

## *Obhibashir Adalat* as conduit to access justice for migrants

### Summary and Key Messages

*Obhibashir Adalat* is a live television programme aired on the DBC channel. It is one of the most impactful initiatives of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), which aims to promote accountability and transparency in migration governance. *Obhibashir Adalat* plays a significant role in mitigating fraudulent practices pervasive in the migration sector. Through this initiative RMMRU engages a wide range of stakeholders including affected migrant workers, lawyers, academics, parliamentarians, government functionaries and migration activists. The initiative also helps generate evidence for policy recommendations related to access to justice, as well as ensuring and promoting the rights of migrants and their access to services. Since 2018 the programme has played a critical role in understanding the lived experiences of migrants in accessing justice. This policy brief presents the social impact of *Obhibashir Adalat*. So far 100 episodes of the programme have been aired.



The participants of the 100th episode of *Obhibashir Adalat*

## Immediate Results of *Obhibashir Adalot*

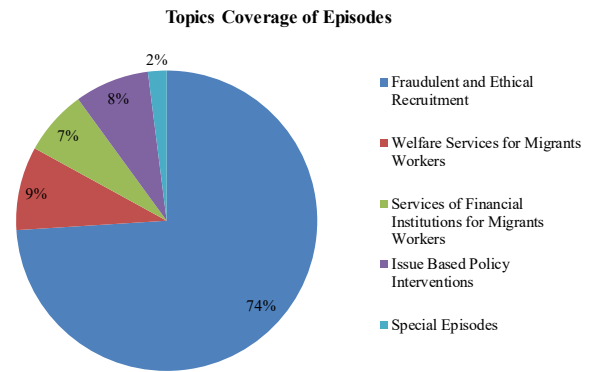
From February 2018 to April 2023 one hundred episodes of RMMRU's flagship advocacy programme *Obhibashir Adalot* have been aired in the DBC channel. In those programmes aspirant and returnee migrants and members of their families could directly raise their grievances before a two member panel comprising of migration experts, lawyers, policymakers and representatives of relevant government institutions. The latter offered their suggestions that helped aggrieved parties to seek redress of their grievances. Others, including migrants in destination countries, could also join the programme online.

- During this period, more than 2,719 aggrieved migrants secured direct support and indirect benefits.
- Affected migrants received approximately BDT 3 crore through local mediation and through intervention of the government institutions such as BMET, PKB and WEWB.
- 541 participants got the opportunity to present their cases before the government functionaries, lawyers, migration experts and MPs and received advice and referral support.
- Along with other initiatives lessons drawn from *Obhibashir Adalot* significantly contributed to the revision of the Overseas Employment and Migration Act, 2013.
- The process of regularisation of sub-agents has been accelerated through the policy discussions of migration experts, policymakers, MPs in the programme.
- The programme helped highlight the need for further decentralisation of the BMET's arbitration mechanism. It is also one of the key attributing factors behind the decentralisation of the BMET complaint system in Cumilla, Chattogram and Narsingdi,
- After the outbreak of Covid 19 based on policy recommendations in *Obhibashir Adalot* the government undertook several initiatives to extend support to the migrant workers and members of their families.

## Thematic Areas

Major labour migration issues such as unethical and fraudulent recruitment, welfare services, financial institutions' services for migrant workers, and issue-based policy intervention, were the main topics

that have been covered in various episodes of *Obhibashir Adalot*.



## Overview of *Obhibashir Adalot* (February 2018- April 2023)

**100**  
Number of Episodes

**541**  
Extend of Participation of Affected Migrants

**294**  
Commitment received from policymakers, experts and representatives of relevant institutions

**2,98,13,300 (BDT)**  
Recovered from agents and sub-agents

**500000**  
Views (Per episode on average)

**Per episode-42 calls**  
Hotline call

*Migrants cannot contact recruiting agencies without the assistance of sub-agents. So, the solution is to incorporate sub-agents into the system. I strongly advise recruiting agencies to engage certain number of agents. I plan to incorporate it in the future amendment to the law.*



-Mr. Imran Ahmad, MP, Hon'ble Minister of MoEWOE (72<sup>nd</sup> Episode, 2021)



The first pressing necessity is to develop skills for labour migration. Workers are paid less than the Contract since they are unskilled.



-Mr. Md. Salim Reza, Full-Time Member, NHRC (86 Episode, 2022)

### Obhibashir Adalat has direct impact on Complaints Management Cell run by BMET

“The number of complaints to be placed in the appropriate channel has increased since the airing of the Obhibashir Adalat programme. It has surely let the migrant workers know about the government’s mechanism to fight such cases as well as facilitate access to justice. The number has been doubled after addressing the fraudulent cases and upholding the issues in the Obhibashir Adalat”, stated Dr. Md. Nurul Islam, Former Director at Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).

Complaint Management through BMET



Source: Migration Trends Report, RMMRU, 2022

### Access to Migration and Reintegration loans from Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB)

Discussion in various episodes of Obhibashir Adalat also focused on the challenges of accessing migration and reintegration loans. Seven episodes highlighted issues of services of different institution, A higher number of applications for loan disbursement of Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) was noted. In the programmes migration experts and policymakers urged to provide hassle-free access loans for overseas job-seekers and departing migrant workers. Obhibashir Adalat is an effective advocacy

tool to raise awareness of migrant community. The data table shows an increasing trend with regard to the loan services of PKB.

Financial Year	Count	Migration Loan (In Crore)
2018-2019	7114	105.49
2019-2020	6340	108.97
2020-2021	11532	267.96
2021-2022	39228	900.22

Source: www.pkb.gov.bd

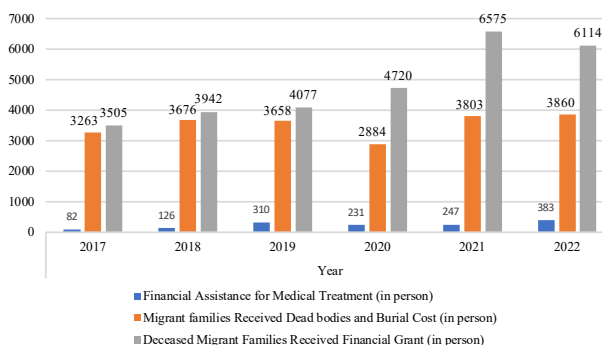
Those whose visas have expired (due to Covid 19) do not need to be concerned; their visas will be extended to re-migrate. In this regard, migrants can call our hotline number and BMET.



-Senior Secretary, Dr. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen, MoEWOE (57th Episode focused on COVID-19, 2020)

### Access to Services from Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB)

Among the 100 episodes total nine episodes of the programme highlighted procedure of receiving medical grants and death compensation from the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB). Through the programme RMMRU created mass awareness among migrant workers regarding the fact that they can lodge complaints and apply for medical assistance for injured and sick workers, disability allowance, bringing the dead body at home, transportation and burial expenses, financial assistance to the families of deceased workers abroad etc. The below data table shows the increasing trend of receiving services from WEWB.



Source: www.wewb.gov.bd



*Sub-agents need to be regularised, and RMMRU has developed an excellent model” based on the discussion on the need for regulation and recognition of sub-agents.*



*-Barrister Shameem Haider Patwari (83rd Episode, 2022)*

*Without the sub-agents it is tough for aspirant migrants from remote places to acquire services and locate recruiting agencies independently. That is why the Parliamentarians’ Caucus on Migration and Development has urged the Hon'ble Prime Minister that sub-agents be brought under regulation.*



*-Mr. Tanvir Shakil Joy (94th Episode, 2023)*

*Running a programme like Obhibashir Adalot was a long-held dream of RMMRU. I am thrilled to witness the benefits that the programme has brought to the migrants.*



*-Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui, Founding Chair, RMMRU*

## Accountability of Sub-Agents

In 2019, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh instructed the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment to provide identity cards to the sub-agents to bring transparency in this sector.

The government amended the Overseas Employment and Migrants’ Act 2013 and incorporated a provision for regularisation of the sub-agents. This was a direct result of longtime advocacy of RMMRU with the policy makers since 2001. In this regard *Obhibashir Adalot* proved to be an important platform.

74 episodes of *Obhibashir Adalot* focused on fraudulent and unethical recruitment management, which has the involvement of sub-agents and recruiting agencies. This has contributed to greater level of participation of sub-agents in local-level mediation. After airing of an episode on fraudulent cases, a sub-agent requested the affected migrant to remove the video from YouTube with the promise to solve the case lodged against him.

The Director General of BMET was present in 11 of the total 100 episodes in which he addressed the fraudulent related complaints. He took the matter seriously and committed to take necessary actions regarding access to justice in migration management.

## Acknowledgement

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*Other policy briefs of RMMRU are available on [www.rmmru.org](http://www.rmmru.org)*

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