

Impact of Covid 19 on Left Behind Migrant Households

Study conducted by 9 BCSM member organizations
under the leadership of Tasneem Siddiqui

BCSM and RMMRU eSymposium under

Build Back Better Series of RMMRU.

27 July 2020

Team Members and Organisations

WARBE DF - Jasiya Khatoon

Bastob - Ranjit Chandra Das

BASUG Yar Mahbub Chowdhury

ASK - Iffat Faria Mim

RMMRU Marina Sultana

BOMSA - Farida Yesmin

YPSA - Abdus Sabur

BOAF - Nazmul Ahsan

Rights Jessore - Adv Tahmid Akash

- Research Coordination, Hossain Mohammad Fazle Jahid, Programme Officer (Legal Support), RMMRU
- Creating online research questions, monitoring data entry and data analysis – Md. Parvez Alam, Sr. IT Officer, RMMRU
- Data entry, cleaning and qualitative data processing: Ashraqa Selim and Saira Afrin of RMMRU

Introduction

- Focuses on impact on Covid 19 on left behind family members of international migrant households of Bangladesh
- Since April 2020 RMMRU has been articulating demand for targeted services to the left behind families
- Along with mental stress about their migrant member's exposure to risk a section of them are in deep financial stress.
- BCSM – a platform of civil society has appealed to PM to create an emergency fund to support the migrants and their family members
- In order to convince the policy makers for such action BCSM initiated this research

Aims of the Research

- Coping strategies of left behind households with Covid 19
- Extent of anxiety of left behind families regarding their migrant members
- Nature and extent of remittance flow during crisis
- The level of inclusion of migrant HHs in existing public, private and NGO assistance programmes
- Coping mechanism of HHs through gendered lens
- Policy implications of the findings

Methodology

- Telephone interview of 200 households
- Conducted by 9 BCSM member organizations in their respective project areas in 21 districts
- Have not followed rigorous quantitative methodology and it is not nationally representative
- Helps understand lived reality of the migrant households

District of Origin of 200 Migrant Households (HHs)

Migration Households			
District	Returnee %	Family %	Total
Dhaka	26	25	51
Cumilla	5	6	11
Narail	6	5	11
Jhenaidah	5	5	10
Jessore	14	9	23
Rajshahi	1	1	2
Chattogram	10	23	33
Shariatpur	1	4	5
Tangail	10	16	26
Narsingdi	5	1	6
Pirojpur	1		1
Barisal	2		2
Jhalokathi	1		1
Meherpur	1		1
Natore	4		4
chandpur	1		1
Feni	1		1
Madaripur	1		1
kishoreganj	4		4
Gazipur	1		1
Cox's Bazar		5	5
Total	100	100	200

- Interview of 100 left behind families in 11 districts
 - 26 female migrant HHs
 - 74 male migrant HHs
- Interview 100 arbitrarily returned migrants covering 21 districts
 - 98 male
 - 2 female

Age and duration of migration

- Average age
 - female migrants 33 years
 - male migrants 36 years
- Duration of stay
 - Female 6 years
 - Male 9 years
- Average family size
 - 5.1 members

- Migrant HHs going through anxiety about their family members abroad
- Anxieties experienced by male and female migrant HH members vary according the gender of the migrant

Experience of women migrants

Home bound domestic workers

Nonpayment of wages, increased workload and reduced communication with family

Outbound domestic and other workers

Job loss, nonpayment of wages, reduced frequency of communication with family, and anxiety

Shahnaz (Saudi Arabia) She broke her hand. Employers are not paying her salary as they are covering the treatment. Earlier she used to ring up everyday, now as she cannot go out due to Covid and also do not have money to top up mobile. She rings up only once a week

Shumi Khatun (Dubai) is an outbound domestic worker and used to work in 3 houses. Two employers have terminated her job. She is facing major problem in maintaining her subsistence. She is distressed. Now calls every ten days, instead of every day

Nazneen Akhtar (Saudi Arabia) could not send any remittance since December. Over two months her work load has increased. Recently she developed skin disease. Employers are sympathetic and bought medicine for her

Experience of Male Migrants

Three types of challenges highlighted:

- Health, Mental Stress, Financial

– Health related problems

- Abdul, an irregular migrant, was severely sick. Before he passed away Abdul informed his family that he could not go out to secure treatment
- Nafiz informed that if one person of a camp is detected positive, the whole camp is put in isolation. No work, no wage, no food

– Mental stress

- Confined in one room since 20th January and feel suffocated
- How to clear the loans incurred to migrate
- Uncertain future in destination
- Visa to expire soon, police may catch and send back

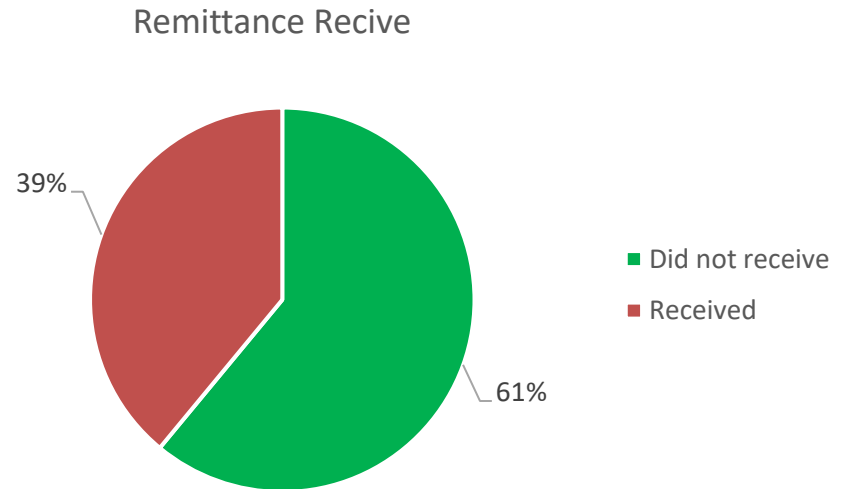
Experience of Male Migrants II

Financial

- Due to irregular status cannot go out to look for work
- Salary has been halved
- No more overtime work
- Surviving by taking loan from fellow workers
- Shop shut and products expired. How to manage the loss

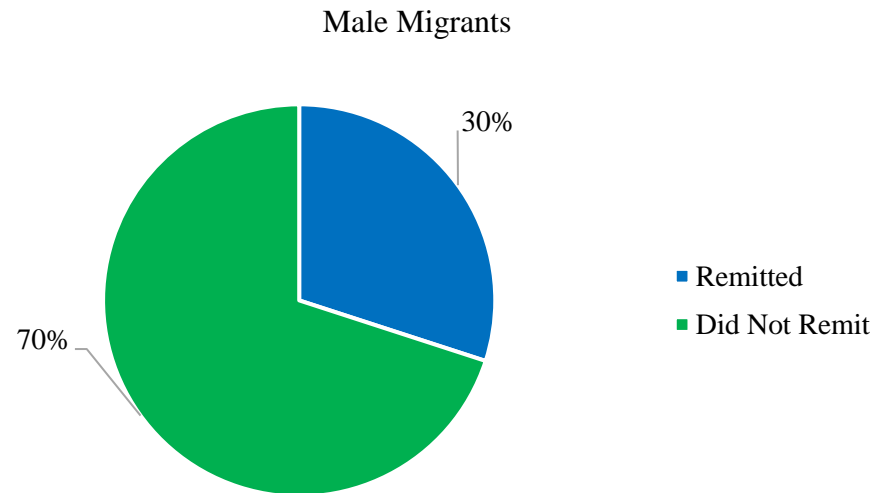
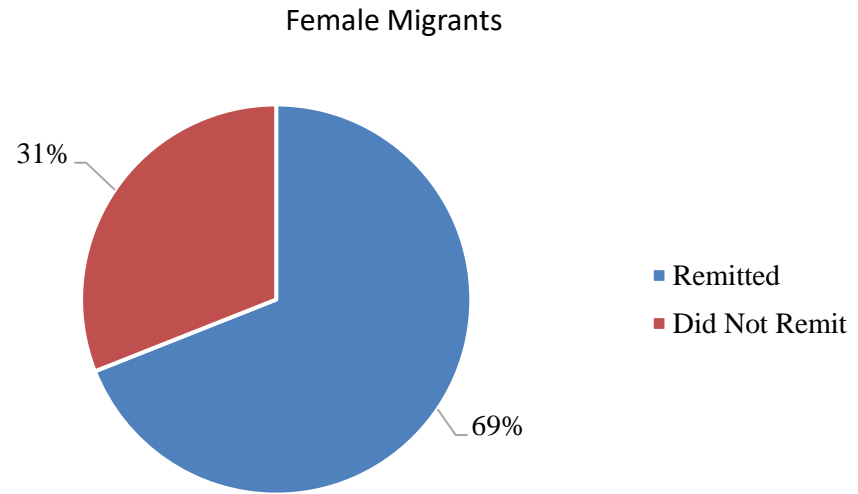
Remittance Flow

- 61 percent did not receive any remittance over the last three months
- The 39 percent received
- Those who received on an average got Taka 30,000
- In normal time these families received on average Taka 47,000 per quarter
- This means that in case of HHs that received remittances experienced a drop of 36 percent



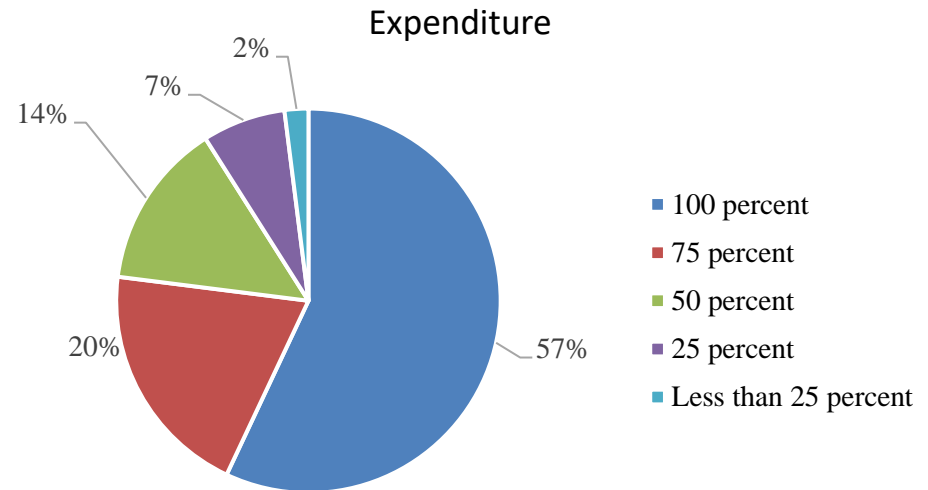
Gender Twist

- Interestingly remittance flow during Covid 19 crisis has a gender twist as well
- 69 percent of female migrants have remitted
- 30 percent of the male migrants could remit



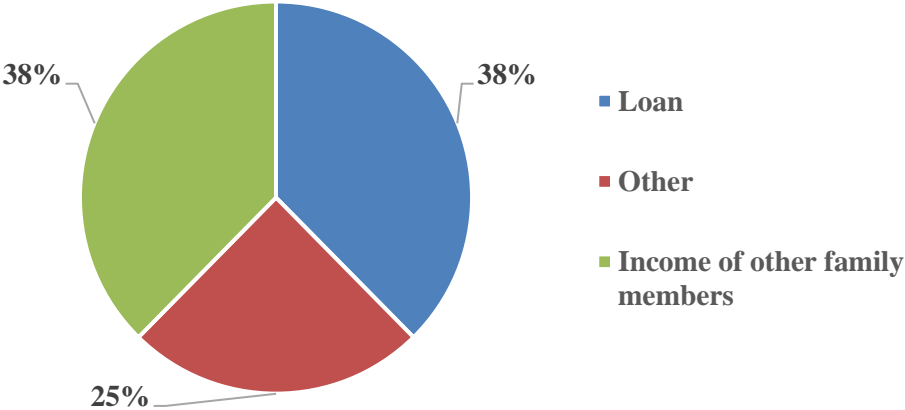
Dependence on remittance

- For 57% families remittance is the only source of income
- 3/4th portion of 18% household's income comes from remittance
- For 14% HHs remittance constitutes half of the family income

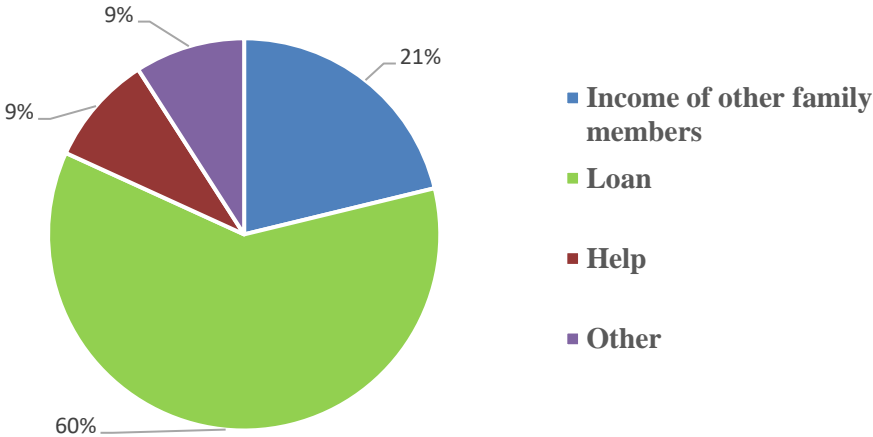


How family expenditures are met?

Female



Male



Households are managing their day to day expenditure in different ways

loan, income of other family members, assistance from others, curtailing expenditure

Loan

Again, there is a gendered difference

60% of male HHs surviving mostly on loan; for female HHs it is 38%

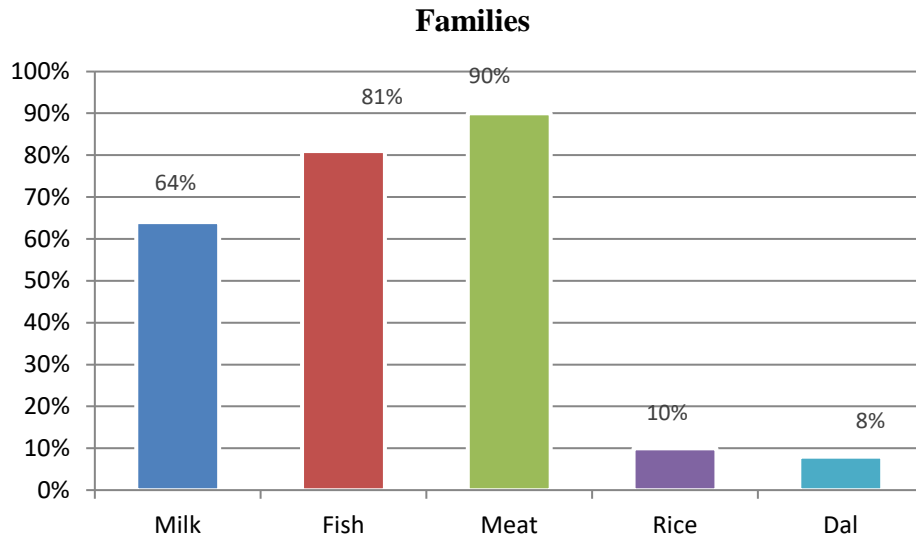
Income of other members

38% female migrant HHs has income from other members, for male HHs it is 21%

Other included curtailing certain food from diet, Curtailing family expenditures etc

How family expenditures are met?

Food Intake

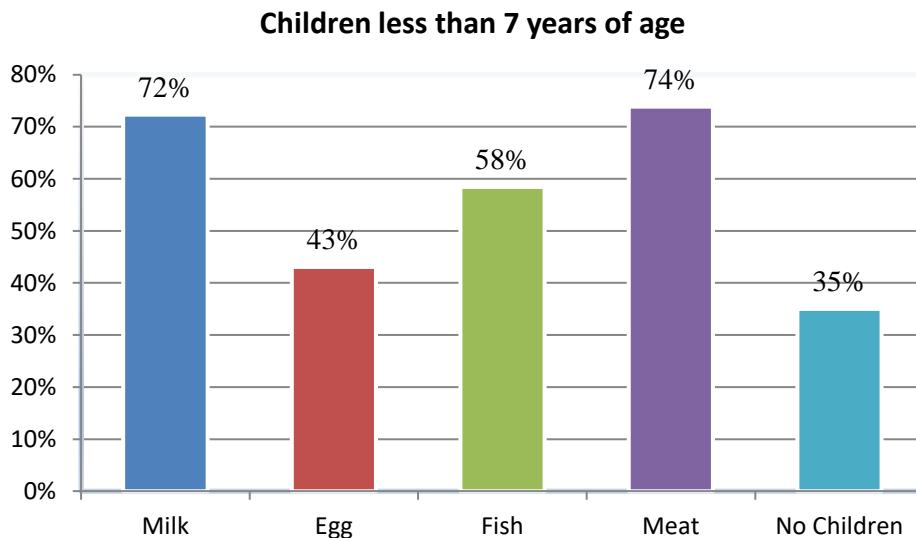


Families have brought in changes in their food Intake

63% of all HH members reduced milk consumption

81% reduced fish consumption

90% reduced meat consumption



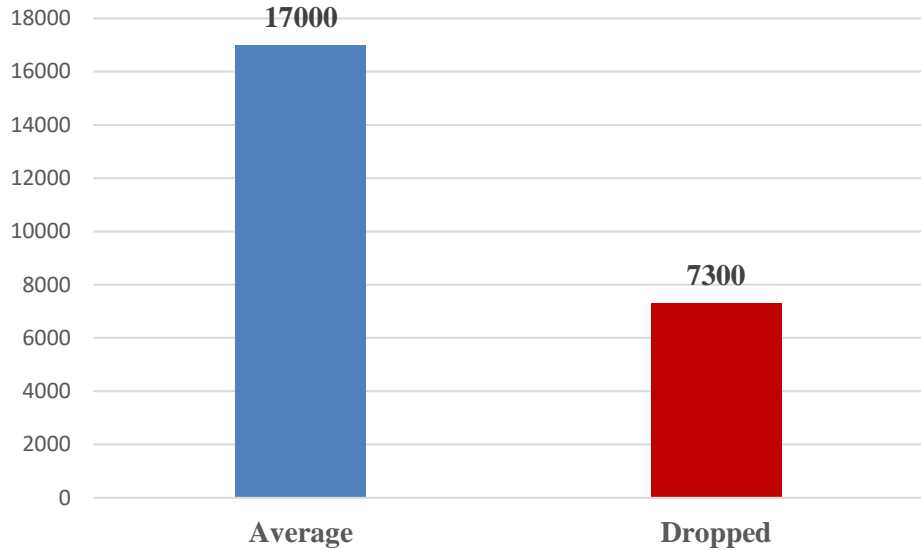
65 of these HHs have children less than 7 years of age

72% reduced milk consumption

43% egg consumption

74% meat consumption

How family expenditures are met? Curtailing expenditure



Before Covid 19

- Monthly HH expenditure on average was Tk17,000

Now

- Tk. 7,300
- 57% drop during Covid 19

Gender based violence during Covid 19

RMMRU has collected 100 cases of violence in migrant HHs

Rape

- Anwara's husband is working in Maldives. Couple of months ago she was raped by a neighbour keeping her son hostage. When her family confronted the perpetrator, Mannan apologised but later released a video of the rape in social media. A case has been lodged and Mannan is now in custody (Tangail)

Gender based violence during Covid-19

Murder

- Shahinur Begum was murdered by her husband. She lived in a joint family that was dependent on brother-in-law's remittance and her husband's earning. Due to Covid 19 income from both sources were lost. Everyone was edgy in the house and at one stage Shahinur was died after beating by her husband, mother in law and sister-in law. (Faridpur)

Depriving lawful inheritance

- Farida's husband died in Saudi Arabia. On June 5, DEMO, Tangail informed the family about the progress in compensation payment. The family prepared a forged document of divorce to deprive Farid her lawful claim (Tangail)

Recommendations

- Increase in remittance flow may not reflect that migrants are being able to cope with Covid 19 situation. Therefore there is a need to extend cash grant support to the distressed left behind families
- Effectively incorporate distressed migrant families in public assistance schemes under Covid 19
- Civil society organizations developed innovative apps and tools to provide counselling to the households in mental and financial stress
- Measures to prevent women from violence and ensure exemplary punishment to the perpetrators