left-behind wife decided on family savings while in 8 percent cases it is the husband and 10 percent cases family savings are managed jointly prior of migration of the husband.

Table 5.3.2: Decision-maker in maintaining family savings (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	10.3	7.5	7.2	1.0	9.3	6.7
Left-behind wife (LBW)	17.9	14.3	22.4	25.7	18.2	21.4
Both male migrant and LBW	18.6	10.2	17.1	9.6	21.2	10.5
Son	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.5	0.0	0.3
Daughter	0.8	0.2	0.8	0.4	0.8	0.2
Male migrant's father	1.1	2.7	1.5	2.4	1.3	1.7
Male migrant's mother	1.9	4.1	1.5	3.1	1.7	3.1
Others	0.0	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.3
Do not have savings	49.4	60.2	48.3	56.4	47.5	55.7
Total no. of cases	263	825	263	826	236	580

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Following the husband's migration, the role of the left-behind wives in managing savings increased to 26 percent. Ayesha Awal (38) is from Dohar. Her husband migrated to Saudi Arabia more than a decade ago. She is a mother of 3 children. She reflects that savings is something she discusses with her husband. She states, "I only discuss important things with my husband over the phone if it is related to savings or property. Over the years, I have learnt to manage my household on my own. I am involved in all kinds of household activities, starting from buying pens and books for my school-going children to looking after construction work. When my husband returns, I want him to do something. That is why, I am saving some money from day to day expenditure without my husband's knowledge".

Decision on Agriculture: More than 60 to 70 percent cases of the internal and international migrant households do not possess any agricultural land.

Table 5.3.3: Decision-maker on agriculture (%)

Person who does	Before		During migration		After husband returns	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	20.2	13.7	10.7	5.6	21.6	14.9
Left-behind wife (LBW)	1.9	1.6	6.5	3.7	1.7	1.9
Both male migrant and LBW	0.4	0.5	0.4	3.1	0.4	0.3
Son	0.0	0.1	1.9	1.5	0.0	0.5
Daughter	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Male migrant's father	13.4	10.9	14.9	8.9	12.7	8.9
Male migrant's mother	0.8	1.2	0.4	1.6	0.4	1.0
Male migrant's siblings	0.4	3.1	1.5	2.5	0.4	2.7
Others	0.0	0.7	1.2	1.7	0.4	1.1
Not involve in agriculture	63.0	68.1	62.2	71.5	62.3	68.6
Total no. of cases	262	827	262	825	236	582

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Children's Future and Marriage: Interestingly, when it comes to the children's future, an overwhelming majority of the respondents claim that decisions on the children's future has been and will be a joint decision by the husband and wife. Eighty-five percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants and 77 percent of the international migrants have felt that way. Similarly, 76 percent of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants and 65 percent of the international migrants think that decision about children's marriage will also be a joint one. It is seen in the later section that more than 95 percent of the male migrants possess phone. It is understandable that regular communication between the husband and wife has created this confidence about joint decision.

Table 5.3.4: Decision-maker on children's future and marriage (%)

Person who does	During migration			
	Future		Marriage	
	Int	Intl	Int	Intl
Male migrant	2.3	2.5	1.9	1.7
Left-behind wife (LBW)	4.2	5.3	3.0	2.2
Both male migrant and LBW	84.8	77.3	76.0	64.7
Others	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.5
No children/ children did not get married	7.6	13.3	17.9	29.9
Total no. of cases	263	831	263	830

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Int=Internal, Intl=International

Decision-Making in a Larger Sphere: Gardner's (1995) work on the left-behind wives of the Bangladeshi migrants in the UK concluded that along with enhancing the women's ability to exercise power in the household decision-making, migration also allows them to create and sustain networks of relationship between neighbours and kin. This study also finds some of the left-behind wives have come out of seclusion and become involved in social issues. Those include participation in extended family decisions regarding marriage and other social issues such as mediating between the husband and wife or the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law etc. The number of such experience of the left-behind wives is not substantial. However, such roles are important indicator of expanding the power base of the left-behind wives.

Shirina (34) is from Sunamganj district. She is good at mediation of marital conflict within the extended family as well as among neighbours. In her own words, "My husband has migrated to South Africa two years ago. By the grace of Allah, he earns a handsome amount. I do not have to think about extra income like other wives of my neighbourhood. After taking care of my children, I can give time in resolving social problems".

Salma Akter (26) describes that her experience of going to bank for collecting remittance have exposed her to different types of networks of women. In her words, "I got to know about government extension officers on farming through these women. More importantly, while standing on queue for receiving remittance, we discuss our hardship on staying without husband. This gives me strength". This section shows that a section of the left-behind wives do take part in wider social issues.

5.4 Agency in Overcoming Social Cost

In section one of this chapter, it has been seen that various types of social costs are borne by the left-behind wives. Along with increased workload and loneliness, power conflict within the family, the women encounter new forms of challenges while

interacting with different public sphere and social institutions. However, some of the women have transformed these challenges into opportunities through their agency.

Farzana Begum of Kalihati was married off to Matin Mia when she was only 14 years old. Her husband had been working in Saudi Arabia at that time. Her mother passed away when she was very young. Eventually her father got married again. Once her father got married, she has never been at ease in her father's house. In fact, after her marriage she has experienced more love at her in-law's house. She was studying in Class VIII when she got married. She was very keen to continue her studies. She could convince her husband whom she only met three times, to allow her to continue with study. Her in-laws supported her all the way through. By taking one step at a time, she completed her SSC, then HSC and just recently, she has finished her graduation. In her words, "I became confident as I was successfully completing each degree. I even travelled to Saudi Arabia alone and spent a month with my husband. My husband is very keen on my seven years old daughter's education. I try to make my husband happy by ensuring good result of my daughter. I am now looking for a job. Until I get a job, I am tutoring a few children at home. I developed myself into a confident person with the help of my in-laws and my husband". Farzana's story shows that women's empowerment become relatively easier if she receives support from family.

Jakia Begum's (32) husband has been working in Saudi Arabia since 2012. She and her two sons stay with her in-laws. Jakia says, "Before migrating abroad, my husband has been sitting idle at home although he has a bachelor degree. He did not want to work under anyone. He did not even allow me to do a job. He attempted to set a business with his parents' money and failed. My father-in-law then sent him to Saudi Arabia for work. He is lucky with his employer and earning a decent salary. My father-in-law is relieved that he is working. Over the years I have first convinced my father-in-law that I need to work. Later, he convinced my husband to allow me to

work outside home. The process was not easy but I managed. Now I am working as a family planning health worker and my in-laws take care of my two sons when I am not home”. This shows that the husband’s migration actually helped his wife in creating scope to pursue her career.

Shaila (21) is from Sunamganj district. Her husband has migrated to Oman. She stays with her in-laws. Her husband sends the remittance to his father. If Shaila needs any money she has to get it from her father-in-law via her mother-in-law. Besides her father-in-law is quite strict as well and didn’t approve of Shaila to go out. She says, “I had to innovate different ways to cope with the situation. Some of the essential work that involved going out, I manage them through my brother. This has been possible because my parental home and in-law’s home is close by. I negotiated with my husband that I will not be asking for money from my father-in-law. Now at the beginning of every month my father-in-law gives me an allowance for bearing my personal expenses. I have also managed to overcome the restriction on my movement from my father-in-law by convincing my mother-in-law to accompany me to different places. I have learnt to pursue things which I feel necessary without creating tension”.

These in-depth interviews demonstrate that supportive environment in the household facilitates the process of self-advancement. However, the left-behind wives have demonstrated their negotiating skill in pursuing certain goals even in those families where patriarchal social norms of control on the women’s mobility still remained strong. Some left-behind wives have developed their own strategies to face social scrutiny which are described below.

Communication as a Method of Increasing Agency

Connectivity with family is of critical importance to the migrants and their left-behind wives. Almost every internal and international migrant maintained a regular communication with their left-behind family members. The method of communication has changed

drastically over the last 20 years. The advent of new technology and the access to internet in remote villages have brought in a major change in the lives of the migrants and their left-behind wives. Ruzina Akter’s (27) husband has been working in Mauritius for last five years. She says, “I talk to my husband multiple times a day through *IMO* video calls. We discuss both important as well as unimportant issues and take many decisions together. Getting to see his face daily helps me to cope with my loneliness. I do the extra work happily in his absence. Sometimes, my neighbours say negative things about me. I discuss those with my husband and he advises me to ignore them. Gradually I have learnt how to do that”.

Table 5.4.1 shows the methods that have been used by the left-behind wives to communicate with their migrant husbands. Mobile phone has been the most popular means of communication between the international male migrants and their left-behind wives. Ninety-six percent of the left-behind wives communicate with their husbands via mobile phone.

Table 5.4.1: Method of communication with the migrant husband

Method of communication	Internal (%)	International (%)
Mobile phone	100.0	95.9
IMO	9.2	74.0
WhatsApp	0.0	0.4
Viber	0.0	0.0
Messenger	0.0	0.1
Skype	0.0	0.0
VOIP	0.0	0.6
Letter	0.0	0.2
Others	0.4	0.6
Total no. of cases	262	824

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

The online messaging and chatting app *IMO* were mentioned as the second most popular method of communication. Seventy-four percent of the left-behind wives have maintained communication through *IMO* app. On the contrary, although all of the internal migrants and their left-behind wives use mobile phone, only 9

percent use *IMO* app. The lesser use of *IMO* between the husbands and wives of the internal migrant household is due to the fact that they get to see each other more often and perhaps for this reason, the keenness to see each other while talking is less.

Online communication has apparently reduced the struggle of the left-behind wives of staying without the physical presence of their husbands.

It also helps in a major way to counter severe criticisms and prejudices against the left-behind wives. Sahana Akhter (36) of Tangail district mentions, “Even a few years back, my husband was always suspicious about my mobility, like where I am going and with whom I am meeting and so on. Once he told me that one of his friends from Bogura now has Filipina girlfriend in Singapore and that he no longer sends money home. After hearing that, I have become worried if something like that happens to him as well. Earlier, only my husband used to call me. Now I also contact him through *IMO*”.

Easy communication has the flip side as well. Compared to before when mobile phone was not so common, nowadays the migrant husband is more equipped to monitor his left-behind wife. Sometimes such monitoring does not allow development of independent decision-making skills of the left-behind wife. Shiuly (45) is from Mirsarai. Her husband calls her all the time and pressures her to monitor the tenants of their Mirsarai house. In her words, “My father-in-law has constructed a two-storied house in Mirsarai town with my husband’s earnings from Saudi Arabia. That house is rented out and my father-in-law has been looking after that. Now I have to look after that house and collect rents after he passed away. My husband is upset with me as he thinks I cannot do the task properly. He wants me to follow-up continuously with the tenant for payment of rent on time. He cannot rely on me. I also get agitated and get upset with him”. Around one-fifth of the left-behind wives

have been facing similar situation. Cell phones have given the migrant husbands the tool to monitor their wives continuously.

Table 5.4.2 shows the frequency of communication between the migrant husbands and their left-behind wives. Seventy-four percent of the international male migrants communicate with their left-behind wives almost every day. About 21 percent of them talk to their wives at least once in a week. Around 5 percent communicate once in a month and less than 1 percent once in three months. A substantial majority (84%) of the internal male migrants communicate with their wives almost every day. About 14 percent of the internal migrants talk to their wives once in a week and 2 percent communicate at least once in a month.

Table 5.4.2: Frequency of communication with the migrant husband

Frequency	Internal (%)	International (%)
Almost everyday	84.3	73.9
Once a week	14.2	21.0
Once a month	1.5	4.5
Once in three months	0.0	0.5
Currently not in contact (above 3 months)	0.0	0.1
Total no. of cases	261	804

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Frequency of Coming Home

Family visit is an important avenue for reducing many of the social costs faced by the migrant families. For the internal migrants, visiting home is relatively easy. In the last 6 months, 22 percent of the internal male migrants have visited the family members twice, 14 percent have visited 3 times, another 20 percent have visited 5 to 7 times and 23 percent have visited more than 10 times. Around 1 percent have not visited the left-behind family members in the past six months. Those who have visited 10 times or more are in fact circular migrants. They go to cities, work there for 20 to 25 days and then come back to the village and stay until their income is

finished. They again go to work and after couple of weeks come back.

Table 5.4.3: Frequency of coming home of the male migrants

Frequency	Return of internal migrants over last 6 months (%)	Return of international migrants over last 3 years (%)
0	1.3	5.7
1	2.7	71.0
2	22.2	15.6
3	14.2	7.7
4	9.8	0.0
5-7	20.0	0.0
8-10	6.7	0.0
10+	23.1	0.0
No. of cases	225	544

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

The majority of the international male migrants visited their left-behind family members only once in the past 3 years. About 71 percent of them visited their left-behind wives only once and 16 percent visited twice in the same period. About 6 percent of the male migrants could not come home from abroad in the past 3 years.

Compared to the left-behind wives of the internal migrants, the stress level of the left-behind wives of the international migrants is much higher. The type of stresses may range from fear about sexual vulnerability of the husband to control by the in-laws or inability to manage education of the children, burden of extra work etc. Perhaps the ability of the internal migrants to move between home and workplace helps them to share responsibilities and reduce some of the burden of the left-behind wives, whereas long time absence of the international migrant husbands increases the scope of low-keyed stress and in extreme cases, occasional nervous breakdown of few of the left-behind wives.

Issues Discussed during Last Visit: Table 5.4.4 shows that the children's future and their education was the top priority for the left-

behind wives and the migrant husbands of both internal and international migrant households during the last visit. About 27 percent left-behind wives of the international migrants and 30 percent left-behind wives of the internal migrants have discussed their children's education and future. About 23 percent of the left-behind wives of the international migrants have also discussed about building a new house or purchasing land with their migrant husbands in last visit to the family. Discussion on construction of house and buying land is comparatively lower (16%) in case of the left-behind wives of the internal migrants. About 12 percent left-behind wives of the international migrants and 18 percent left-behind wives of the internal migrants discussed about the household management with their partner during the last visit.

This section demonstrates that the children's education is always the highest priority of the migrant households. Another major target of the international migrants is to construct new home or purchase land, therefore, discussion on these issues also surfaces more in case of the international migrants.

Table 5.4.4: Topic of discussion with husband during last visit

Topic of discussion	Internal (%)	International (%)
About children's future and their education	30.4	26.5
Building new house/ buying land	16.1	23.0
Household management	18.0	12.2
Marriage of children	3.7	6.3
Health	1.8	2.3
On paying debt	0.5	2.1
Taking another child/ family planning	3.7	3.2
About migrant's own future	1.4	5.1
Economic affairs	11.1	5.5
Usual talk of husband and wife	26.7	29.9
Others	1.8	2.1
Total no. of cases	217	525

Source: SDC and RMMRU Household Survey on Social Cost of Migration, 2018

Note: Each cell represents percentage of total number of response

Chapter Conclusion

The chapter begins with an overview of the social cost of migration experienced by the left-behind wives. Loneliness, lack of companionship, burden of work, imposition of restriction by the in-laws, lack of autonomy, occasional nervous breakdown and lack of appreciation of the left-behind wives' role are some of the social costs identified by these women. Along with these traditional ones, conflict between the husband and wife over family decision-making as well as implementation, over monitoring by the husband, physical insecurity, fear of sexual harassment of the young left-behind wives as well as the adolescent daughters of the migrants and psychosocial stress are newer forms of social costs. Negative remarks from the extended family as well as the outsiders are another important stress particularly faced by the left-behind wives of the international migrants. The costs borne by the left-behind wives vary on the basis of age of the women, their location and nature of the household they live in. The young wives staying in an extended family are more likely to experience higher restriction on movement and lack of autonomy. The women from all age groups are more likely to be blamed for disrespecting dominant social norms of public and private divide of work. The women from both the groups are also likely to be equally lonely.

In the absence of the migrant husbands, the left-behind wives managed their families by undertaking innovative steps. Unlike earlier time, the left-behind wives under this study have not merged their households with the extended families. On the contrary, around 7 percent of the left-behind wives of the international migrants who initially have been staying with their in-laws in the extended families have subsequently moved to independent homes. The left-behind wives themselves shoulder a large portion of the responsibilities of their migrant husbands along with their traditional role of cooking, cleaning, child rearing. In the absence of their husbands, their involvement in taking family members to the doctors and buying medicine as well as participation in purchase of

household utensils increased manifold. Overseeing house construction and repair is another new addition of work for the left-behind wives of the international migrants. They have taken help from their children and father-in-laws mainly on paying bills, cultivation and lease of land and taking the children to places. Some of the wives staying in a nuclear family are overburdened with work and are subjected to psychological and physical insecurity related to their adolescent girl children as well as fear of losing assets including land. However, most of them also enjoy greater autonomy and scope for participation in both public and private spheres compared to those who live in the extended family.

Compared to before, now the international migrants can communicate with their families more frequently. As high as 74 percent of the left-behind wives of the international migrants talk to their husbands every day. The highest used method of communication is cell phone, followed by *IMO*. Development of frequent communication helps the left-behind wives and their migrant husbands in managing loneliness. It also has increased husbands' control over financial matters particularly in respect to use of remittance. Besides, a section of the international male migrants have used communication tool to monitor day-to-day movements of their left-behind wives.

Along with the increased sphere of participation in household management, a small number of women also participate in wider social institutions such as decisions in the extended family on marriage and performance of rituals. Through performing responsibilities beyond their immediate households, the women have also enjoyed greater power. Whether they would be able to retain those powers once their spouses return, would depend on their agency.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary and Conclusions

This study attempts to understand the social costs of internal and international migration in Bangladesh. The majority of the research on the impact of labour migration treats the household as the unit of analysis and concludes that the households benefit economically and socially from migration of one or a few members. These studies demonstrate that migration reduces household poverty, increases income and expands the range of goods and services consumed by the household members, particularly in case of those households which are involved in international migration. However, in reaching such conclusion, economic costs of migration are essentially taken into consideration overlooking the social costs. While investigating the social cost of migration instead of looking at the household as a unit, this study attempts to explicate the social costs of migration borne by different groups of the household members – the left-behind wives of the male migrants, the left-behind husbands of the female migrants and the girl and boy children of both male and female migrants.

Conceptual and Methodological Framework

This study is based on the conceptual understanding that social costs are integral part of migration experience. However, through meaningful policy intervention and social awareness the harmful social costs can be reduced. The aim of the study is to locate how the members of the left-behind families continuously negotiate with the negative social outcomes of migration and transform some of

the challenges into opportunities by questioning the social order, by creating new norms and in the process, developing their own agency.

The study applied both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative research involved a household survey of the internal, international and non-migrant families in 12 districts of Bangladesh. In 2014 and 2017, RMMRU has conducted two waves of a panel survey on 20 districts. Survey method applied in the current study selected those households from the panel which have the left-behind male and female spouses of the migrants and also those which have the children of the migrants below the age of 18 years. The survey altogether covers 1,741 households. 279 of them are the internal migrant households, 1,061 international migrant households and 401 are the non-migrant households. A total of 4,884 members of these 1,741 households have been interviewed. Among them, 135 are the left-behind husbands, 1,094 are the left-behind wives, 286 are the non-migrant husbands, 382 are the non-migrant wives, 2,216 are the left-behind children of the migrant households and 771 are the children of the non-migrant households. Qualitative data includes 300 in-depth interviews of the left-behind male and female spouses and children.

Socio-demographic characteristics: Chapter II sketches the national scenario of international labour migration and socio-demographic profile of the migrant and non-migrant households surveyed under the study. The chapter highlights that the average family size of the migrant as well as non-migrant households is four. On an average, these families have two children. The average age of the left-behind and non-migrant husband is within the range of 40 to 45 years and the left-behind and non-migrant wife is within the range of 30 to 35 years. Major occupations of the left-behind husbands are agriculture, service, business etc. Ninety-five percent of the left-behind wives are housewives. In both internal and international migrant households, the left-behind wives and husbands receive significant amounts of remittances. In majority

cases, remittances constitute the sole source of family income.

Left-behind children: Chapter III begins with identifying the social costs experienced by the migrant children. Insecurity, loneliness, missing one or both parents and absence of the mother during sickness are some of the major difficulties faced by the children of the migrant workers. In the absence of the parent, the children of the migrants also shoulder additional responsibility for household management. The responsibilities borne by the children of the migrant workers are very much gendered in nature. By engaging in activities such as cooking, cleaning and providing care to siblings, the workload of the girl child increases. The boy child assumes additional responsibility in day-to-day grocery shopping, payment of bills and supporting agricultural work.

There is a major concern about the children of the migrants missing out on their childhood and being burdened with household chores in the absence of one of their parents. An interesting finding of the study is that somewhat similar percentages of the children of the non-migrant households are also involved in household chores. However, the time spent by the children of the non-migrant families on household duties is less than the children of the migrants. Fifteen percent of the left-behind children perceived that their education was hampered due to shouldering of additional responsibilities in the absence of the migrant parent.

Educational outcome of the children of the migrant and non-migrant households are quite good and similar. Eighty-six percent children of the international migrants, 85 percent of the non-migrants and 82 percent of the internal migrants have passed in all the subjects and been promoted to the next class. All types of households put major emphasis on the ability on learning English as a communicative language and kindergartens are preferred for the children. It is, however, mostly the international migrant households who can afford sending children to kindergartens. Expenditure on private coaching is also the highest in the international migrant households.

The school attendance outcome on the children of the internal and international migrants is also gendered. Compared to the children of the male migrants, school attendance of the children of the female migrants is lower. Ninety-three percent children of the male migrants are attending school regularly and 86 percent of the children of the female migrants go to school regularly. This reflects the fact that in the absence of the male migrants, the left-behind wives make sure that the children attend school. However, in the absence of the female migrants, their husbands or other family members have not been as successful in this respect as the left-behind wives of the male migrants. It is well understood that both left-behind wives and husbands are equally interested in the children's education. However, constant presence of the left-behind wives at home and their vigilant eyes create more enabling environment for ensuring regular attendance at school.

The study found that parental migration affects the children's psychological development, particularly early childhood development. However, the children of the migrants also develop their agency while coping with the absence of their migrant parent through employing different methods. This includes taking part in games and sports, watching TV, using mobile phone, spending time with friends, spending more time with the left-behind parent and talking with the migrant parent in destination. Developing intimate friendship is another way of coping by the children of the migrants. Compared to a girl child, a boy child use friendship and play sports in the field in adjusting with stresses and insecurities created by parental migration. The girl child copes with the absence of the migrant parent through watching TV and conversing with the parents. Religious and cultural practices also create opportunities for both boy and girl child. Seventy-seven percent of the children of the migrants are involved in different religious activities and festivals. This finding, however, should not be misinterpreted as migration imposes conservative values. This is because equal percentage of the children of the non-migrant households also participates in religious activities. It is important to note that 15 percent of the children have problem in coping with the absence of

a parent. They seclude themselves from others and spend leisure time on their own. They also do not make any effort to overcome loneliness and sadness. The percentage of those who do not take any action is much higher in case of the girl child. Thirty percent of the girl children of the international migrants do not take any action to cope with loneliness and sadness compared to 18 percent of the boy children.

Left-behind husbands: Chapter IV concentrates on the experience of the left-behind husbands. Loneliness, lack of companionship, burden of additional household responsibilities, psychological stress, disagreement with the wife, fear about physical and sexual insecurity of the wife in destination and inability to handle sickness of the children are seen by the left-behind husbands as major social costs that they have to shoulder as consequence of migration of their wives. A majority of the left-behind husbands have been managing their households on their own. Some of them take part in cooking, cleaning, washing etc. They also develop partnership with their children. Around one-fifth of the left-behind husbands have received support from their extended family members such as parents, parents-in-law and siblings to manage the households. Some left-behind husbands have perceived that participation in certain type of household work in the absence of their wives is temporary and they will cease performing these tasks once their wives return.

Compared to an earlier study conducted in 2001, more left-behind husbands have come out of traditional gendered division of labour and shouldered responsibilities such as medical care of the children, the elderly parents' care and more importantly, one-fifth of them got themselves involved in cooking. It is evident that a large number of the left-behind husbands have transformed themselves into primary care givers. They have breached the dominant view that the mother being the care giver and the father as the breadwinner. Left-behind husbands have taken their daughters' support in cleaning the homestead and sons' support in day-to-day grocery shopping and

payment of bills. Around 70 percent of the left-behind husbands do not mind doing these jobs. However, 30 percent of them have not been comfortable performing those tasks as they felt those tasks are to be performed by women. Compared to the past, more and more migrant couples are engaging in joint decision-making on matters pertaining to education and marriage of the children and their future. In the absence of the migrant wife, 41 percent of the left-behind husbands are taking decisions on their own about the use of remittances, in 35 percent cases decisions are jointly taken by the left-behind husbands and their migrant wives. In 9 percent cases, the migrant wives take decision on their own. In the rest 15 percent cases, decisions are taken by the female migrants' parents, siblings and children.

One of the stresses that the left-behind husbands go through is societal scrutiny. Society looks down upon them and do not treat them as 'man enough'. A section of the left-behind husbands has developed their own mechanism in dealing with perception about them. They immerse themselves in work and spend more time with the children. Some even work harder so that the wife can return quickly. The study demonstrates that due to necessity some of the left-behind husbands have redefined their masculine role by incorporating new forms of activities, which were traditionally seen as feminine. It is not clear yet, whether such changed perception of manhood will sustain once the wife returns. The mental exercise that the left-behind husbands go through creates agency within them in managing life in the absence of the wife. Therefore, it can be argued that migration exposes the left-behind husbands to a situation that generate certain transformation of values and redefines gendered division of labour.

Left-behind wives: Chapter V presents the social costs borne by the left-behind wives. Earlier research on the left-behind wives has demonstrated that decision-making authority as well as autonomy of some of the left-behind wives increased due to migration of the husbands. But such increase of power is contingent upon age and

education of the left-behind wife as well as on the family structure. Some of them break certain traditional norms and some are successful in breaking the gendered division of labour at home as well as outside. However, such changes can be experienced in exchange of shouldering major increase in substantial workload. This study also finds that the women have successfully shouldered many of the new responsibilities, which earlier have been performed by their husbands. These include more participation in day-to-day grocery shopping, purchase of household utensils, repair and construction of household, paying bills etc. The women hardly expressed discontent with such increased workload. The left-behind wives, along with their children and with occasional support of the extended family, have been able to run the household without serious problem. Rather, they have conceptualised increased workload as their contribution in creating a better future for their households. A section of the left-behind wives felt more confident once they have been able to perform new types of jobs in the absence of the husbands. However, things are more complex at present. Traditional control through the extended family has reduced as more and more of the left-behind migrant families have become nuclear in form. It seems the in-laws are less powerful in the context of nuclear households but influence of the husband through regular communication, particularly via cell phone and internet, has increased. This brings in both positive and negative outcomes for gender relationship. Getting suggestions from the husband takes out the fear of taking wrong decision from the left-behind wives whereas, excessive dictation from the migrant husbands on certain issues, deprive them from developing their own capacity to decide independently.

Earlier studies show that in the absence of the husbands, the left-behind wives who are relatively older, have a few children and reside in a nuclear family, have participated effectively in public sphere of work and take independent decisions. A majority of the families under this study is living in a nuclear set up and the women are performing all types of work such as taking the family members

to the doctors, paying bills, dealing with banks and maintaining family savings and looking after homestead construction. Earlier in a situation where maintaining day-to-day communication was hard, there was little scope for the husbands to engage in day-to-day monitoring of the tasks that their wives have been performing in their absence. Such situation provided the left-behind wives a certain degree of autonomy in decision-making. The advent of cell phones has altered scenario as the migrant husbands are able to monitor the additional tasks that their wives perform in their absence. The women's participation in agricultural production-related decision-making is a good example of such monitoring. The study finds that a large number of families, except a handful, are not involved in agriculture. In those families which are involved in agriculture, the migrant husbands have a bigger say. In majority cases, these husbands now instruct their wives over phone on when to purchase seeds, what type of seeds to be purchased, how much water should be given and when and at what price the produce should be sold.

In the absence of the husband, some of the left-behind wives come out of seclusion and get involved in social issues. Those include participation in the extended family decisions regarding marriage and other social events. Some left-behind wives have taken part in mediation of marital conflict within the extended family as well as among neighbours. Due to the absence of their male counterpart, the left-behind wives have more opportunity to participate in these events. This, in the long run, creates a new network to pursue other social goals. This is, however, not solely related to migration of the husband. It is also due to other broader social and economic transformations that are at work in Bangladesh and are changing the role of the women in rural society from being restricted in private domain. The left-behind wives who have some education are more capable to gain from such participation.

The left-behind wives also bear some major social costs for their husbands' migration. Loneliness, restrictions on movement, control

by the husband's family as well as by the husband, being overwhelmed with rearing of the children, the children's education, physical insecurity, fear of sexual harassment, psychological stress, occasional nervous breakdown are important among them. The absence of the husbands deprives them of the companionship. To them, spending days and months without their husbands is lonely, tiresome and difficult. This sometimes takes the women on the verge of mental breakdown.

Another major challenge is the societal perception that they are spending the husband's money and perhaps pursuing relationships with other men. On many occasions, friends and relatives convey negative messages to the husband about their left-behind wives. This on occasions creates distrust and distance between the husband and wife. The left-behind wives get worried that negative statements can strain the marriage and may even lead to dissolution of the marriage. Regular communication through cell phone and *IMO* helps the left-behind wives to counter some of these aspersions.

It is interesting to observe how the societal discourse on the left-behind wife is dominated by questioning her sexual integrity, whereas there is hardly any literature on migration which looks into sexual behaviour of the husband living in the countries of destination. This is also not an issue in respect to the left-behind husbands.

Major Conclusions: This study concludes that economic gains of migration are enjoyed by the nation at large as well as by the migrant households as a unit. However, the social costs of migration are mostly borne by the individual household members: the left-behind husbands, wives, children, elderly and siblings. The social costs borne by the individual groups vary significantly. Therefore, interventions to reduce the harmful social costs should be different for different groups. So far, the government and civil society organizations including the NGOs have failed to incorporate the

issue of the left-behind family members of the migrants in the mainstream policy and programme activities.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Specific Recommendations

The Left-behind Children

- Community level awareness programme is required to make families conscious not to impose excessive household chores, including care work on the children of the migrants. The awareness campaign should be designed in accordance to the differential needs and priorities of the boy child and the girl child.
- In order to cope with the trauma of the absence of a parent, gender and age segregated counseling programmes need to be organised both by the government agencies and civil society organizations.
- Special care support needs to be designed for the migrant families which have children with disability.
- The boy and girl child of the migrants should be included in programmes such as the children's parliament. Clubs and libraries should be set up catering to the needs of the children in general and those should be inclusive of the children of the migrants.

The Left-behind Husbands

- Negative mindset of society about the left-behind husbands has to be replaced by underscoring their positive contribution in making their wives' migration effort successful.
- As part of conscious effort to recognize the contribution, the term 'left-behind husband' should be replaced by 'husband left-in-charge'.

- The contribution of the husbands left-in-charge in breaking the traditional gendered division of labour should be underscored in public discussions. Among other things, this can be done through highlighting in the media, literature and cultural activities.
- In order to cope with the absence of the migrant wife and manage the responsibility of the household and looking after the young and adolescent children, age segregated counseling and human relationship training programmes need to be organised by the government agencies particularly by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

The Left-behind Wives

- As part of conscious effort to recognize the contribution, the term 'left-behind wife' should be replaced by 'wife left-in-charge'.
- Societal suspicion of the wives left-in-charge pursuing other relationships has to be replaced by a deeper understanding of their contribution to the children's education, caring the elderly and participation in male dominated spheres of work.
- After the return of their migrant husbands, the wives left-in-charge should be encouraged to continue to perform some of the functions traditionally viewed as male work.
- As it is suggested in case of the husbands left-in-charge, the role of the wives left-in-charge should also be highlighted in public discussion, mainstream cultural activities, the media and literature.

6.2.2 General Recommendations

- Currently the government and the development partners are involved in the preparation of a Comprehensive Action Plan on Migration. Needs and interests of the left-in-charge spouses and the left-behind children should be well integrated in that document.

- Wage Earners' Welfare Board of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment needs to incorporate the left-behind children and the left-in-charge husbands and wives as their important stakeholders.
- Support services to the left-behind families should be made integral part of Wage Earners' Welfare Fund programme.
- Accessing the left-behind family members of the migrants become difficult due to lack of data. BMET can start developing a database of the left-behind families of the migrant workers. This can be done at the time when BMET registers the migrants and provide them smart cards.
- At bilateral and multilateral forums, the government and civil society should demand granting of annual leave to the migrants on a regular basis. This would reduce the problem of loneliness and isolation to some extent.
- The female domestic workers right to communicate with the children should be ensured during bilateral negotiation with destination countries. Implementation of the rights ensured in bilateral negotiation and Memorandum of Understandings should be monitored by the Bangladesh embassies at the destination countries.
- The findings of the study demonstrate that further analysis is required on social costs of migration on other members of the households. Elderly care may suffer due to the absence of the male or female migrants who were the primary care-giver of the elderlies. Therefore, in order to organise alternative services it is particularly important to understand the gap of care on the wellbeing of the parents of the migrants. Social costs borne by the siblings and the returnee female migrants also need to be studied.

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