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Migration and gender in Bangladesh: An irregular landscape

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Migration and gender in Bangladesh: An irregular landscape

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Foreword

This survey is part of a series of studies commissioned by the Work in Freedom Programme of the ILO to document the motives and trajectories of migrant women workers, and they are meant to explore the lives and work environments of women who seek work abroad. While other studies describe the working and living conditions of migrant women in specific destination countries, this particular survey is meant to analyse the context in Bangladesh that informs women's mobility and work-seeking abroad. In addition, it reviews both women and men's motives and propensity to migrate.

Despite increasing research on women's labour migration, public discourse on the topic is still influenced by assumptions that apply to men's labour migration. For example, policies on safe migration and human trafficking tend to assume that women migrate homogenously from different parts of the country. In reality, the migration of women depends on the specific context of patriarchy and how women's mobility, work-seeking and distress is socially appraised and mediated. The authors of this survey explore and meticulously elucidate these differences

in the context of Bangladesh. For example, the current discourse in Bangladesh on high recruitment fees prevailing in the country tends to assume that recruitment fees for migrant women workers are generally high as they are for male migrant workers. This study questions such assumptions basing itself on extensive field data.

More generally, the survey explores the local and regional specificities of men and women's migration and work-seeking in selected localities of Bangladesh. In this respect, it brings forth a wealth of gendered evidence that can inform policymaking in many ways at the local, national and regional levels. For example, if women from certain specific localities tend to migrate and others don't, do the current one-size-fits-all pre-departure government policies for migrant women make sense? If the cost of women's migration is significantly lower, shouldn't public policy on women's labour migration focus on improving working conditions through the work of labour attachés and consular offices rather than the current overwhelming focus on pre-departure and recruitment?

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Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BAIRA	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BMET	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CRC	Chonpara Rehabilitation Centre
DFID	Department for International Development
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
RAPID	Research and Policy Integration for Development
SANEM	South Asian Network on Economic Modeling
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
UAE	United Arab Emirates
WIF	Work in Freedom

Acknowledgements

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We thank the migrant women and men who shared information with us. They and their family members generously gave time and offered hospitality when we met them in their homes, without expecting much in return. Their collaboration and their trust made this survey possible.

The survey is the product of a team. Anisa Zaman and Hannan Biswas of Drishti Research Centre (DRC) planned the survey with the collaboration Thérèse Blanchet, Principal Investigator. Anisa and Hannan made reconnaissance visits and selected the unions to be surveyed, recruited and trained the local research assistants, and coordinated data collection. Abzal Hossen and Nilufa Yasmin as research assistants worked along the survey team and checked the data collection. The local research assistants worked hard visiting distant villages, repeatedly if need be, to gather data that could not be collected in one go. Thank you Liton, Akimun, Mehedi Monir, Ariful Hoque, Khairunnesa, Kamal, Nupur, Shanto, Rifat, Robin, Mahmudul Hasan Rana, Saifullah and Honufa. Thank you Kaiyum, Shammo and Ratul who entered the data.

Hannan conducted the first data analysis and prepared the tables and the graphs. Thérèse completed the analysis and wrote the final text.

Executive summary

Historically, cross-border labour migration has been a male affair in Bangladesh, the government imposing more or less severe restrictions on women at different points in time. Bars were progressively lifted from 2003 onward. A policy that positively encouraged women to migrate, with some limitations on age that do not apply to men, was clearly expressed in the 2015 bilateral agreement signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), committing to send 200,000 Bangladeshi women to KSA as domestic workers over two years. Strongly criticized in the Bangladesh media, the agreement nonetheless ushered in a new era, lowering migration costs and increasing salaries for domestic workers, no doubt reflecting a high demand for this occupation.

This report presents the result of a survey conducted in five districts of Bangladesh to document cross-border labour migration. The districts were selected for their contrasting features. Two districts, Barguna and Patuakhali, are relatively new to migration, whereas three districts, Manikganj, Narayanganj and Brahmanbaria, have a long history of such movement. The extent of women's participation in migration was a major criterion for the selection of districts aimed to capture a range of situations. Within each of the five districts, one union[1] was chosen for investigation and all migrant households within the selected union were visited. In the absence of the migrant, family members acted as respondents. In all, 8,437 migrant workers were recorded in 125 villages. Women were found to represent 15.7 per cent of the migrant population, the range spreading from 27.5 per cent in Arpangashia (Barguna) to 5.1 per cent in Majlishpur (Brahmanbaria). While findings on women's overall participation is close to the national average, differences between unions are significant.

The survey also found that averages at union levels concealed an important heterogeneity within. For example, in Kayetpara union of Narayanganj district, women accounted for 8.2 per cent of the migrant workers but most of them were found in Ward No. 9, also known as Chonpara, where they made up 54.2 per cent of the migrant workers. These clusters or "pockets" from where a relatively large number of women migrated contrast with surrounding villages. Another area from where women have been migrating in large numbers and for several generations is Sayasta union, in Singair subdistrict of Manikganj district.

Educated middle-class women have not been attracted to overseas labour migration, and survey results confirm this fact. Two thirds of the surveyed women are either illiterate or did not study beyond primary level. Men in the same category represent 45 per cent. Widowed, divorced, abandoned or separated (WDSA) women make up 18 per cent. The percentage could be higher, as women estranged from their husbands without being divorced are frequently declared 'married'. WDSA is a typically female category found insignificant among men (below 1 per cent). In Bangladesh's patriarchal society, where men are the entitled 'protectors' of women, WDSA women are seen as "shelterless" (*oshohai).* Migrant women confirm this "shelterlessness" but also challenge the assignation – and the ideology it carries – especially when work migration allows them to transform bad fortune into opportunities that more "sheltered" women do not enjoy. The survey shows that 67.5 per cent of the migrant women are "married", challenging the idea of husbands as providers.

The survey confirms that the costs of migration for women and for men differ widely and the gap has been widening since 2015. Fourteen per cent of the women migrated without paying any fee to the recruiting agency and, for Saudi Arabia,

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1   Union councils (or union parishad or rural council or unions) are the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh. Each union is made up of nine wards. Usually, one village or several small villages are designated as a ward. Currently, there are 4,554 union parishads in Bangladesh. Union dwellers directly elect a chairman and nine male and three female members.

this percentage is one third. Such a situation practically never occurred for migrant men, where only 0.1 per cent reported the same. Of all destinations, men who migrated to Kuwait paid the largest surcharge.

For the 8,431 migrants, the survey lists 48 destinations, women being present in 22 of them. Saudi Arabia is by far the most important country, receiving 46 per cent of the men and 37 per cent of the women. For women, the next most important destinations are Jordon (20.9 per cent), Lebanon (11.5 per cent) and the UAE (10.8 per cent).

Occupations prior to migration are strongly gendered, with 55.8 per cent of the women declared as homemakers. Interestingly, 16 per cent were factory workers. In Chotobighai and in Kayetpara, former factory workers represent 52.6 per cent and 40 per cent of the migrant women respectively, whereas in Majlishpur and in Sayasta they make up a mere 1.5 per cent

and 0.8 per cent respectively, suggesting that quite different paths lead women to migrate in different parts of the country. Men's occupations reflect the more-or-less rural economies they come from.

The study concludes that the pool of women candidates for migration is unlikely to dry up soon, in spite of their negative portrayal in the Bangladesh media. Situations are diverse and the picture emerging is a mixed one. Where migration is relatively new and candidates less well informed, higher fees are charged, and sub-agents advise their clients to dispense with attending the mandatory government training prior to migration. They have no interest in sending their recruits to hear that migration should be free of costs. Also, women are less likely to send remittances to a personal bank account, which does not facilitate control over their income.

1. Introduction

International labour migration has played a major role in the Bangladesh economy and from the start, it has been a male affair. The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) began publishing non-sex-segregated data from 1976. Separate figures on women and men are available from 1991 and, up to 2003, women constituted on average less than 1 per cent of the migrant workers (see Appendix table 1). The reality was somewhat different, as official records did not include women who migrated unofficially, bypassing government-imposed restrictions.[2] Women migrated to India as their main destination and also reached Middle Eastern countries via India. These migrant women were acknowledged and sometimes assisted as "victims of trafficking". They were not seen as migrant workers. Crossing borders without proper documentation and working informally, they were perceived as associated with "immoral work". Depicted as destitute, they were simultaneously merged with children as victims of trafficking. The foggy conceptualizations, the lack of evidence and the clear ideological biases regarding women's capabilities and their right to mobility have been the object of much criticism. Inflated figures on "victims of trafficking" and processes that rendered women migrant workers invisible were also challenged. In many ways, this period is behind us.

In 2003, adopting a "modernist" approach, the government of Bangladesh lifted most restrictions on women crossing borders and, from thereon, the number of migrant women in official records regularly increased. Between 2010 and 2014, BMET data show a yearly average of 45,600 women migrating abroad. The figure jumped to 110,055 between 2015 and 2019, which is 2.4 times higher. Since 2013, women have represented between 12 and 18.7 per cent of the migrant workers. The bilateral agreement signed with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in February 2015 confirmed the reversal of past policies, as the Bangladesh Government committed to sending 200,000 women domestic workers over two years. Women were not only permitted but positively encouraged to migrate. Before the COVID-19 pandemic led to the interruption of all departures in March 2020, numbers had stabilized (see graph below). Women's participation in cross-border labour migration now appears an irreversible feature of the landscape.

The bilateral agreement between the Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia governments stipulated that women would migrate "free of cost". A lowering of migration costs effectively followed the agreement, affecting all destinations in the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia being the cheapest. Lower costs gave women a comparative advantage over men, even though reputational harm continued to apply. This economic advantage should not be minimized. Husbands agreed "exceptionally" to send their wives abroad as they could not afford the cost of their own migration and women trapped in bad marriages could leave without husband's assistance or permission. As the survey demonstrates, men's costs, which were already high, further increased as women's costs decreased, a situation partly reflecting the robust demand for women domestic workers in contrast to the shrinking of demand for men's labour in construction and other low-skill jobs.

Stopping short of opposing women's right to migrate, most Bangladesh media criticized the 2015 agreement. Why conclude such an accord with Saudi Arabia, considering its poor record and the fact that major sending countries had already imposed a ban on their women migrating to Saudi Arabia for domestic work. Protective measures were inadequate, and women's security could not be ensured, it was

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2   Official records did not include labour migration to India and there were no mechanisms to do so. In the 1970s and '80s, the border between India and Bangladesh was relatively porous and cheap to cross. It separates people sharing the same language and often sets apart relatives. Several families, especially from the districts of Jessore, Satkhira and Narail, migrated to work in India. In 2001, Bangladeshi women were known to work in Kolkata, Mumbai and elsewhere. The first Bangladeshi women who migrated to work in the Middle East did so via India.

argued. As if to prove their point, journalists subsequently looked for women returnees to record their stories. Women repatriated in batches from shelter homes in Saudi Arabia were of special interest. A relentless pursuit was undertaken, and exposure of the abuse suffered by women abroad regularly appeared in the media. Interestingly, most migrant women met in the course of our fieldwork – including those who had been victims of abuse – did not appreciate the media coverage and many tried to avoid journalists. They said these reports tarnished their image and further weakened their claim that women could migrate in dignity. All migrant women are not subjected to "torture", but journalists were only interested in these kinds of stories, they said. The media campaign certainly raised embarrassing question for the government while strengthening the views of those already dubious, or clearly opposed to women's labour migration.

The BMET data show the prevalence of women's and men's labour migration is unevenly scattered over the territory, and these differences are particularly significant for women. Official data allow comparing districts but differences within districts and disparities between communities are undetectable. The Drishti Research Centre (DRC) documented in the past the relatively high level of women migrating in some "pockets" of the country.[3] Generations of women migrated from these areas – the earliest migration documented for the Middle East was in the early 1980s. Risks were recognized but women were deemed capable of navigating the troubled waters.[4] Social tolerance was manifest, while successful migrant women who accumulated wealth inspired others to follow the same path. Veteran migrant women originated from families that lost their land and their means of livelihood, were forcibly displaced or had migrated internally and formed new communities. Many had experienced acute poverty and had gone through trying episodes, which contributed to (re)shaping gender roles and norms. The ethos prevailing in these "pockets" contrasts with the values and norms upheld in surrounding

communities. Important differences are also found district-wise. In Cumilla, Brahmanbaria, Feni, Noakhali and Chattogram districts, men have migrated early and in large numbers, while women's individual labour migration has been considered a family dishonour of such magnitude that in no circumstance could it be allowed. Very few women are known to have migrated from these districts.

New areas have opened up to cross-border migration and mixed patterns have emerged. Already, the ready-made garment sector that created jobs for some 4 to 5 million workers had caused young women to migrate internally on a large scale. We see that such internal migrations bear a relationship with women crossing borders for work, in some cases preceding them.

Bangladesh society remains a patriarchal entity, where male domination is well enshrined in institutions and in practices. History is movement, however, and patriarchy is not immutable. According to Nathalie Heinich, norms relating to behaviour adjust to the conditions of the real world. They change faster than values not submitted to the same pressing necessity. Utopic ideas may be entertained for a long time. For example, the low cost of women's labour migration and the high cost for men is an inescapable reality for anyone considering migration. Some may deplore the situation and may argue that market conditions and government policies do not correspond to "our" values, but facts still condition behaviour. Heinich points out the torsions and tensions that arise when the gap widens between strongly held values that cannot be realized, and behaviour that adjusts to the possibilities of the real world.[5] This could be what we are witnessing in some parts of the country regarding women's labour migration.

Religious authorities and conservative elders continue to preach that "women are made for the home". The old saying is kept alive and conservative families having the means may abide by the injunction even if more and more distant from the norm. Thus, reputation,

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3   See Blanchet, Razzaque and Biswas (2008) and Md. N. Islam (2010).

4   Thérèse Blanchet and Samantha K. Watson, "Learning to Swim in Turbulent Waters: Women's Migration at the Agency-Exploitation Nexus", *Journal of Contemporary Asia* (8 July 2019).

5   Nathalie Heinich, "Des Valeurs. Une Approche Sociologique", Collection Bibliothèque des Sciences humaines, Paris: Gallimard (2017).

morality and family honour may be preserved by keeping women at home, while women crossing borders without guardians are suspect of moral impropriety. As pointed out, there are important local variations in these judgements but, on the whole, women's labour migration is not a source of honour and respect unless and until sufficient money has been earned over a sufficiently long time and converted into land, brick-and-mortar houses, or invested into meritorious acts, such as large donations to a mosque – the irony being that the institution thus benefiting may be the very one denigrating migrant women. Migrant women's households often graduate to a higher socioeconomic status but when this occurs, as the survey results suggest, the source of the wealth acquired is readily forgotten and new narratives are invented.

The government highlights remittances and their importance to the national economy. However, little attention has been paid to the ways in which different migration scenarios impact patriarchal families. How money earned by women (as daughters, wives, sisters or mothers) and men (as sons, husbands, brothers or fathers) is differentially channelled, gifted, appropriated and invested, and how power relations within are modified, fought over and (re)negotiated as a result. While the money earned abroad gives migrant women new leverage, the unequal rights traditionally granted to sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives are not easily written off. Women in particular have a hard task in keeping control over their earnings and in managing reputational damage. While the impacts of migration and remittances on individual migrants and on the relationships unfolding within families are complex, one cannot deny that cross-border migration has been a source of emancipation for many women. Perhaps this is why resistance and criticism are so strong.

The survey provides useful information on a large population in five contrasted areas. It complements qualitative research that the DRC conducted before and alongside the exercise.

▶**Figure 1. Bangladesh migration: 1991–2019**[6]
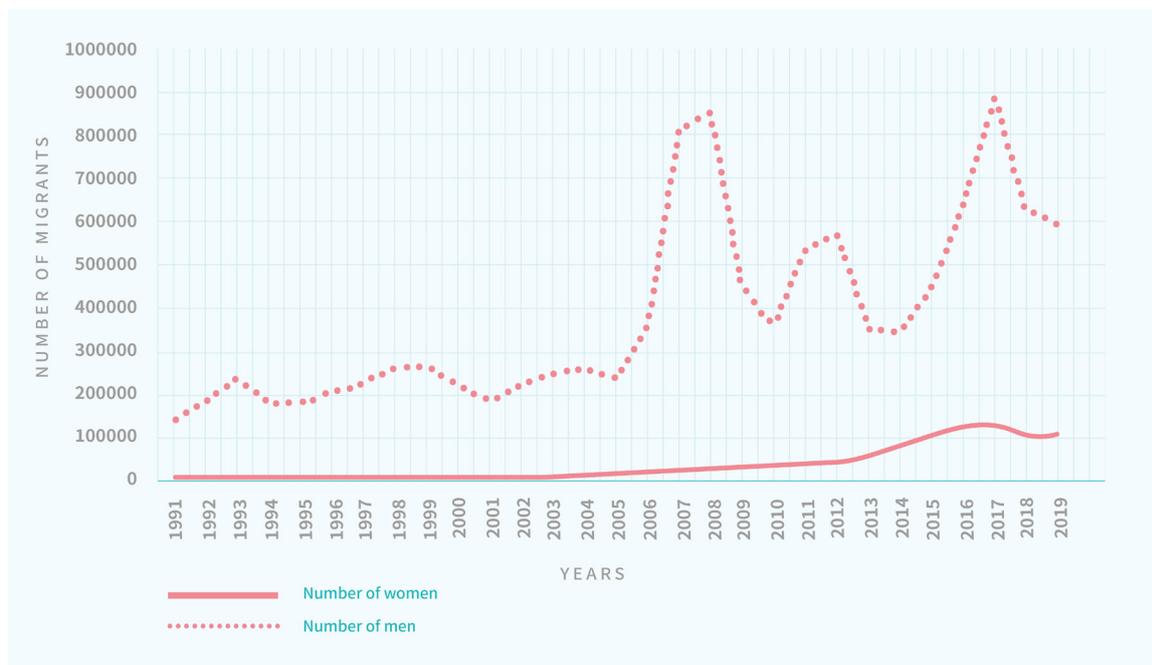
Source: From BMET data on male and female migrant workers released in 2020. Figure produced by the authors.

6   The two graphs do not include the year 2020. The sharp drop in departures from the month of March because of the COVID-19 pandemic caused the curve to nosedive. The impact of this major event is still to be assessed in the long term.

▶**Figure 2. Migration trend of women workers from Bangladesh: 1991–2019**

NUMBER OF WOMEN

[Line chart showing number of migrants on the y-axis (0 to 1400000) against years on the x-axis (1991 to 2019). The red line stays near 0 from 1991 to 2002, rises to about 120000 around 2004, stays around 200000 from 2006 to 2009, increases to about 300000 by 2011, then rises steeply to a peak of about 1230000 in 2017, dips to about 1030000 in 2018, and rises slightly to about 1040000 in 2019.]

NUMBER OF MIGRANTS

YEARS

Source: From BMET data on women migrant workers released in first quarter of 2020. Figure produced by the authors.

2. Survey plan

2.1 Objectives

The survey aimed to capture the uneven spread of cross-border migration in different parts of the country, measure women's and men's participation, and assess the relationship between the two. The purpose is to explore the Bangladesh landscape at close range and throw light on its heterogeneity at a particular point in time.

Selecting districts with different histories of migration and different degrees of women's and men's participation, the survey measures the incidence of women's and men's migration at union and village levels. Looking into alternatives to earn a living, it considers who the migrants are and why women and men select this path as an option. A more specific objective is to measure and assess women's cross-border work mobility, or lack thereof, and question particular constructions of gender in relation to class with a focus on the politics of place and locality.

The survey documents age, educational level, marital status, socio-economic level, family rank, motivations to migrate and the stage in the lifecycle when migration occurs, drawing comparisons between women and men, and between locations. Considering economic and geographic particularities, the study looks into migration networks, history, cultural and religious mores in order to gain a better understanding of differences between localities.

Bengali society generally defines husbands and sons as family providers and, therefore, wives and daughters undertake labour migration by default. In a way, women's work migration underscores men's failing in their (traditional) role. In families having no sons, daughters migrate substituting for the brothers they do not have. That their achievement is seen as remarkable underscores the traditional belief that (too many) daughters are a curse while sons are a blessing to their parents.

Women's migration is often presented as an exceptional response to exceptional circumstances rather than the "normal" state of affairs that may endure. When is women's migration considered an acceptable option, and why should it remain a transient response linked to "abnormal" circumstances? These are important questions raising issues of normativity and its variations in different times and places. The survey should provide data to etch out the contours of these complex issues.

2.2 Plan, methods and research team

Five districts were purposely selected for their contrasting features. These are Barguna, Brahmanbaria, Manikganj, Narayanganj and Patuakhali. Within each district, one union was selected for the survey. All villages within the selected union were covered, and each migrant household was investigated. The survey recorded the number of women and men presently working abroad, the intending migrants and the returnees, their destinations, the number of years spent abroad, the occupation(s) prior to migration, the family circumstances, the cost of the last migration and so on. Quantitative survey techniques were developed for gathering basic information on a large population while a small space was reserved to describe specific events or circumstances. The questionnaire was field-tested in several locations before starting the survey (see questionnaire in Appendix 2).

Fourteen local research assistants were recruited and a team of two, preferably a man and a woman working in tandem, were appointed for each union. Senior members of the research team provided basic training on cross-border labour migration and on gender issues. All local research assistants lived within the union they surveyed and had some knowledge of the area and its people. Their status as insiders facilitated data collection. It also became of vital importance when the pandemic broke out towards the end of the survey and outsiders became suspect of carrying the disease. For a while, the research team based in Dhaka was not welcome in some villages. Three of the 14 research assistants had completed graduation, five were studying for BA or Honours degrees, four were college students, one was a former BRAC field worker and one was a qualified schoolteacher. In addition to their main

occupation, a few had held jobs as community workers.

2.3 Calendar and the COVID-19 pandemic

Begun in December 2019, the survey was completed by 25 March 2020. These dates are important, considering what was to follow. On 26 March, the government imposed a lockdown to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Airports, land routes and waterways were closed, and the country came to a standstill. Already, towards the middle of March, reports circulated of migrants who came on a visit and could not return to their jobs abroad as a lockdown had begun at their destination. Others had a visa and had everything ready for departure but could not leave. Migrants from Italy were the first to return because of the pandemic. They were accused of not respecting the quarantine and spreading the virus when they returned to their villages. Those who had been acclaimed as heroes in the past suddenly became pariahs. Without understanding the full consequences of the pandemic at this stage, there were signs that the situation was dramatically changing for migrant workers. As mentioned, the new paradigm did not affect the survey as data collection had been completed.

2.4 Districts and unions selected for survey

Among the five districts selected for their contrasting features, three types emerged. The first type is represented by Manikganj and Narayanganj districts, which are known for a high incidence of male migration and also contain villages where women have been migrating for several generations. The two unions selected were Kayetpara (Narayanganj) and Sayasta (Manikganj).

Kayetpara is one of the most densely populated unions under Rupganj subdistrict in Narayanganj district. Comprising 43 villages of various sizes, it is surrounded by the Balu and Shitalokkha rivers. Some villages have already disappeared due to river erosion. Others have been compressed by the expansion of housing projects and urbanization. Most of the local

inhabitants were farmers but the expansion of industrial and housing projects changed their livelihoods. Chonpara Rehabilitation Centre (CRC) – established in the mid-seventies to 'rehabilitate' destitute people living on the streets of Dhaka – is located within Kayetpara union. Inhabited by people originating from different districts, it was considered a slum and for many years Rupganj's established population refused to accord them voting rights. Civic rights were finally granted in 2010.[7] Largely due to women's work in surrounding factories and their migration abroad, living conditions have improved and Chonpara is no longer considered a slum. However, its history and social particularities mark it apart from surrounding villages. Chonpara has been a reservoir for the recruitment of women migrant workers for many years.

Sayasta is one of the 11 unions in Singair subdistrict of Manikganj district. Almost half of its people are landless. Dhaleswary and Kaliganga rivers and several natural channels crisscross the subdistrict and villages are regularly flooded and crops damaged. Boats were the main means of communication in the past. Recently, roads have been built but they do not reach everywhere. The traditional activities were rice cultivation, livestock rearing and trading. To these has been added vegetable cultivation to serve a growing urban market in and around Dhaka. In the past, poverty and landlessness prompted a large number of women and men to migrate overseas, and the local economy still heavily relies on migrant remittances. Some unions of Singair are close to Hemayetpur (a newly established industrial zone) where several ready-made garment and garment-related factories have been built. Recently, the Dhaka tannery industry also shifted to Hemayetpur. These industries did not exist when the first generations of women migrated abroad, and even today, women see more benefits in migration than in working in local factories. The survey will show that a few younger women had worked in garment factories before migrating abroad.

The second type of district is represented by Barguna and Patuakhali where women and men have begun to migrate more recently, mostly in

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7   A writ petition was presented at the High Court that put the question to the concerned government official as to why this population had been deprived of voting rights. The latter in no way opposed the request and the Chonpara people became voters in the Union Parishad in 2010, adding a new element in local politics.

the last 10–12 years. Both districts were badly affected by a series of cyclones: Sidr (2007), Aila (2009) and Amphan (2020). Thousands of inhabitants lost their homes and local livelihoods, and moved to industrial areas in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur or Chattogram. Women first migrated abroad from these industrial zones. Arpangashia and Chotobighai, the two unions selected for the survey, are quite similar geographically. Surrounded by rivers, they are vulnerable to river erosion and natural disasters. Roads are frequently damaged and means of communications are poor. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood, with some men also engaging in river and sea fishing.

The third type of district is represented by Brahmanbaria, which is the second-most important district for male migration in the country. Men's migration is both ancient and widespread, while women seldom migrate, if at all. Majlishpur union was selected to represent a location with strong negative views about women's labour movements.

For the selection of the union, the local District Employment and Manpower Office (DEMO) officials were consulted where such an office existed. Otherwise, the selection followed consultation with local people, one of the criteria being the incidence and particularities of women's labour migration.

▶ Table 1. Number of villages surveyed in five unions with subdistricts and districts

District	Subdistrict	Union	Villages surveyed
Barguna	Amtali	Arpangashia	14
Brahmanbaria	Sadar	Majlishpur	14
Manikganj	Singair	Sayasta	42
Narayanganj	Rupganj	Kayetpara	43
Patuakhali	Sadar	Chotobighai	12
Total			**125**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

2.5 Limitations

The limitations of the survey are many. They are in the method itself, which does not permit the addressing of complex issues. Moreover, computing data within an administrative unit, such as a union, levels off the particularities of specific communities. The heterogeneity within is lost, and this has important consequences when studying a minority population, such as women who cross borders. In areas where intensive fieldwork was conducted in the past, for example, in some villages of Sayasta and Kayetpara unions, women's labour migration was well documented and the low "average" at union level was immediately questioned. If one had not already conducted research and gained knowledge through qualitative fieldwork on small populations, the levelling-off effects may not have appeared so clearly.

The size of the survey was ambitious. In all, 8,437 migrant workers were investigated in 125 villages. The number of issues addressed in the questionnaire were extensive and sometimes complex, and here results are uneven. For example, in documenting the migration process, costs of migration, number of years spent abroad, damages suffered and remedial steps taken, the information is rather thin, especially when the migrant has already left the country although the opposite applies for the small number of intending migrants. Also, lack of time, fatigue or disinterest on the part of respondents may account for some of the unanswered questions.

Much effort was deployed to ensure reliable data. As mentioned, senior researchers instructed local research assistants on labour migration and gender issues, and provided support whenever problems occurred during the survey. They also randomly double-checked on the surveyed villages to ensure that no migrant household was left out and all migrants were effectively recorded. Nonetheless, and in spite of the efforts deployed, women's labour migration could be under-reported.

3. Survey results

3.1 Capture at different stages of the migration journey

The survey covered all migrant households within each village of the selected unions. Within each migrant household, migrants were recorded at three stages of the migration journey. These include (1) "current migrants" comprising those presently abroad, on a home visit or having returned less than a year ago, (2) "intending migrants" comprising those actively engaged in preparing migration, and (3) "ex-migrants", those returned a year or more ago. The purpose of the categories was to gain a better understanding of households' migration strategy. Ex-migrants in households where no one was presently engaged in migration were left out of the survey and this is one of its limitations.

3.2 Sex-wise distribution of migrant workers in surveyed unions

Table 3 presents the percentage of women and men migrants in each union surveyed and, as expected, considerable disparities are found in both the overall number of migrant workers and the sex distribution. Women's overall participation, at 15.7 per cent, is close to the national average.

▶ Table 2. Sex-wise and union-wise migration status

| Union | Current | | Intending | | Ex-migrant | | Total | Total |
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Arpangashia	64	170	2	4	3	8	69	182
Chotobighai	124	490	8	4	1	2	133	496
Kayetpara	273	775	12	5	4	25	289	805
Majlishpur	112	2 286	14	50	5	79	131	2 415
Sayasta	674	3 184	18	16	13	12	705	3 212
Total	**1 247**	**6 905**	**54**	**79**	**26**	**126**	**1 327**	**7 110**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ Table 3. Migrant women and men in surveyed unions

Surveyed Union	No. of Villages	Women	Men	Total Migrants	Percentage of women
Arpangashia (Barguna)	14	69	182	251	27.5
Chotobighai (Patuakhali)	12	133	496	629	21.1
Kayetpara (Narayanganj)	43	289	805	1 094	26.4
Majlishpur (Brahmanbaria)	14	131	2 415	2 546	5.1
Sayasta (Manikganj)	42	705	3 212	3 917	18.0
Total	**125**	**1 327**	**7 110**	**8 437**	**15.7**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶**Table 4. Union- and sex-wise BBS population data and percentage of migrants in survey**

Union	Union-wise total population (BBS 2011)				Population 18 years and above (BBS 2011)		Total number and percentage of migrants in survey			
	Total HHs	**Both sexes**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total female**	**Total male**	**% female**	**% male**
Arpangashia	3 534	14 873	7 224	7 649	4 309	4 988	69	182	1.4	4.2
Chotobighai	4 220	19 630	9 844	9 786	5 426	5 982	133	496	2.2	9.1
Kayetpara	14 472	66 200	33 580	32 620	20 627	20 387	289	805	1.4	3.9
Majlishpur	5 059	28 847	13 933	14 914	6 232	7 543	31	2 415	1.7	38.8
Sayasta	6 153	27 188	13 447	13 741	7 927	8 937	705	3 212	7.9	40.5
Total	**33 438**	**156 738**	**78 028**	**78 710**	**44 521**	**47 837**	**1 327**	**7 110**	**2.8**	**16.0**

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 2011 Population Census and RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

Table 4 juxtaposes survey results with an estimate of the total male and female population aged 18 years old and above in each of the surveyed unions. Population figures are drawn from the 2011 National Census, the last one available. Even without adjustment for population growth, the Census provides a useful reference, permitting the survey to capture the wider context and draw meaningful comparisons.

3.3 Survey results and national census data: Patterns emerging

3.3.1 Arpangashia (Barguna) and Chotobighai (Patuakhali): New recruitment pools

It may be recalled that the two unions in Barguna and Patuakhali districts were selected as territories where overseas migration increased following destructive cyclones, namely Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009. Survey results show that men constitute a majority but the gap with women is less pronounced than elsewhere. In Arpangashia (Barguna), at least one out of four migrants is a woman, a pattern that markedly differs from the all-male migration practised in old migration districts, such as Cumilla, Feni, Noakhali or Chattogram. Three villages (out of seven) account for 78 per cent of the migrant women. One cannot say whether these villages constitute sociologically distinct "pockets", as qualitative research is yet to be conducted.

A similar concentration is found among men, where 77.4 per cent of the migrants originate from three villages. Informants mentioned the growing influence of pirs and the pirs' followers,[8] who do not appreciate women engaging in work outside the home and strongly condemn cross-border labour migration. Disciples of Shorshina Pir, Joinpuri Pir and Charmonai Pir are said to create a climate of intimidation and fear, which does not stop women from migrating, but families tend to be discrete about departures. This could lead to under-reporting as suggested above. The first women to migrate abroad from the two unions did so after moving out and working in Dhaka or Chattogram for some time but, more recently, women have been migrating directly from their villages.

3.3.2 Sayasta (Manikganj) and Majlishpur (Brahmanbaria): Contrasted past and present

Male migration in Sayasta (Manikganj) and Majlishpur (Brahmanbaria) unions is remarkably high. When survey results are plotted against the 2011 Census data, as many as 38.8 and 40.5 per cent of the men 18 years and above are shown engaged in migration. Migration appears to be of paramount importance in the local economies. Sayasta also has the highest percentage of

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8   Pirs are individuals endowed with considerable spiritual power and considered to be holy men or living saints. Pirs belong to a popular Islamic tradition rejected by Muslim fundamentalists. In recent years, pirs and their followers have been killed for their beliefs in Bangladesh.

migrant women at 7.9 per cent of the overall female population 18 years and above. Survey results (appendix table) show migrant women well spread out in all the villages of the union. The same applies to migrant men. As mentioned, women have been migrating from Sayasta union for several years. They have the reputation of being strong and capable to withstand hardship, while a remarkable social acceptance prevails. A retired schoolteacher from Sayasta explained.

> In Sayasta union, women started migrating in the mid-seventies, even earlier than men. In those days, women used to reach the Middle East via India. Local people never criticized these women. Fanaticism was rare but recently some people have begun to raise questions. Women built houses, invested their income and transformed the local economy. They paid for men's migration and after that many abstained from working abroad. Some women still work abroad even after sending their sons and husbands.

It must be said that a higher number of migrant women was expected from the survey, in line with the findings of earlier research. Could the scenario suggested by the teacher above explain a progressive diminution of numbers of migrant women? In other words, once families reach a sufficient level of security and well-being, women migrating abroad is no longer the preferred option. Case histories of individual families have shown that women who spearheaded migration did not pass on the "tradition" to their daughters but sent their sons instead. They could afford the higher cost of male migration while their family derived honour and prestige in adopting such behaviour. Ex-migrant women have expressed doubts on the economic advantages of sending their sons but confessed to feeling a social pressure to do so. This is an important finding. Thus, women's labour migration in Sayasta, and

possibly elsewhere, could be seen as a stopgap, a temporary solution to economic stress, not meant to last. Here also, informants speak of the growing influence of conservative religious groups. The history of Majlishpur (Brahmanbaria) is very different from Sayasta (Manikganj). It never sent its women abroad. The move was unthinkable in the past and is still frowned upon today.

3.3.3 Kayetpara: Heterogeneous population

Kayetpara is an interesting example of the highly heterogeneous population residing in the same union. The most populous of the five surveyed unions, it has the largest number of villages. Migration appears relatively less important than in Sayasta or Majlishpur in the overall economy, and migrant women are shown to make up only 1.4 per cent of the women aged 18 years and above. The high incidence of women's labour migration observed in Chonpara here completely "disappears" as more conservative communities all around do not send their women abroad, thus lowering the percentage of migrant women at union level.

If one carves out from Kayetpara union Ward Number 9 (more or less Chonpara) where most of the families transported and rehabilitated in 1975 still reside, one gets the following picture.

Table 5 shows that 81 per cent of the migrant women in Kayetpara union are from Ward 9, and only 19 per cent come from the remaining eight wards taken together. Presented differently, in Chonpara, women make up 54.2 per cent of the migrant workers, and are therefore more numerous than men, whereas they make only 8.3 per cent in the rest of Kayetpara union. Clearly, the history of Chonpara left its mark on the present. It may be recalled that in 1975 families were picked up from the streets of Dhaka, transported by truck and "dumped"

▶Table 5. Chonpara (Ward 9) as a "pocket" of women's labour migration in Kayetpara union

	Men	Women	Per cent		Total	Total %
			Men	Women		
Chonpara (Ward 9)	198	234	24.6	81.0	432	39.5
Rest of Kayetpara	607	55	75.4	19.0	662	60.5
Total	**805**	**289**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**1 094**	**100.0**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

along the immersible bank of the Shitalokkha River where grew a tall grass called chon. Hence, the name Chonpara. The first inhabitants were destitute and NGO workers with somewhat feminist ideas provided assistance. Marriage being unstable, women were – and still are – the main family support. These women did not observe purdah. To feed their children, they took up work "outside" unlike women in the rest of the union, where less poverty and more conservative attitudes prevailed. This is how it began. Chonpara exemplifies how communities residing in a same union may have different histories and lifestyles, and these particularities get submerged in the averages of administrative units. Districts are too large to capture heterogeneity, and so are unions. While the Chonpara Rehabilitation Centre is a unique project, resettled communities constituting socially differentiated "pockets" are found in other parts of Bangladesh as well. Such "colonies" were studied in Jessore. Lacking good agricultural land, Jessore began to see migration develop rather early, and women played a major role in the 1970s.[9] But that is outside the purview of the present report.

3.4 Age of migrants and mean duration of work abroad

In 2007, the Bangladesh government lowered the minimum age for migrant women from 35 years to 25. Setting a minimum age for migration is supposed to protect women, as younger women are believed to be more exposed to sexual abuse. At the same time, migrant women should be young enough and strong enough to withstand the heavy work expected of them, thus disqualifying older women. The 2015 agreement with Saudi Arabia stated that women candidates for migration should be between 25 and 45 years old, while a document issued in 2018 for women migrating to Lebanon mentioned that women should be between 25 and 38 years of age.[10] Such age limitations have not been imposed on men. Boys qualify as migrant workers as soon as they reach their majority at 18 and an upper age limit has not been fixed.

We know that many families do not abide by the government age regulation. Ample evidence has been found in earlier research, and in the present fieldwork, of families sending abroad underage daughters, and more rarely underage

▶Table 6. Sex-wise age distribution of migrants

Age	All	Women	Men	Women %	Men %	All %
Below 18 years	32	15	17	1.1	0.2	0.4
18–22 years	1 133	186	947	14.0	13.3	13.4
23–27 years	1 741	298	1 443	22.5	20.3	20.6
28–32 years	1 978	334	1 644	25.2	23.1	23.4
33–37 years	1 394	214	1 180	16.1	16.6	16.5
38–42 years	1 114	154	960	11.6	13.5	13.2
43–47 years	471	59	412	4.4	5.8	5.6
48–52 years	369	43	326	3.2	4.6	4.4
53–57 years	104	10	94	0.8	1.3	1.2
58–62 years	73	9	64	0.7	0.9	0.9
63 years and above	28	5	23	0.4	0.3	0.3
Total	**8 437**	**1 327**	**7 110**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

9   T. Blanchet et al., *Beyond Boundaries: A Critical Look at Women Labour Migration and Trafficking Within*, Drishti Research Centre, report submitted to USAID Dhaka (2002), https://www.coursehero.com/file/66381652/BEYONDDOC/.

10   Bangladesh, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, *Guideline/Order: Recruitment of female domestic workers for Lebanon: Memo no. 49.00.0000.102.11.002.15-415* (28 August 2018).

sons. Subagents (*dalal*s) advise families on the way to proceed, assuring them that, for a little extra cost, the situation is perfectly manageable. In 2019, *dalal*s specializing in this type of service charged 10,000 taka. Government officers are also known to take bribes to register underage girls. A 13-year-old girl has been known to have migrated to Saudi Arabia only two years ago. Imposing a minimum age remains a challenging task in Bangladesh. This is seen with the marriage of underage daughters, which continues unabated using loopholes and other techniques to circumvent the law.

The survey records the age of migrants as reported by respondents. This could be the age on the passport, which bears little relation with the true age, but we had no means to verify this. When the age given appeared inconsistent with other life events, the age was adjusted. Considering the tendency to ignore or manipulate age, the ages recorded here must be understood as approximations. Even so, interesting features appear when comparing women and men.

Table 6 shows 1.1 per cent of the women presently working abroad are below the age of 18, and 14 per cent are between 18 and 22 years old. One may conclude, therefore, that a good number of women presently working abroad are below the age of 25. The peak age for women, shown to be between the age of 28 and 32, appears credible.

▶Figure 3. Present age distributions of migrant women
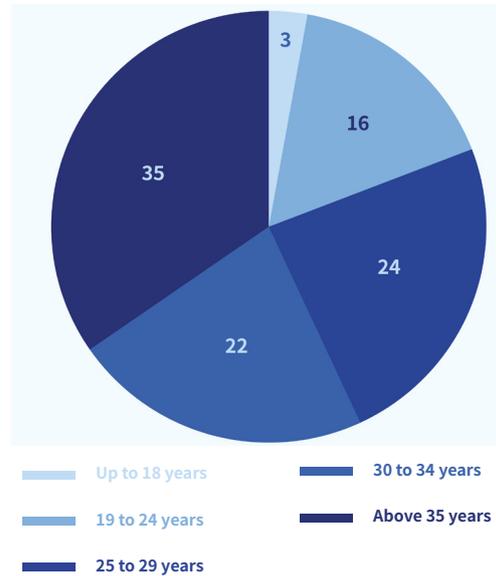
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

By comparison, the number of male migrants declared to be presently below the age of 18 is insignificant. For the next age groups, differences between men and women are slight.

If one considers the mean duration of work abroad for women and men migrants, one sees that girls aged below 18 years already have worked abroad 17 months, while boys below the age of 18 have worked 13 months, reinforcing the conclusion that girls migrate younger than boys.

▶ Figure 4. Sex-wise percentage distribution of migrants' present age

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶**Table 7. Migrants' present age and mean duration of work abroad (in months) by sex**

Age	Women	Men	All
Below 18 years	16.9	13.2	14.6
18–22 years	29.0	23.4	24.8
23–27 years	37.9	43.3	42.4
28–32 years	47.4	69.1	65.4
33–37 years	59.3	84.9	81.0
38–42 years	71.5	107.0	102.1
43–47 years	80.8	113.4	109.3
48–52 years	112.4	141.8	138.3
53–57 years	128.5	164.2	160.8
58–62 years	196.2	186.6	187.8
63 years and above	132.0	192.3	181.6

Source: RAPID/Drishti-ILO Migrant Survey 2020

The figure below shows the age range of women and men and the mean duration of work abroad. For the age category 18 to 22 years, women worked 29 months and men worked 23.4 months. For the age group 23 to 27 years old, the mean duration of work abroad is slightly less for women and we observe the gap increasing further with older groups. After the age of 23, the average working time of women and men goes in favour of men. If men start migrating older than women, they stay abroad longer. Among migrants who worked abroad 12 years or more, the proportion of men is more than twice that of women. Such long stays could bear a relationship with destinations other than the Middle East, where men are more numerous than women. The differences could also be explained by the fact that women often migrate by default, to

▶ **Figure 5. Age of migrants and mean duration (in years) of work abroad**
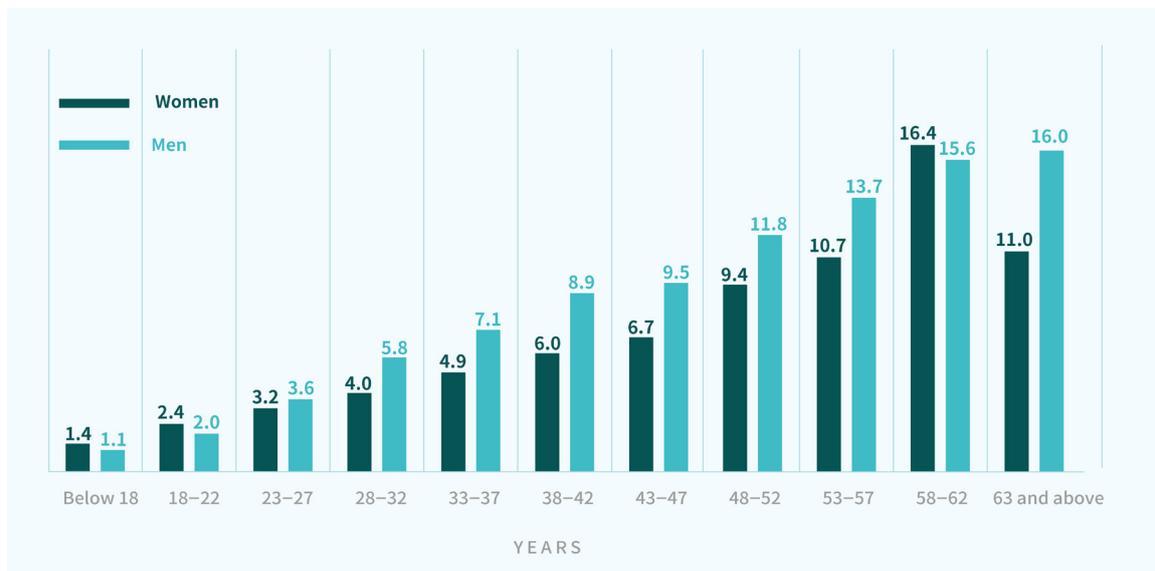
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶Table 8. Sex-wise duration of migration

Duration of migration	No. of women	No. of men	Women %	Men %	All	All %
> 1 month	45	109	3.4	1.5	154	1.8
1–6 months	136	412	10.2	5.8	548	6.5
7–12 months	157	648	11.8	9.1	805	9.5
1–3 years	418	2 068	31.5	29.1	2 486	29.5
3–6 years	283	1 291	21.3	18.2	1 574	18.7
6–12 years	210	1 627	15.8	22.9	1 837	21.8
Above 12 years	78	955	5.9	13.4	1 033	12.2
Total	**1 327**	**7 110**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**8 437**	**100.0**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

replace a sick father, a missing brother or a runaway husband, or to solve an unforeseen family crisis. With unmarried girls, a marriage may be arranged after one or two overseas migrations and then work abroad is dropped. Alternatively, some women migrate after their marriage failed or when their husband's income no longer suffices to meet family needs. Family responsibilities also weigh differently on women and men. Migrant mothers stop working when the caretaker of their children – mother or mother-in-law – can no longer shoulder the responsibility. They also stop work to arrange the marriages of their daughters.

3.5 Educational level

Nationally, women's educational level has increased and the gap with men has reduced, but such a trend is not observed among migrant workers. Table 9 above shows that over 20 per cent of the surveyed women have had no

schooling, whereas the percentage for such men is 8.2 per cent. Two thirds of the women either have had no education or did not study beyond the primary level, while this is the case only with 45 per cent of men. Hardly any women studied beyond secondary school and this is where the gap with men is the largest. Only 1.7 per cent of the migrant women have passed the secondary certificate exams while 8.1 per cent of migrant men have done so. At the higher secondary level, the gap gets wider.

The occupations presently offered to women opting for migration – domestic work and garment factory work – do not attract educated middle-class women. A few professional women, such as doctors, work abroad but their number is very small. The higher educational level of migrant men reflects a broader range of socio-economic backgrounds. Yet, men's educational level in this survey is quite low. Only 8.1 per cent completed their secondary schooling and 7 per

▶Table 9. Sex-wise educational levels of migrant workers

Education	Total women	Total men	All	Women %	Men %	All %
No schooling	268	583	851	20.2	8.2	10.1
Up to Class V	662	2 609	3 271	49.9	36.7	38.8
Class VI–VIII	297	1 904	2 201	22.4	26.8	26.1
Class IX–X	63	778	841	4.7	10.9	10.0
SSC	22	574	596	1.7	8.1	7.1
HSC	9	374	383	0.7	5.3	4.5
BA and above	4	112	116	0.3	1.6	1.4
Islamic education	2	176	178	0.2	2.5	2.1
Total	**1 327**	**7 110**	**8 437**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Figure 6. Sex-wise percentage distribution of migrants' educational levels**
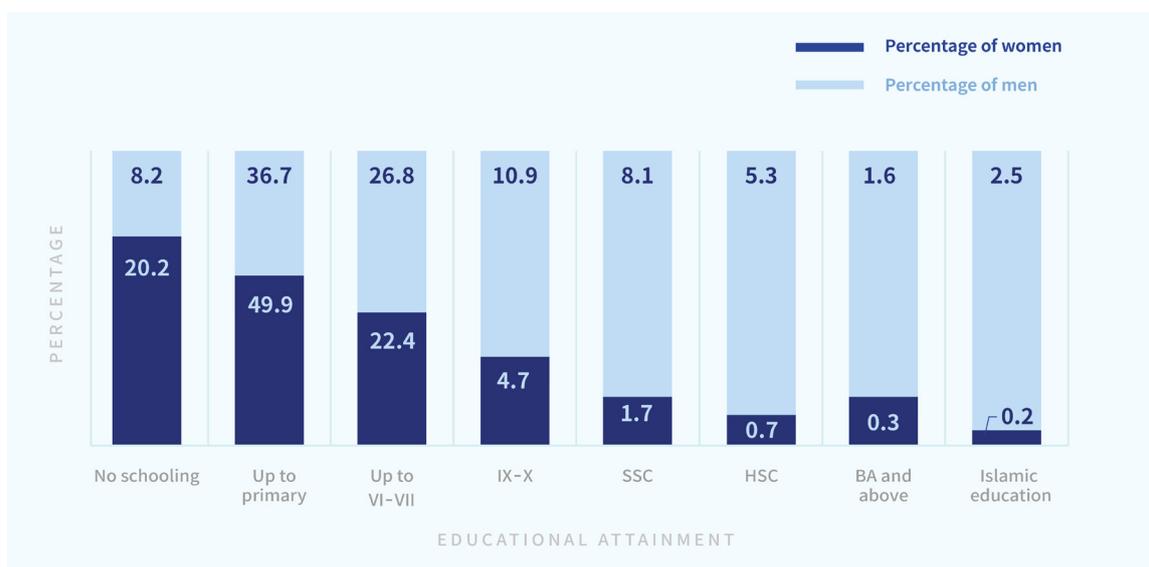
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

cent obtained the Higher Secondary Certificate and above. It is often said that boys achieving good results at school may pursue their studies and need not go abroad. To succeed abroad, one does not need academic qualifications, and migration is an option for those who did not study for long.

A detailed table on literacy levels of all migrants in each surveyed union is given in the Appendix table 9.

3.6 Marital status

Table 10 and figure 7 show the current marital status of the surveyed migrant workers. It shows that 67.5 per cent of the migrant women are currently married, against 70.6 per cent of the men. One can say that 85.5 per cent of the migrant women and 71.3 per cent of the migrant men were married once. Some marriages ended and others have not been legally terminated but marital obligations are not maintained. In Bangladesh society, parents have a moral and a social obligation to arrange the marriages of their children, and marriage is nearly universal. Girls from poor families tend to be married early. Parents fulfil their duty even if such marriages are often unstable. For divorced, separated and unsupported women with or without children, migrating abroad is an option.

Survey results show that 14.5 per cent of the migrant girls/women are unmarried. Unmarried

daughters are more likely to migrate in families having no son, or where sons are the youngest. It is often said that daughters migrate to earn their dowry, which poor parents cannot afford to pay. The narrative hides the fact that many daughters become their family's main support, earning faster and as much, if not more, than sons. They make it possible for parents to purchase land, build a house and educate their siblings. Parents may be grateful for the support they receive but there is also embarrassment in relying on a daughter's income for too long. Most parents insist that a marriage will be arranged at the first opportunity. But daughters who have worked abroad, earned well and experienced a degree of freedom may not have the same wishes. Many are suspicious of the men interested in marrying them in exchange for a generous dowry supposedly required to compensate for their "damaged reputation". However, should they stop working abroad, young women can hardly remain single.

Interestingly, 18 per cent of the women – but less than 1 per cent of the men – fall in the category widowed/divorced/separated/ abandoned (WDSA). In a recent nation-wide survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 25 per cent of migrant women are found to be in the WDSA category. Such women fit the stereotype, regularly evoked in media reports, of the "shelterless women"

▶ **Table 10. Marital status of migrant women and men**

Marital status	Women	Men	All	Women %	Men %	All %
Married	896	5 017	5 913	67.5	70.6	70.1
Unmarried	192	2 043	2 235	14.5	28.7	26.5
Divorced	99	26	125	7.5	0.4	1.5
Widow/Widower	48	10	58	3.6	0.1	0.7
Separated/ abandoned	92	14	106	6.9	0.2	1.3
Total	**1 327**	**7 110**	**8 437**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

(*oshohai meye)* who have little choice but to migrate to feed their children and themselves. Migrant woman often hold the same narrative to justify their migration. The "shelterless" woman's image inevitably draws the contour of the reverse model, that of women protected and provided for under the guardianship of fathers, husbands or other substitutes. It may be useful to unpack the stereotype and also question the powerful gender ideology it carries. After all, women migrate from different situations and for different reasons. Shelterless women in the WDSA category may migrate to provide for themselves and their children, but women migrate also to get out of stifling "shelters" such as bad marriages, or shelters that bring no comfort, emotional or material.

The category WDSA, which averages 18 per cent, shows considerable disparities among the surveyed unions. They are 37.7 per cent in Arpangashia, 25 per cent in Kayetpara, 13.5 per cent in Majlishpur and Chotobighai and only 8.5 per cent in Sayasta union (see Appendix table 10). These differences are important, and more research is required to clarify their signification.

Finally, 67.8 per cent of the migrant women are declared married. This points out to husbands not sufficiently or not adequately earning to provide for the family. However, that alone is not a sufficient reason, as husbands and families must permit, or at least not interfere, with a woman's decision to migrate. In Majlishpur, 58 per cent, and in Sayasta, 71 per cent, of the migrant women are married. Again, more research is needed to make sense of these differences.

▶ **Figure 7. Marital status of migrant women and men**
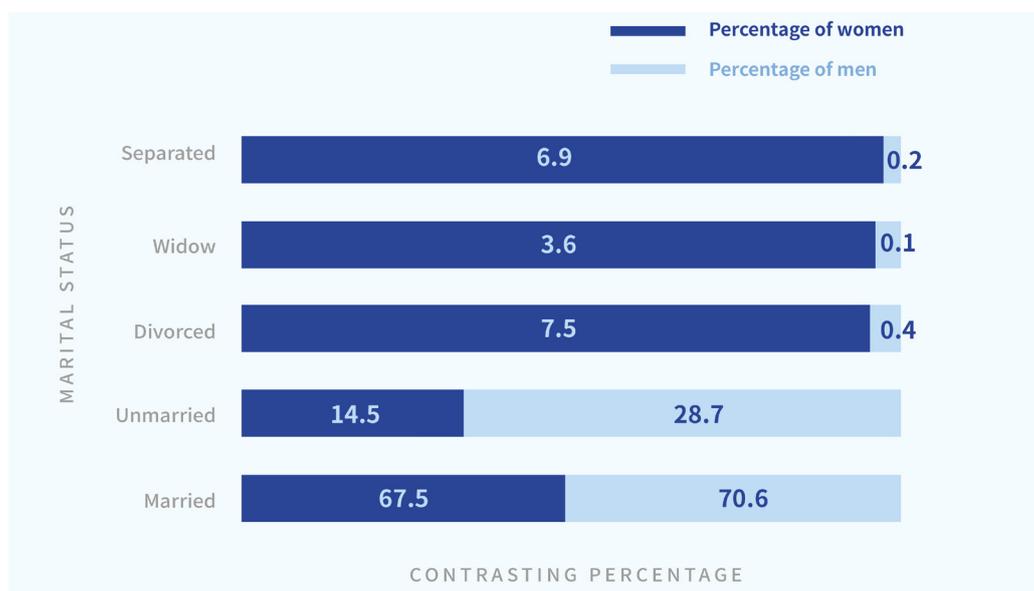
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

Interestingly, 28.7 per cent of male migrants are unmarried. Here also, important regional variations are found. In Majlishpur, unmarried men make up 36 per cent of the migrants, whereas in Chotobighai, they are 21.6 per cent. One strategy to pay for the high cost of male migration has been to arrange a son's marriage against dowry: with the bride comes a substantial amount in cash. Such practices – which have been condemned by NGOs and the government – demonstrate that in the marriage market, if migration devalues women, it adds value to men. It must be said that in "pockets" where women's labour migration is a common and accepted practice, such valuation is increasingly contested as migrant women's ability to earn is well proven. The actual earnings of a migrant daughter or a migrant wife change the direction of monetary flow and disrupt the logic of dowry. In other words, the justification for wife-givers to compensate wife-takers loses ground. Dowry then may be explained as a gesture not to lose face. The relationships between marriage and dowry, migration and gender, constitute a rich and insufficiently explored field of research needing more ploughing. Survey data here provide a useful contribution. For marital statuses by locality, see Appendix table 8.

3.7 Children of migrants

The great majority of migrants lead single lives while working abroad and those with children leave them behind. Husband and wife seldom migrate at the same time and the situation of children is quite different depending on whether the migrant parent is the mother or the father.

Mothers, whose husbands are working abroad, continue to take care of their children while handling other responsibilities as well. On the other hand, fathers whose wives are working abroad seldom assume the parenting alone, if at all, and other women substitute for the absent mother. Mothers commonly leave their small children in the care of an older generation of women – their own mothers or their mothers-in-law. They often return to look after adolescent daughters so that nothing untoward occurs and reputations are not damaged before arranging a marriage. This period is one of tension. For this reason, daughters of migrant mothers are often married early. Field evidence also suggested that many children remain without adequate parenting care. The survey did not record any significant difference in the number of children born to migrant women and migrant men.

Table 11 above shows that 12.6 per cent of women who were or are married and 14.3 per cent of men who were or are married have no children, while 31.9 per cent and 31.2 per cent respectively have one child each. Again, 34.1 per cent of married or once married women and 31.1 per cent of married or once married men have two children each. A similar proportion of women (15.7 per cent) and men (14.7 per cent) have three children. Men are more likely to have five children and more, but the number of such individuals is very small.

Over 21 per cent of migrant women's children belong to mothers who are either divorced, separated or widowed. These children are left behind when their mother leaves, usually in the care of family members. We have seen that less

▶ **Table 11. Number of children and marital status of migrant workers**

No. of children	Married		Divorced/widowed /separated		Total		Per cent	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
0	78	703	66	24	144	727	12.7	14.3
1	261	1 565	101	17	362	1 582	31.9	31.2
2	326	1 599	61	5	387	1 604	34.1	31.7
3	171	742	5	2	176	744	15.5	14.7
4	47	278	6	1	53	279	4.7	5.5
5+	13	130	0	1	13	131	1.1	2.6
Total	**896**	**5 017**	**239**	**50**	**1 135**	**5 067**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

than 1 per cent of the men belong to the same category, so the problem hardly occurs for them. Parental responsibilities weigh more heavily on migrant women. As mentioned, women often interrupt their migration career to look after their children, whereas migrant men continue working abroad while their wives single-handedly raise their children and look after family affairs.

3.8 Number of migrants per household

Most households reported having only one migrant member. However, the number of households declaring two or more migrants is slightly higher in the case of men. Table 12 shows that 86 per cent of the migrant women were the only person to migrate from their household, while the proportion for men is 80 per cent. Again, two women migrated from 11.6 per cent households and two men from 16 per cent households; together it is 15.3 per cent. Only 2.3 per cent of women-migrant households and 4 per cent of male-migrant households reported three or more migrants.

▶ Table 12. Sex-wise number of migrant workers per household

No. of migrants	Women	Per cent	Men	Per cent	All	Per cent
1	984	86.2	4 572	80.1	5 556	81.1
2	132	11.6	913	16.0	1 045	15.3
3	25	2.2	180	3.2	205	3.0
4	1	0.1	32	0.6	33	0.5
5+	0	0.0	9	0.2	9	0.1
Total	1 142	100.0	5 706	100.0	6 848	100.0

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ Figure 8. Percentage of women and men who migrated per household

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

3.9 Migration from male- and female-headed households

Before discussing survey results, it may be useful to reflect on conceptual tools. Male-headed households have been, and still are, recognized as the norm in Bangladesh society.[11] Women may become the head of the household when their husband dies, when their husband gets incapacitated and cannot earn, or when widowed, divorced or abandoned; they are responsible for the household and look after their children alone.

In surveys conducted in Bangladesh over the years, male- and female-headed households have been important instruments to assess vulnerabilities and needs, with female-headed households being associated with greater poverty and want. In periods of distress, the presence of female heads of households has served as a useful indicator in the distribution of relief and assistance. However, with greater access to labour markets and control over income, women heads of household may not be in a position of weakness. This is the case for some migrant women who earned well abroad, purchased land, built a house, paid for other family members to migrate and are credited with other achievements. Such women could be strong heads of household. It would be wrong to consider women in this position forever weak and vulnerable. Moreover, the attribution "head of household" could be ambiguous when customary criteria do not accord status. For example, what to make of a married woman with an incapacitated husband, who honours him by declaring he is the head while she is the sole earner and effectively runs the household.

In this survey, wishing to give credit to women's managerial capacities and the important responsibilities some of them shoulder, it was decided to recognize as heads of household women who manage family affairs and take major decisions in the absence of their migrant husbands. Here, the "head of the household" is not the owner of the property she manages but only the caretaker and her position may be temporary. This "generous" definition of female heads of household is problematic as male migration "creates" female heads of household and thus increases the number of men migrating from female-headed households. In these cases, migration first occurred when the men were heads of the household. With the definition adopted in the survey, women heads of household represent 31.9 per cent of all households. The survey also shows that 17 per cent of the women migrated from male-headed households and only 12.8 per cent from female-headed households. This picture does not accord with findings from our previous research showing that more women migrated from female-headed households because of economic necessity and also due to a solidarity among women. Female heads understand the benefits of migration and are willing to put aside criteria of honour and reputation more readily than male heads of household.

Questioning research tools and their usefulness has some merit. While patriarchy and male-headed households are well entrenched in Bengali society – structurally and ideologically – economic transformations may also challenge age-old institutions. In migrant households in particular, the absence of a mother or a father inevitably leads to a redefinition of roles and responsibilities, and the practical arrangements made may well go against "tradition". How decisions are reached, negotiated or imposed, short-term or long-lasting, may or may not set new norms. A one-time survey does not suffice to capture the complexities of migrant households. At this stage, one may say that the categories of male and female heads of household are inadequate to reflect the multiple arrangements made within migrant households over time.

Table 13 below computes the number of migrant women and men from male-headed and female-headed households (as defined above) and compares results for each of the surveyed unions, keeping in mind the warnings made above. In the Arpangashia union, 66 persons migrated from female-headed households (FHHHs), and out of them 9 (13.6 per cent) were women and 57 (86.4 per cent) were men. On the other hand, a total of 185 persons migrated from male-headed households (MHHHs), and out of them 60 (32.4 per cent) were women and 125 (67.6 per cent) were men. In the Chotobighai union, the pattern is different. Here, 24 persons migrated from female-headed households (FHHHs), and out of them 14 (58.3 per cent) were

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11   Bangladesh is also home to matrilineal societies where norms differ, such as the Mandi, but they were not captured in this survey.

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▶ Table 13. Number of women and men migrating from female- and male-headed households

Surveyed union	No. of migrants from FHHHs		Total migrants from FHHHs	No. of migrants from MHHHs		Total migrants from MHHHs	All migrants
	Women	Men		Women	Men		
Arpangashia	9	57	66	60	125	185	251
Chotobighai	14	10	24	119	486	605	629
Kayetpara	102	225	327	187	580	767	1 094
Majlishpur	53	543	596	78	1 872	1 950	2 546
Sayasta	166	1 516	1 682	539	1 696	2 235	3 917
Total	**344**	**2 351**	**2 695**	**983**	**4 759**	**5 742**	**8 437**

Note: FHHHs = Female-headed households; MHHHs = Male-headed households.
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

women and 10 (41.7 per cent) were men. On the other hand, a total of 605 persons migrated from male-headed households (MHHHs), and out of them 119 (19.7 per cent) were women and 486 (80.3 per cent) were men. Here, male-headed households are more likely to have men abroad while female-headed households are more likely to have women.

In Kayetpara union, a total 1,094 men and women migrated abroad. Of them, 327 persons migrated from female-headed households (FHHHs), out of which 102 (31.2 per cent) were women and 225 (68.8 per cent) were men. On the other hand, a total of 767 persons migrated from male-headed households (MHHHs), out of which 187 (24.4 per cent) were women and 580 (75.6 per cent) were men. In this union, we have seen that women's labour migration is highly concentrated in a couple of wards, namely in Chonpara and the Chonpara Rehabilitation Centre (see details in the Appendix table 3). After Chotobighai (where numbers are very small), this is the union where female-headed households are most likely to have women abroad, a finding that appears consistent with practices observed in Chonpara.

In the Majlishpur union, the survey found a total 2,546 persons had migrated abroad. Women's mobility is restricted even for economically distressed households. As a consequence, the proportion of women among migrants is only 5 per cent. From female-headed households

(FHHHs), 596 persons migrated and 53 (8.9 per cent) were women and 543 (91.1 per cent) were men. A total of 1,950 persons migrated from male-headed households (MHHHs), out of which 78 (4 per cent) were women and 1,872 (96 per cent) were men. So, FHHHs are slightly more likely to send women abroad, but it is rare everywhere, and more so in MHHHs. These findings are consistent with women's highly restricted mobility. Special attention should be given to the social protection women gain in such situations. What is the quality of their "shelter"?

Historically, the Sayasta union is known for its large number of migrant women, but here the proportion of women has reduced compared to the study we conducted in 2008.[12] As mentioned, women played a pioneering role in labour migration, not only in the Sayasta union but in other unions of Singair subdistrict. The current survey found a total 3,917 persons had migrated abroad or were engaged in the process of migration, which is the highest number of migrants in the five unions surveyed. The proportion of men and women migrants is 82 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. Among the total migrants, 1,682 (42.9 per cent) persons migrated from female-headed households, and of them 166 (9.9 per cent) are women and 1,516 (90.1 per cent) are men. On the other hand, 2,235 (57.1 per cent) persons migrated from male-headed households, and of them 539 (24.1 per cent) are women and 1,696 (75.9 per cent) are men.

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12   Thérèse Blanchet, Abdur Razzaq and Hannan Biswas, *Documenting the Undocumented: Female Migrant Workers from Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Pathak Shamabesh, 2008). A survey conducted in 2004-2005 in five unions of Singair subdistrict found 40 per cent of the migrants were women.

▶ **Figure 9. Comparative percentages of migrant women from female- and male-headed households**
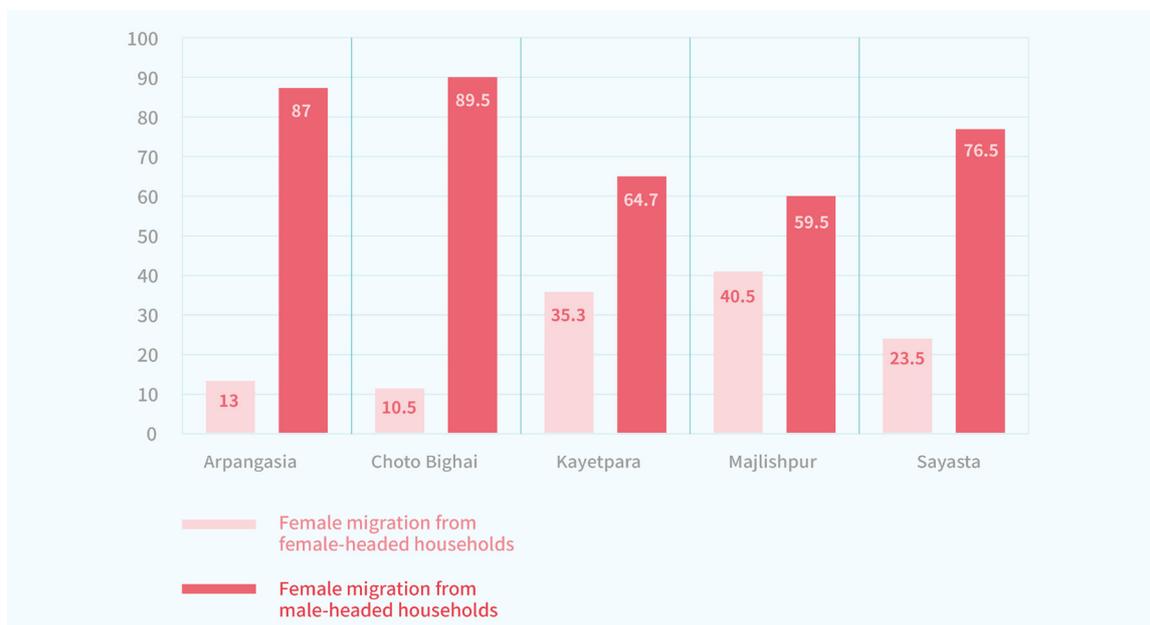
Note: FMfhhh = Female migration from female-headed households; FMmhhh = Female migration from male-headed households.
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Figure 10. Percentages of migrant men from female- and male-headed households**
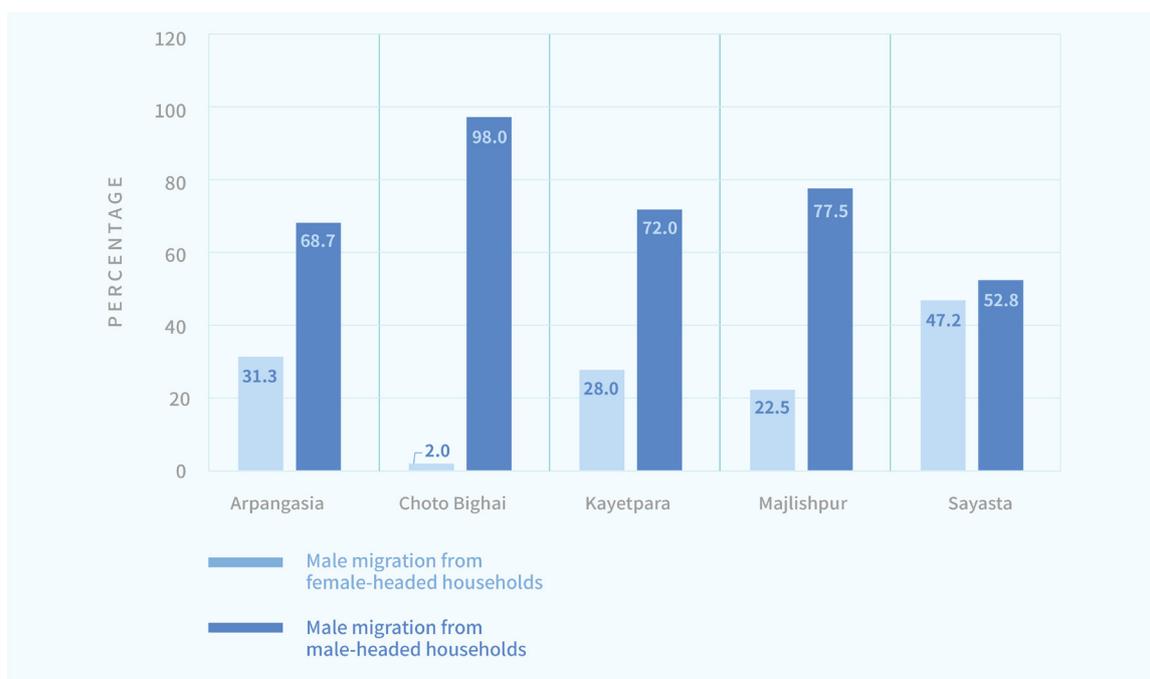
Note: MMfhhh = Male migration from female-headed households; MMmhhh = Male migration from male-headed households.
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

3.10 Respondent's relationship with migrant

Table 14 shows the identity of respondents and their relationship with the migrants. Migrant women and men were themselves the respondents in 7 per cent and 3.3 per cent of the cases respectively. Husbands were respondents for their wives in 27 per cent of the cases and wives for their husbands in 25.6 per cent. Mothers spoke about their sons and daughters in an almost equal proportion (20 per cent). Fathers were respondents for their migrant sons in 29.8 per cent, and for their migrant daughters in 18.5 per cent, of the cases. Daughters were respondents for their migrant mothers in 4.7 per cent of the cases but only in 0.9 per cent of the cases for their fathers. Sons were less likely than daughters to be respondents for their migrant mother or father (2.6 per cent). Finally, 7.7 per cent of brothers and 2.5 per cent of sisters were respondents for their migrant siblings. Some respondents were not members of the migrant household but had a close relationship with them. Among them, 3.2 per cent were sisters-in-law, 0.8 per cent parents-in-law, 0.5 per cent brothers-in-law, 1.0 per cent nieces and nephews, and 1.7 per cent uncles and aunts.

▶ **Table 14. Respondents and relationship with the migrants**

Respondent	Female migrants	Male migrants	All	%
Her/himself	93	236	329	3.9
Husband	360	0	360	4.3
Wife	0	1 817	1 817	21.5
Mother	274	1 433	1 707	20.2
Father	246	2 116	2 362	28.0
Daughter	62	65	127	1.5
Brother	57	593	650	7.7
Sister	53	159	212	2.5
Son	34	177	211	2.5
Sister-in-law	26	245	271	3.2
Parents-in-law	55	11	66	0.8
Daughter-in-law	8	0	8	0.1
Brother-in-law	12	31	43	0.5
Nephew or niece	12	69	81	1.0
Uncle or aunt	21	124	145	1.7
Others	14	34	48	0.6
Total	1 327	7 110	8 437	100.0

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

4. Destinations

4.1 Destinations in national data over the last ten years

Before presenting results from the five unions surveyed, let us examine the situation for the country as a whole. Appendix table 10 indicates the destinations and the sex-wise distribution of migrants as officially recorded by the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) between 2009 and 2019. One sees considerable fluctuations over time in the flow of migrants to a specific country.

Let us take Saudi Arabia, by far the most important destination for Bangladeshi migrants. Due to a seven-year freeze imposed by the Saudi government on male migration from 2009 to 2016, the number of men migrating in this period is very low, whereas, for different reasons, the number of women is almost insignificant. We see the number of women progressively increasing after the signing of the bilateral agreement in February 2015, promising to send 200,000 women, as domestic workers, over two years. The Bangladesh government strongly inviting women to take jobs in Saudi Arabia while barring men was politically unpalatable, especially considering that Saudi Arabia did not have a good reputation in its treatment of women domestic workers. The government was under pressure to negotiate an end to the freeze on men's migration, and it succeeded. First, it was agreed that for each woman sent to Saudi Arabia, two, and then three, visas would be granted to men. In the end, far more men migrated to Saudi Arabia than a multiplier of three women. Once the doors were flung open, a flow of migrants entered. In the year 2017, as many as 467,954 men entered Saudi Arabia. Such a high figure does not correspond to a boom in the Saudi economy and an increased demand for male workers. Rather, recruiting agencies seized the opportunity taking advantage of the considerable appetite for migration among men, charging high fees, as the survey documents. Several men migrated with "free visas", meaning they obtained legal documents, but their Saudi sponsors did not provide them with jobs, and they were "free" to find their own. This kind of arrangement may be advantageous for experienced migrants benefiting from reliable networks but, for newcomers, it could be catastrophic. For the recipient government, "free visa" holders become an easy catch when the need is felt to reduce the number of migrant workers. Law enforcers closed their eyes to the practice for some time but declared such arrangements illegal when the pandemic broke out in March 2020. Several male migrant workers with "free visas" were arrested by the Saudi police and sent to detention centres.

▶ **Figure 11. Year-wise major destinations of women migrant workers**
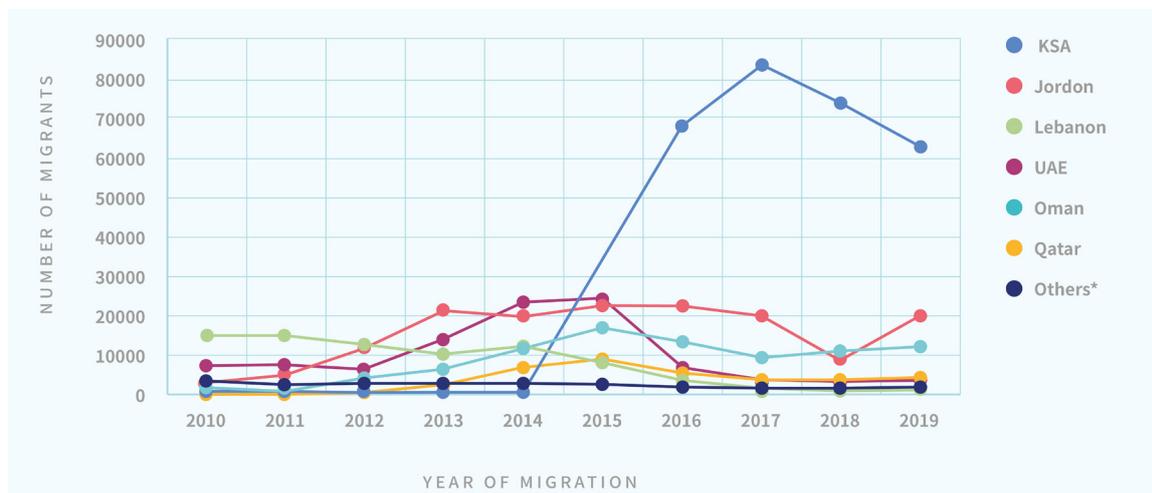
Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training. Data published in January 2020.

The BMET records over ten years illustrate how variable the sex ratios are in each recipient country. Jordan and Lebanon have more Bangladeshi women than men and constitute notable exceptions. Otherwise, male migrants dominate everywhere, their percentage ranging from 95.2 and 92.8 in Qatar and Oman respectively to 79.2 in Saudi Arabia. Recent studies conducted in Lebanon, Jordan and Oman have shown how sex ratios contribute to fashion the social environment, shape attitudes and condition the lives of migrant women and men.

4.2 Destinations in the surveyed unions

Survey in the 125 villages of the five unions surveyed recorded a total of 48 destinations for 8,437 migrants. The 1,327 women were found

to be in 22 destinations (see Appendix table 14). Questions regarding the legal status of the migrant were not asked, as getting accurate answers was doubtful, while the question could have raised suspicion. Therefore, migrants could have lived and worked at their destination for several years, documented or undocumented.

Migrants from the five unions are found on five continents. Such widespread presence could favour the opening of new markets, on which the Bangladesh Government places high hopes. But the great majority of migrant workers continues to work in Middle Eastern countries. In the survey, this region is the destination for 82 per cent of the migrants. Saudi Arabia tops the list with 37 per cent of the women and 46 per cent of the men reporting the country as their last

▶ **Table 15. Destination countries of migrants in surveyed unions**

Destination	All	Women	Men	Women %	Men %	All %
Saudi Arabia	3 750	492	3 258	37.1	45.8	44.4
UAE	762	143	619	10.8	8.7	9.0
Lebanon	353	153	200	11.5	2.8	4.2
Jordan	314	277	37	20.9	0.5	3.7
Oman	357	100	257	7.5	3.6	4.2
Kuwait	610	30	580	2.3	8.2	7.2
Qatar	399	47	352	3.5	5.0	4.7
Bahrain	268	19	249	1.4	3.5	3.2
Malaysia	829	10	819	0.8	11.5	9.8
Mauritius	64	16	48	1.2	0.7	0.8
Iraq	116	3	113	0.2	1.6	1.4
Singapore	125	0	125	0.0	1.8	1.5
Republic of Korea	30	0	30	0.0	0.4	0.4
Maldives	129	0	129	0.0	1.8	1.5
Brunei	29	0	29	0.0	0.4	0.3
Australia	13	4	9	0.3	0.1	0.2
Europe*	102	11	91	0.8	1.3	1.2
North America*	36	12	24	0.9	0.3	0.4
Africa*	115	1	114	0.1	1.6	1.4
East and Southeast Asia*	25	6	19	0.5	0.3	0.3
South Asia*	11	3	8	0.2	0.1	0.1
Total	**8 437**	**1 327**	**7 110**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: (*) mark indicates several countries lumped together.
Source: RAPID/Drishti-ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

destination (see table 15). The finding is in line with the vast increase recorded at the national level from 2017 onward. It shows the high level of dependency on the Saudi market, which is not without risks politically and economically. Other destinations in the Middle East, by order of importance, are the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Jordan, Bahrain and Iraq, all countries practising some form of the sponsorship or *kafala* system. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia is the most important destination, followed by the Maldives and Singapore, the three countries being destinations for 12.7 per cent of the almost exclusively male workers.

Countries offering the possibility of settlement in Europe, North America and Australia are highly praised, but not easily entered. Migrants are found scattered in ten European countries, with Italy and the UK topping the list. A few migrants are reported in Canada and the USA, Australia, Japan and South Korea. South Africa is the most important destination on the African continent, with 99 men declared to be working there. A single migrant has been reported in South America, in Paraguay.

The field survey confirms Jordan as the most important destination for women after Saudi Arabia, with 21 per cent reporting the country as their last destination. This is followed by Lebanon (11.5 per cent) and the UAE (10.8 per cent). Interestingly, only 0.5 per cent and 2.8 per cent of the men mentioned Jordan and Lebanon respectively as their last destination. As these lines are written, the dramatic situation in Lebanon, following the collapse of its economy and a political crisis further exacerbated by the huge explosion that destroyed Beirut on 4 August 2020, badly affected migrant workers. At the time of the survey, numbers had not reduced yet. Oman is another important destination for both women (7.5 per cent) and men (3 per cent). The survey reports 3.5 per cent of the women and 5 per cent of the men working in Qatar, and 1.4 per cent of the women and 3.5 per cent of the men in Bahrain, are migrants from Bangladesh. Mauritius has a small number of Bangladeshi men (0.7 per cent) and women (1.2 per cent) engaged in the garment sector.

5. Costs of labour migration

5.1 Women and men compared

Migrant labour recruitment processes in Bangladesh have the notorious reputation of being the costliest compared to other labour-sending countries. But this assertion must be qualified. It concerns men. Women have always paid less than men, and the signing of the bilateral agreement with Saudi Arabia in 2015 with the provision that women's migration be "free of cost" further widened the gap.

Anomalies and fraudulent practices in the labour recruitment processes have been reported for several years. Weaknesses and loopholes in the regulations, unethical practices and political influences have been identified as the main causes. Layers of intermediaries, each taking their profit, lack of transparency and traceability at both sending and receiving ends, trading in visas, and so on, are some of the well-known problems. Although local and international organizations have long called for action against irregularities and fraudulent practices, no visible change has been noticed. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recently commissioned a study on the subject and reached the same conclusions.[13]

Collecting data on migration costs in a survey on a large population is a challenging task. Migrants directly engaged in the migration process generally know the cost of their migration but in their absence, a wife, a sibling or elderly parents may not know or remember the amount spent. Also, specific informants could have understood the question differently. The cost first agreed may not be the total amount and additional claims could be made after departure. Alternatively, a high amount may have been paid in the hope of getting a certain type of job, which is never obtained. As mentioned, survey data do not permit dissecting these processes which are better analysed in case histories.

We compute here the financial costs of migration as reported by respondents. These are shown in table 16 and in figure 12. Marked differences are immediately apparent. They show nearly 14 per cent of women migrating without paying any fee to the recruiting agency. This practically never occurred for migrant men, where only 0.1 per cent reported the same. Again, 4.5 per cent of the women paid up to 10,000 taka but no men were found in this category. About 26 per cent of the women reported spending 10,000–30,000 taka for their migration, whereas 0.9 per cent of the men reported spending between 10,000–70,000 taka. These men were all veteran migrants. Colours have been added to the right of table 16 to highlight "acceptable" and "above acceptable" levels of costs for men. The reference is taken from the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), which fixed maximum migration costs for all major destination countries after negotiation with the Bangladesh Association of International Recruitment Agencies (BAIRA) in 2017. For details, see Appendix table 3.

Figure 13 shows that about 72 per cent of the women migrated with costs up to 50,000 taka, while the corresponding percentage for men is only 0.7 per cent. Again, about 22 per cent of the women migrated with costs ranging between 50,000 and 150,000 taka and only 3.7 per cent of the men are in this range. The survey found over 95 per cent of the men bearing a high level of migration costs. Who incurs these abnormally high migration fees and how these can be justified when comparative costs in neighbouring "sending" countries for the same destinations have remained much lower? These are questions that have been repeatedly raised with numerous solutions proposed and partially applied. However, survey results show, once more, that these attempts at control have been ineffective.[14]

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13   IOM, "Mapping of Labour Migration Recruitment Practices in Bangladesh" (2020).

14   "The Cost: Causes of and Potential Redress for High Recruitment and Migration Costs in Bangladesh", ILO Brief, Asia-Pacific Decent Work Decade 2006-2015.

▶ **Table 16. Sex-wise migration costs and cost illustration in colour**

Costs in BDT	Women	Men	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %
No cost	185	9	13.9	0.1	18.4	
Up to 10 000	60	0	4.5	0.0		
10 001–20 000	166	7	12.5	0.1	26.2	
20 001–30 000	182	14	13.7	0.2		
30 001–40 000	170	13	12.8	0.2		0.9
40 001–50 000	196	6	14.8	0.1	49.4	
50 001–60 000	131	9	9.9	0.1		
60 001–70 000	35	8	2.6	0.1		
70 001–150 000	124	245	9.3	3.4		3.4
150 001–250 000	29	864	2.2	12.2		
250 001–350 000	7	1 656	0.5	23.3		
350 001–450 000	3	1 918	0.2	27	4.7	93.6
450 001–550 000	6	858	0.5	12.1		
550 001–650 000	2	590	0.2	8.3		
650 001–750 000	6	398	0.5	5.6		
750 001++	8	374	0.6	5.3		
Missing	17	141	1.3	2.0	1.3	2.0
Total	**1 327**	**7 110**	**100**	**100**	**100.0**	**99.9**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Figure 12. Migration costs for women and men compared**
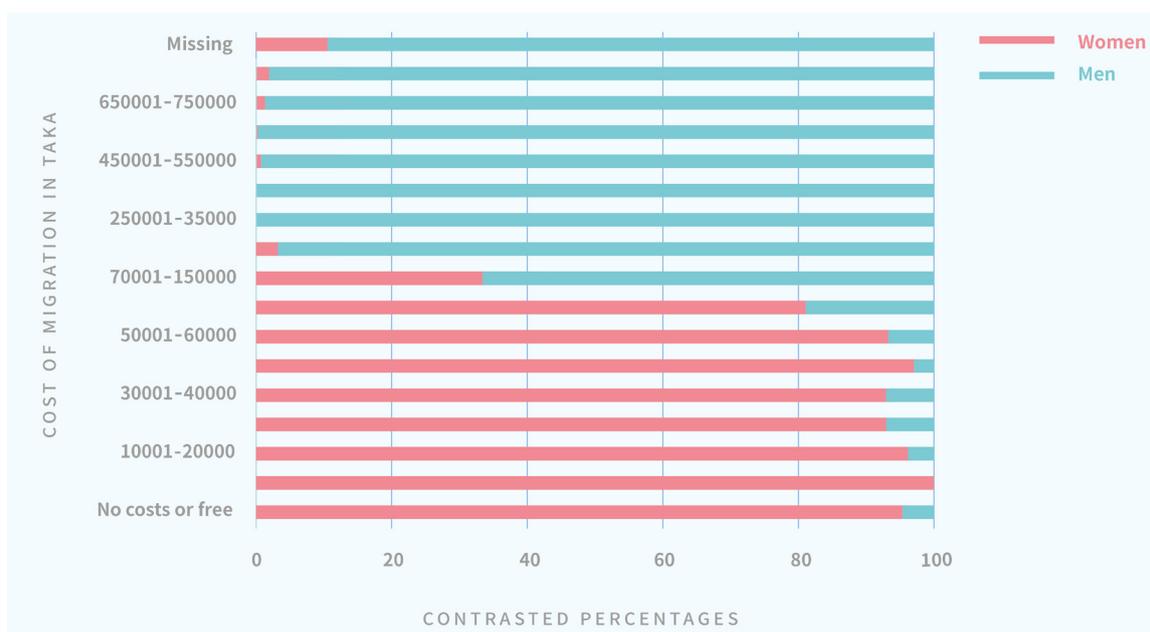
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Figure 13. Trends in migration costs**
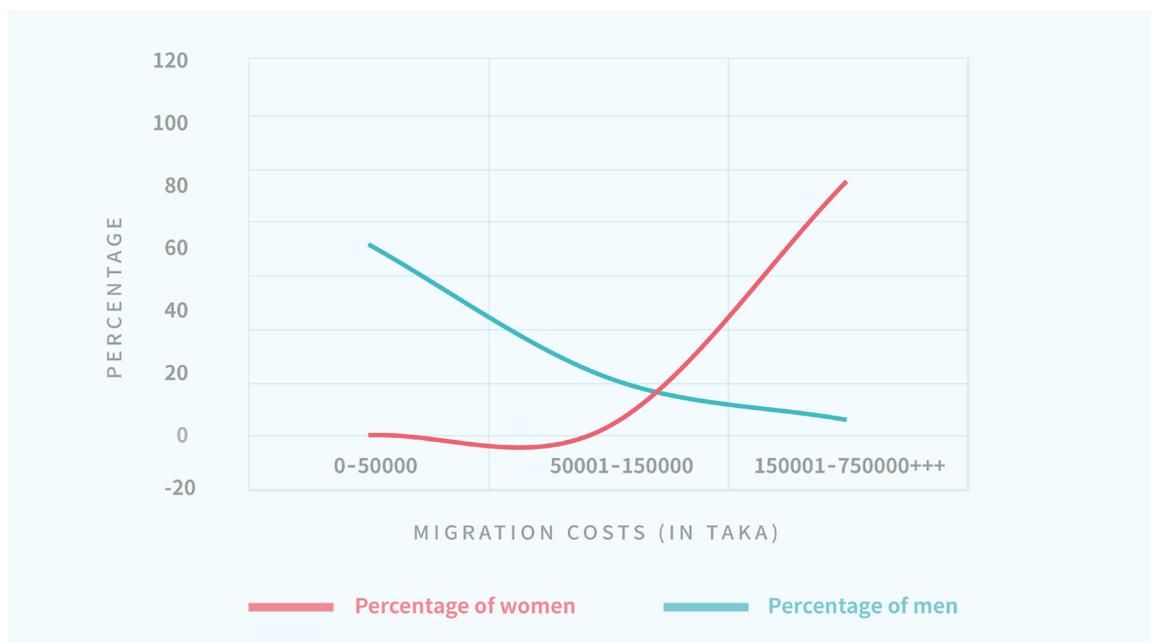
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

5.2 Country-specific migration costs for men

Clearly, recruiting agencies did not follow the government instructions on processing charges established in 2017. Skilled and professional people may be able to negotiate with prospective employers or their representatives, but unskilled and low-skilled workers have very limited capacity to do so. Most migrants from Bangladesh belong to the latter category and are charged the highest recruiting fees. From survey data, several tables have been prepared showing the mean cost of migration for specific countries, with a time frame indicating when the cost was incurred. For the exercise, we extend the norms established in 2017 to earlier periods.

Table 17 shows 3,081 men migrated to Saudi Arabia. The cost of their migration varies depending on how long ago they migrated. Interestingly, the most recent departures (1,131 men migrated between January 2018 and March 2020) paid on average 476,113.17 taka, which is 288.6 per cent above the government-specified migration fee of 165,000 taka. The cost is higher

for men who migrated between January 2016 and December 2017: they paid on average 576,528.72 taka, which is 349.4 per cent above the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) reference fee. The highest cost was paid by those who migrated between January 2014 and December 2015, when 256 men on average paid an average of 589,472.66 taka, which is 357.3 per cent above the GoB reference fee. This was just before the seven-year freeze imposed on male recruitment got lifted. As soon as restrictions were removed, one sees the number of migrant men shooting up and average costs also slightly going down.

Table 18 shows 561 men migrated to Kuwait and the mean cost of their migration at different times. The 292 men migrated from January 2016 to March 2020 paid on average 560,000 taka, which is 525 per cent above the government-specified migration fee of 106,780 taka. Here, the cost estimation could be conservative because several Kuwait returnees reported to journalists paying amounts 25–30 per cent higher.[15] Of all destinations, Kuwait migrants paid the largest surcharge. In this connection, a major scandal recently broke out when a Bangladeshi

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15   The Daily Star, 16 April 2020, https://www.thedailystar.net/city/news/uae-warns-countries-strict-restrictions-recruitment-1893307.

▶ **Table 17. Mean costs for men who migrated to Saudi Arabia**

Year of migration	Duration of stay (months)	No. of migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost	% above GoB reference fee
2018–March 2020	1–27	1 131	538 484 000	476 113.17	288.6
2016–17	28–51	592	341 305 000	576 528.72	349.4
2014–15	52–75	256	150 905 000	589 472.66	357.3
2012–13	76–99	204	111 135 000	544 779.41	330.2
2010–11	100–124	230	109 685 000	476 891.30	289.0
2008–09	125–148	184	73 750 000	400 815.22	242.9
2006–07	149–172	107	35 610 000	332 803.74	201.7
2006 and before	173 and above	377	99 543 845	264 042.03	160.0
Total		**3081**	**1 460 417 845**	**474 007.70**	**287.3%**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 18. Mean costs for men who migrated to Kuwait**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)	% above GoB reference fee
2018–March 2020	0–27	165	93 445 000	566 333.33	530.4
2016–17	28–51	127	69 880 000	554 603.18	519.4
2014–15	52–75	37	18 350 000	509 722.22	477.4
2012–13	76–99	16	8 520 000	532 500.00	498.7
2010–11	100–124	34	13 410 000	394 411.76	369.4
2008–09	125–148	37	14 000 000	378 378.37	354.4
2006–07	149–172	36	9 950 000	276 388.89	258.8
2006 and before	173 and above	109	24 530 000	225 045.87	210.8
Total		**561**	**252 085 000**	**449 349.40**	**420.8**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

member of Parliament, owner of a Kuwait-based cleaning company, was arrested by the Kuwait Criminal Investigation Department (CID) under accusations of human trafficking and money laundering.[16] More than 20,000 Bangladeshi men were reportedly recruited by the man and his associates. Ongoing investigations in both Kuwait and Bangladesh reveal a system that functioned for several years, implying involvement of officials and collaborations on both sides of the border. The COVID-19 pandemic, which brought about the closure of airports, stopped the movement of individuals and disrupted cash flows, could have hastened the downfall of an elaborate mechanism of fraud and deception of migrant men.

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16   Mohammad Shahid Islam, known as Kazi Papul, was arrested by the Kuwaiti Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 7 June 2020, accused of human trafficking and money laundering. The Kuwait prosecution had previously collected testimonies from Bangladeshi workers recruited to work in his cleaning company, called Marafie Kuwaitia. The men reported having paid 2,800 to 3,000 Kuwait dinars, equivalent to 693,000 to 832,000 taka, for the privilege of a job in Kuwait, which many never got. Journalists interviewed men who returned to Bangladesh empty-handed. In mid-February, Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission opened an enquiry into the allegations that Shahid Islam amassed 14 billion taka by trafficking people to Kuwait and siphoned off the money to different countries. Sources: https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/mp-papul-took-money-5-bangladeshis-take-them-kuwait-90232 and https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/mp-shahid-arrest-prosecution-asks-him-be-kept-detained-1912337.

Table 19 shows the mean cost of migration to the United Arab Emirates for men. Policy barriers on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers have been imposed from late 2012 but a limited number of workers managed to migrate in the domestic sector. The current survey recorded that 133 men migrated between 2016 and March 2020. In spite of labour recruitment barriers, the UAE still has the second-largest number of expatriate Bangladeshis (an educated estimate is 700,000). The GoB set 107,780 taka as maximum fee for labour recruiting processes to the UAE

in 2017. Private recruiting agencies have been taking 334 per cent above the government-specified fee between 2014 and March 2020. Again, private recruiting agencies exceeded labour recruitment fees by 272 per cent and 294 per cent between 2008 and 2013, and by 207 per cent between 2006 and 2007.

Tables 20, 21, 22 and 23 present the mean costs for men who migrated to Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon and Malaysia.

▶ **Table 19. Mean costs for men who migrated to the UAE**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)	% above GoB reference fee
2018–20	0–27	85	30 400 000	357 647.06	331.8
2016–17	28–51	48	16 850 000	351 041.67	325.7
2014–15	52–75	64	22 730 000	360 793.65	334.8
2012–13	76–99	148	46 540 000	316 598.64	293.7
2010–11	100–124	121	36 627 000	302 702.48	280.9
2008–09	125–148	64	18 810 000	293 906.25	272.7
2006–07	149–172	26	5 800 000	223 076.92	207.0
Before 2006	173 and above	47	11 533 000	245 382.98	227.7
Total		**603**	**189 290 000**	**313 913.80**	**291.3**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶**Table 20. Mean costs for men who migrated to Qatar**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)	% above GoB reference fee
2018–20	0–27	107	39 620 000	370 280.37	367.4
2016–17	28–51	117	48 220 000	412 136.75	408.9
2014–15	52–75	55	20 710 000	383 518.51	380.6
2012–13	76–99	28	10 040 000	358 571.43	355.8
2010–11	100–124	11	3 450 000	313 636.36	311.2
2008–09	125–148	8	1 680 000	210 000.00	208.4
2006–07	149–172	3	1 100 000	370 000.00	367.1
2006 and before	173 and above	9	1 890 000	210 000.00	208.4
Total		**338**	**126 710 000**	**374 881.70**	**372.0**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 21. Mean costs for men who migrated to Bahrain**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean costs (BDT)	% above GoB reference fee
2018–20	0–27	22	8 600 000	390 909.09	399.8
2016–17	28–51	91	37 604 300	413 234.07	422.6
2014–15	52–75	46	16 945 000	368 369.56	376.7
2012–13	76–99	33	13 100 000	396 969.69	406.0
2010–11	100–124	20	6 830 000	341 500.00	349.3
2008–09	125–148	12	4 080 000	340 000.00	347.7
2006–07	149–172	6	1 750 000	291 666.67	298.3
2006 and before	173 and above	15	3 780 000	252 000.00	257.7
Total		**245**	**92 689 300**	**378 323.70**	**386.9**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 22. Mean costs for men who migrated to Lebanon**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)	% above GoB reference fee
2018–20	0–27	46	17 160 000	373 043.48	316.7
2016–17	28–51	76	28 410 000	378 800.00	321.6
2014–15	52–75	40	15 970 000	399 250.00	339.0
2012–13	76–99	12	3 590 000	299 166.67	254.0
2010–11	100–124	19	6 600 000	347 368.42	294.9
2008–09	125–148	3	1 020 000	340 000.00	288.7
2006–07	149–172	0	0	0	0.0
2006 and before	173 and above	3	480 000	160 000.00	135.8
Total		**199**	**73 230 000**	**367 989.90**	**312.4**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 23. Mean costs for men who migrated to Malaysia**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)	% above GoB reference fee
2018–20	0–27	307	118 010 000	384 397.39	240.2
2016–17	28–51	172	63 060 000	368 771.93	230.5
2014–15	52–75	69	24 560 000	355 942.03	222.5
2012–13	76–99	37	11 300 000	313 888.89	196.2
2010–11	100–124	63	18 790 000	298 253.97	186.4
2008–09	125–148	78	22 435 000	287 628.20	179.8
2006–07	149–172	34	9 890 000	290 882.35	181.8
2006 and before	173 and above	19	4 742 000	249 578.94	156.0
Total		**779**	**272 787 000**	**350 175.90**	**218.9**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

5.3 Country-specific migration costs for women

The bilateral agreement signed between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh in February 2015 led the government to further remove bottlenecks for women. Migration was announced to be free of cost, as mentioned, the employers paying recruiting agencies fees and airfares.[17] Visas for domestic work in Saudi Arabia became plentiful. Yet, a sufficient number of candidates did not come forth, and recruiting agencies began paying local subagents more money for each woman recruited. Quite a few women could migrate for free, and a small number even received a cash payment. Yet, others were made to disburse money, subagents exerting tricks to scoop out what they could. For recruiters, business remained lucrative by the sheer number of women sent to Saudi Arabia, including some who were clearly unfit for the job. The bilateral agreement and an associated high demand for domestic workers in other receiving countries created pressure to offer better conditions to women domestic workers in general.

Table 24 below shows the costs women incurred for migrating to Saudi Arabia. Out of 278 women who migrated between January 2018 and March 2020, 91 (33 per cent) reported not paying any charge for their migration, while 67 per cent had to pay on average 42,492 taka. Migration fees increased where candidates lived far away from Dhaka and where recruiting networks were less developed. In 2008–20011, the mean cost of migration to Saudi Arabia was between 50,000 and 70,000 taka. Field studies showed that average salaries also increased following the 2015 agreement. One can say that a new phase had begun, with the financial benefits of migration for women markedly increased.

Table 25 shows mean migration costs for Jordan, where women are employed in garment factories and in domestic work. The Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL), a state-owned overseas employment company, manages recruitment for garment factories.[18] Nonetheless, several women pay subagents under the promise that procedures would be free of hassles. As for migrants to Saudi Arabia, the more distant from Dhaka were the recruits, the greater was the reliance on subagents and the higher the cost, at least for first-time migrants.

▶ **Table 24. Mean costs for women who migrated to Saudi Arabia**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)
2018–March 2020	0–27	91	Free	Free
2018–March 2020	0–27	187	7 946 000	42 491.98
2016–17	28–51	11	Free	Free
2016–17	28–51	80	3 685 000	46 062.50
2014–15	52–75	4	Free	Free
2014–15	52–75	31	1 865 000	60 161.29
2012–13	76–99	16	1 405 000	87 812.50
2010–11	100–124	13	1 010 000	77 692.31
2008–09	125–148	5	250 000	50 000.00
2006–07	149–172	6	425 000	70 833.33
2006 and before	173 and above	14	965 000	68 928.57
Total		**458**	**17 551 000**	**38 320.96**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

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17   Thérèse Blanchet, From Risks to Rights: Evaluation of a Training Programme for Women Aspiring to Migrate for Work (Dhaka: SANEM Publication, 2018).

18   BOESL is the Government's recruitment agency for overseas employment, specializing in skilled and professional migration, responsible for identifying labour demand in foreign job markets and facilitating the recruitment process for Bangladeshi migrant workers under bilateral arrangements with certain countries of destination.

▶ **Table 25. Mean costs for women who migrated to Jordan**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)
2018–March 2020	0–27	15	Free	Free
2018–March 2020	0–27	99	4 079 000	41 202.02
2016–17	28–51	79	4 290 000	54 303.80
2014–15	52–75	43	1 869 000	43 465.12
2012–13	76–99	21	1 175 000	55 952.38
2010–11	100–124	5	290 000	58 000.00
2008–09	125–148	2	105 000	52 500.00
Total		**264**	**11 808 000**	**44 727.27**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 26. Mean costs for women who migrated to Lebanon**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)
2018–March 2020	0–27	2	Free	Free
2018–March 2020	0–27	17	750 000	44 117.65
2016–17	28–51	21	995 000	47 380.95
2014–15	52–75	37	2 810 000	75 945.95
2012–13	76–99	31	1 810 000	58 387.10
2010–11	100–124	17	1 165 000	68 529.41
2008–09	125–148	5	815 000	16 300.00
2006–07	149–172	7	370 000	52 857.14
Before 2006	173 and above	9	445 000	49 444.44
Total		**146**	**9 160 000**	**62 739.73**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

Table 26 shows mean migration costs for Lebanon, a praised destination for women up to 2015. Women's greater freedom of movement may account for the popularity of the "free visas" that subagents sold at a higher price.

Table 27 shows the mean costs for women who migrated to the UAE. As mentioned, the Emirates have been a praised destination for women and men. Women have been known to migrate under different types of arrangements to the UAE, each having its price. These include (1) live-in domestic worker tied to one *kafeel,* (2) live-out domestic worker with a "free visa", and (3) dance bar workers, for whom migration is not only free of charge but an advance payment is given prior to departure. The latter applies to a small number of young women migrating on tourist visas. Such migrant workers are not recorded by BMET but were captured in the survey.[19]

Tables 28, 29 and 30 show the mean costs for women who migrated to Oman, Kuwait and Qatar.

19   We include this last category of migrant women among "workers" but the press refers to them as "victims of trafficking". A Bangladeshi man, owner of four luxury hotels in Dubai, used to recruit young women as dance bar workers. Azam Khan had his passport seized in Dubai and was later arrested in Bangladesh, accused of human trafficking. Five women complained of being forced into prostitution and not getting paid. The scandal involved two reputed dancers and choreographers accused of training and helping in the selection of girls. These accusations were levelled after the Dubai hospitality sector closed down as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

▶ **Table 27. Mean costs for women who migrated to the UAE**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)
2018–March 2020	0–27	5	Free	Free
2018–March 2020	0–27	30	1 582 000	54 551.72
2016–17	28–51	31	2 080 000	67 096.77
2014–15	52–75	17	1 560 000	91 764.71
2012–13	76–99	12	945 000	78 750.00
2010–11	100–124	12	675 000	56 250.00
2008–09	125–148	11	850 000	77 272.73
2006–07	149-172	1	90 000	90 000.00
Before 2006	173 and above	11	790 000	71 818.18
Total		**130**	**8 572 000**	**65 938.46**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 28. Mean costs for women who migrated to Oman**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)
2018–March 2020	0–27	5	Free	Free
2018–March 2020	0–27	32	1 737 000	54 281.25
2016–17	28–51	3	Free	Free
2014–15	28–51	25	1 440 000	57 600.00
2012–13	52–75	7	410 000	58 571.43
2010–11	76–99	10	655 000	65 500.00
2008–09	100–124	2	100 000	50 000.00
2006–07	125–148	4	100 000	25 000.00
2018–March 2020	149–172	1	30 000	30 000.00
Total		**89**	**4 472 000**	**50 247.19**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 29. Mean costs for women who migrated to Kuwait**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)
2018–March 2020	0–27	11	490 000	49 000.00
2016–17	28–51	0	0	0
2014–15	52–75	2	130 000	65 000.00
2012–13	76–99	1	35 000	35 000.00
2010–11	100--24	0	0	0
2008–09	125–148	4	360 000	90 000.00
2006–07	149–172	3	230 000	76 666.67
Before 2006	173 and above	7	720 000	102 857.14
Total		**28**	**1 965 000**	**70 178.57**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 30. Mean costs for women who migrated to Qatar**

Year	Duration of stay (months)	Total migrants	Total cost (BDT)	Mean cost (BDT)
2018–March 2020	0–27	5	Free	Free
2018–March 2020	0–27	20	805 000	40 250.00
2016–17	28–51	9	294 000	32 666.67
2014–15	52–75	6	145 000	24 166.67
2012–13	76–99	4	155 000	38 750.00
2010–11	100–124	1	60 000	60 000.00
Total		**45**	**1 459 000**	**32 422.22**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

5.4 Discussion on findings

The cost of migration recorded in this survey may be compared with the findings of a nation-wide study recently conducted on the subject by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).[20] The BBS study covers five years, from 2015 to 2018 (ending 15 months before the present survey). The considerable gap between men and women's migration costs is acknowledged – it is also mentioned that some women migrated for free. However, differences are found to be far less important than in the present survey. In the BBS study, the mean recruitment costs for men and for women are calculated at 471,000 taka and 100,000 taka respectively. In other words, between 2015 and 2018, men paid on average 4.7 times more than women to migrate. In our report, table 31 below shows that the gaps in migration costs for women and men who migrated to Saudi Arabia, the most important destination, are far above a multiplier of 4.7. For the years 2014–2015, men paid 11 times more than women and, for 2016–2017, they paid 14

times more than women, not to mention 2018–March 2020 when the gap was even larger.

If one considers other destinations besides Saudi Arabia, an average migration cost as high as 100,000 for women is not found in any of the seven most important destinations recorded in the survey. The average cost of migration for Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar ranges from 32,000 to 70,000 (see tables 25 to 30). In none of the major destinations do migration costs reach the level given in the BBS study.

Smaller studies should not be dismissed on the grounds that they do not cover the entire country. The research team stands by the findings of the survey. These are credible and in line with findings from research conducted at the grassroots level by the Drishti Research Centre team over the last six years. A gap between women's and men's migration costs has always existed, but it kept increasing from 2015 onwards. The BBS study calculates men's and women's average monthly earnings at 25,693 and 18,033 respectively. That women on average

▶ **Table 31. Mean cost of migration to Saudi Arabia: Year-wise and sex-wise**

Year	Women: Average paid (BDT)	Men: Average paid in (BDT)	Men paid a multiplier of
2018–March 2020	28 582	476 113	16.7
2016–17	40 494	576 529	14.0
2014–15	53 085	589 472	11.0

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20   Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Cost of Migration Survey (July 2020). Study conducted with financial and technical assistance from ILO with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

earn less than men may not be challenged, but they generally save more. The majority work as live-in domestic workers and do not pay for food and lodging whereas most men living out have such costs. In any case, the greater (and growing) financial benefits of women's labour migration is widely recognized in migrant communities. Male migration has become a luxury that the poor cannot afford.

5.5 Migration costs paid by intending migrants unable to leave because of the pandemic

The time between payment of migration costs, departure, work, income and remittances is often one of tension, especially when candidates for migration borrowed money at high interest rates. As mentioned, the survey was completed at the end of March 2020, just as the country was closing down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the intending migrants had already paid for their migration, totally or partially, when airports closed, and they were left stranded not knowing if and when they could depart. As these lines were written, ongoing field research revealed that intending migrant workers were still waiting, while agents had not returned the payments received, giving hope that the crisis would soon be over.

The situation has been catastrophic for those living in great uncertainty, while the clock was ticking and the interest on the loan contracted mounting. Table 32 shows the migration costs already paid by women and men intending to migrate at the time of the survey. The numbers are small but sufficient to show that men were in a situation far more difficult than women, as the amount of money disbursed was considerably greater. Among women, 42 per cent of the intending migrants did not incur any costs while, for men, this group is only 2.7 per cent. Most men paid large sums of money, some selling their means of livelihood in order to migrate. The cascading effects of the losses were often dramatic.

At any time, overseas migration processes may be a time-consuming affair and completing all necessary steps may turn into a bitter experience. We asked respondents whether they, or the migrant they reported on, faced problems during the migration process. Interestingly, more problems were reported in relation to those who were yet to leave than those who had already left. Tables 33 and 34 reveal that in areas where people have migrated for generations, respondents were less likely to report migrants encountering difficulties in organizing migration, as opposed to unions where migration was more recent, such as Arpangashia and Choto Bighai. More men than women were reported having encountered difficulties.

▶Table 32. Migration costs paid by intending migrants, sex-wise

Costs	Women	Men	Women %	Men %
No cost	16	2	42.1	2.7
Up to 50 000	20	5	52.6	6.8
50 001–150 000	2	5	5.3	6.8
150 001–250 000	0	9	0.0	12.3
250 001–350 000	0	19	0.0	26.0
350 001–450 000	0	27	0.0	37.0
450 001–550 000	0	2	0.0	2.7
550 001++	0	2	0.0	2.7
Missing	0	2	0.0	2.7
Total	**38**	**73**	**100**	**100**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 33. Problems in organizing migration: Area-wise responses of migrant women**

Union	Number of responses		% of responses	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Arpangashia	18	51	26.1	73.9
Chotobighai	22	111	16.5	83.5
Kayetpara	14	275	4.8	95.2
Majlishpur	15	116	11.5	88.5
Sayasta	51	654	7.2	92.8
Total	**120**	**1 207**		

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Table 34. Problems in organizing migration: Area-wise responses of migrant men**

Union	Number of responses		% of responses	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Arpangashia	66	116	36.3	63.7
Chotobighai	115	381	23.2	76.8
Kayetpara	73	732	9.1	90.9
Majlishpur	222	2 193	9.2	90.8
Sayasta	211	3 001	6.6	93.4
Total	**687**	**6 423**		

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

6. Occupations and livelihoods before migration

Table 35 reveals the occupations in which migrant women and men engaged before migration. A more complete table showing differences between unions is given in the Appendix. In the analysis, we shall refer to both tables. But first, we must insist on the limitations of a survey in examining occupations prior to migration. The survey reveals only one occupation per person, although we are aware that the same individual may engage in different occupations at different times of the year, or even at the same time.

A first observation reveals how strongly gendered occupations are prior to migration. For women, homemakers, a gender-specific occupation in Bangladesh as elsewhere, comes top of the list (55.8 per cent). This bears a link with the 67.5 per cent of the women reported to be married. Factory workers, representing over 16 per cent, is the next occupational group

for women. This average masks important differences between surveyed unions. Thus, in Chotobighai and in Kayetpara, former factory workers represent 52.6 per cent and 40 per cent respectively of the migrant workers, whereas in Majlishpur and in Sayasta they represent a mere 1.5 per cent and 0.8 per cent. Such large differences suggest quite different paths leading women to migrate.

Interestingly, a similar proportion of women and men (10.9 and 11 per cent respectively) were unemployed prior to migration. However, a much higher proportion of men than women were students (17 per cent against 4.9 per cent). The difference relates to girls being taken out of school early to be married, the marriage often ending in divorce followed by migration, in a scenario described earlier. It may also relate to poorer families unable to maintain their children in school for long. Women's educational level

▶Table 35. Sex-wise occupations prior to migration

	Number		Percentage	
Occupations	Women	Men	Women	Men
Farmer	60	2 902	4.5	40.8
Homemaker	740	2	55.8	0.03
Day labourer	11	234	0.8	3.3
Business/petty trader	23	686	1.7	9.6
Unemployed	145	780	10.9	11.0
Student	65	1 193	4.9	16.8
Fisher	0	45	0.0	0.6
Factory worker	213	206	16.1	2.9
Transport worker	0	233	0.0	3.3
Job holder	43	261	3.2	3.7
Mason	0	166	0.0	2.3
Carpenter	0	81	0.0	1.1
Tailor	23	98	1.7	1.4
Others*	4	223	0.3	3.1
Total	**1 327**	**7 110**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Note: *Others = Saloon worker, cook, electrician, motor mechanic, building painter, plumber, dock worker, goldsmith, graphic designer, quack, domestic worker, etc.
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

being particularly low, those who were students before migrating are likely to have migrated very young. Here also, interesting differences appear between surveyed unions. In Arpangashia, none of the 69 migrant women were declared students prior to migration whereas in Majlishpur, 17 out of 131 women, that is 13 per cent, were students. Majlishpur, the very conservative union, is also where women were least likely to have worked in factories. Case histories suggest that discreetly leaving the village to work abroad could be easier than joining a factory. The percentage of boys who were students prior to migration is highest in Kayetpara (26 per cent) and lowest in Arpangashia (10.4 per cent).

Prior to migration, farming was the main occupation for 41 per cent of the men, reflecting their rural background. But here also, averages mask important differences among surveyed unions. In Kayetpara, a more industrial area, only 8.3 per cent of the men declared farming as their occupation prior to migration, but this is 57.3 per cent in Sayasta. The highest percentage of boys who were students prior to migration is also found in Kayetpara, drawing the contours of a more industrialized area.

The number of job holders is low among both, women and men (3.2 per cent against 4 per cent) and this is a major reason for migrating. Businessman and petty trader, transport worker, mason, fisher are mostly or exclusively men's occupations.

▶ **Figure 14. Percentage of women's and men's occupations prior to migration**
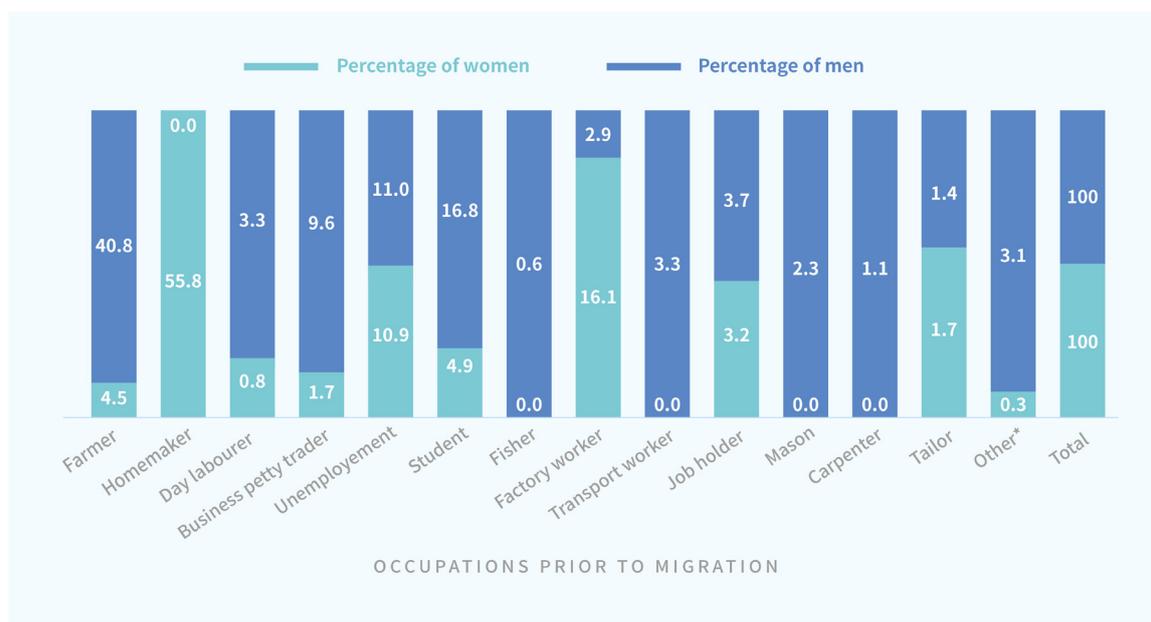
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

7. Conclusion

One of the purposes of the survey was to highlight women's and men's participation in cross-border labour migration in five districts of Bangladesh. The irregular landscape of migration in terms of sex ratio, history and geography can thus be drawn with a finer brush.

In the five unions surveyed, women are found to represent 15.7 per cent of the migrant workers, the range spreading from 27.5 per cent in Arpangashia (Barguna) to 5.1 per cent in Majlishpur (Brahmanbaria). While the overall findings are close to the national average, the differences between unions are significant. Moreover, averages at union level conceal heterogeneity within, as "pockets" where women migrate in large numbers get submerged in the midst of more "traditional" communities, as shown for Kayetpara union, where Ward 9 shows women's participation at 54.2 per cent of the migrant workers whereas the average for Kayetpara union is 8.2 per cent. The recruitment of migrant women as domestic workers within social clusters has been analysed by Praveena Kodoth for south India. Though she covers larger territories, her work is inspiring, and fruitful comparisons can be made with the Bangladesh irregular landscape.[21] There is a need to understand better the history and the socio-economic particularities of these "pockets" and in what way they differ from surrounding communities. While the Government of Bangladesh, unlike the Government of India, has taken a clear position encouraging women to migrate, in many communities and families, women's labour migration is not considered an option. For example, pockets such as Chonpara are neither a reference nor a model for surrounding villagers who take pride in adherence to values of honour. Even poor households see women's labour migration as incompatible with their rank and class.

Women often migrate without informing relatives and neighbours, to avoid criticism from those pretending to occupy superior moral grounds. These criticisms do not stop women from migrating but places them, and their families, on the defensive. "I lower my gaze and do not say anything when people blame me for allowing my daughter-in-law to migrate," said an old man, who is a follower of a pir who strongly condemns women's mobility. While migrant men occupy their rightful place as "men" and as family providers, migrant women need excuses for intruding a space not deemed rightfully theirs. Narratives of sacrifice, duty to the family and "exceptional" circumstances are served to justify their migration. Widowed, divorced, separated or abandoned women migrate as they lack a male provider. Wives migrate to pay off the loan contracted to cover the cost of a husband's "failed" migration. Daughters migrate replacing a missing brother when fathers are incapacitated or absent. Migrant daughters and wives appear as saviours in exceptional times and circumstances. They migrate by default and their migrations are often constructed as stopgap solutions. When the crisis is over, or when migrant women "open their eyes" and no longer take for granted family expectations on their income, their working abroad is often stopped or questioned. In the Sayasta union, veteran migrant women gave up their own migration, sending their son or their husband instead, even as they entertained little expectations about economic returns. Such "economic irrationality" destabilizes positivist migration theories.

Associated with low status, hard work and modest pay, the occupations available to migrant women, largely domestic and garment factory work, understandably do not attract women who have better options. Two thirds of the migrant women surveyed either have no schooling or did not study beyond primary level. For women at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, overseas migration offers possibilities of earning not available at home. As mentioned, 18 per cent of the migrant women in the sample belong to the category widowed, divorced, separated or abandoned (WDSA). Whatever the discourse of

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21   Praveena Kodoth, "Inside the Shadow of the State: Recruitment and Migration of South Indian Women as Domestic Workers", ILO Background Paper (2020).

duty and sacrifice served at home, there is no doubt that for many women, migration allows a reversal of bad fortune. For unmarried girls, it delays the pressure to marry and may reduce the attraction of marriage altogether.

The survey amply demonstrated the wide gap in men's and women's migration costs, with some women migrating for free, whereas men pay excessively high fees that have further increased as women's costs decreased. Between 2014 and 2020, men migrating to Saudi Arabia paid 11 times, 14 times and then 16.7 times more than women. These differences are considerably higher than those found in the national survey conducted by BBS on costs of migration, which concluded that men pay four times more than women. Why do so few women migrate in relation to men, even when the high costs of migration do not favour the latter? Survey results do not provide the answer to this question. Nonetheless, they contribute to drawing the contours of a changing landscape.

Survey data provide interesting clues for future research. For example, in Chotobighai (Patuakhali) and in Kayetpara (Narayanganj), 52.6 and 40 per cent of the women respectively were factory workers prior to migration. Entry into a formal work sector, familiarity with specific rates of pay for specific hours or amounts of work, and an environment where workers interact and share ideas, are often described as an eye-opener. There are no factories in Chotobighai and the women were internal migrants before crossing the border, which is not the case for Kayetpara where work could be found near home. Interestingly, none of the Majlishpur (Brahmanbaria) women had worked in a garment factory prior to migration, leaving directly from home to take up work abroad. These life paths suggest quite different experiences of the world with qualifications more or less suited to cope with the challenges of work abroad.

Even though the migration journey is not always successful, misfit occurs, and risks of exploitation and abuse are real, the pool of Bangladeshi women candidates for migration is unlikely to dry up soon. The women's situations are diverse, and the picture emerging from the numerous case histories documented by the Drishti research team before and along this survey are mixed, while they do not accord with the disastrous picture painted in the media.

The long-term consequences of the pandemic cannot be judged at present, but in the short term, while a majority of migrant workers suffered a loss of income, the crisis seems to have affected men more than women. In migrant villages, many predict that in the near future, more women will migrate as men incurred greater losses. Live-in domestic workers are more necessary than ever to their employers. Their workload may have increased but they did not lose their job. The same applies to women in the garment sector. Salaries may have been delayed, but as lockdown measures relaxed and banks functioned normally again, families at home reported getting remittances. Women employed as cleaners in schools were less fortunate. Most were laid off without compensation as schools closed down, and they were left to fend for themselves. Live-out domestic workers serving several employers were deprived of work and lost their former advantage over live-in workers. The small number of women employed in the hospitality sector, including hotels and dance bars, were seriously affected as these establishments closed their doors early and for a prolonged period. Young women working in dance bars filed "trafficking cases" against their employers, accusing them of not getting paid and being forced into sex work. Some grey zones came to light, and systems that functioned relatively smoothly prior to the pandemics came to a halt. The crisis in general exposed the disposability of migrant workers' rights.

We conclude by recommending more checks on abusive practices at home and abroad. While the exploitation migrant women suffer abroad is commonly denounced, and rightly so, identifying abuse and exploitation occurring at home, including that which may unfold within households is less often done. In areas relatively new to migration, subagents were found taking advantage of candidates' lack of information and low exposure to the outside world, charging them higher fees and taking more liberties. For example, they advised their clients to dispense with attending the mandatory training prior to migration. Women who did not attend the training did not hear that migration should be free or cost, or that they should open two bank accounts before departure, one for the family and one for personal savings. Many women did not attend the training – their *dalal* paying a small bribe to bypass this step and get BMET

registration and clearance. Others did not open a bank account even though they attended the training. They were not convinced of the necessity to do so and were not encouraged by their families either, who preferred direct payments being made to one of them. Given the deeply rooted structural and cultural inequality of the sexes in Bangladesh society, enshrined in practices such as men's polygamy, unequal inheritance rights, virilocal marriages and so on, taking precautions to ensure that women control and manage at least part of their income is all the more important. Using women's remittances to meet common family needs is not objectionable; however, when their income serves to acquire land or other valuable assets and they are deprived of ownership, or when the husband brings a new wife in the house built with their income, a deep injustice is committed for which women have no legal recourse. We have seen structural inequality being upheld at the *shalish* or village arbitration that the women called to resolve such conflict. They were not well served.

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▶ # Appendix 1: Tables 1 to 14

▶**Appendix Table 1. Year-wise labour migrants with percentage of women**

Year	No. of women	No. of men	Total Migrants	% of women
1991	2 189	144 967	147 156	1.49
1992	1 907	186 217	188 124	1.01
1993	1 793	242 715	244 508	0.73
1994	1 995	184 331	186 326	1.07
1995	1 612	185 931	187 543	0.86
1996	1 994	209 720	211 714	0.94
1997	1 762	229 315	231 077	0.76
1998	939	266 728	267 667	0.35
1999	366	267 816	268 182	0.14
2000	454	222 232	222 686	0.20
2001	659	188 401	189 060	0.35
2002	1 216	224 040	225 256	0.54
2003	2 353	251 837	254 190	0.93
2004	11 259	261 699	272 958	4.12
2005	13 570	239 132	252 702	5.37
2006	18 045	363 471	381 516	4.73
2007	19 094	813 515	832 609	2.29
2008	20 842	854 213	875 055	2.38
2009	22 224	453 054	475 278	4.68
2010	27 706	362 996	390 702	7.09
2011	30 579	537 483	568 062	5.38
2012	37 304	570 494	607 798	6.14
2013	56 400	352 853	409 253	13.78
2014	76 007	349 677	425 684	17.86
2015	103 718	452 163	555 881	18.66
2016	118 088	639 643	757 731	15.58
2017	121 925	886 600	1 008 525	12.09
2018	101 695	632 486	734 181	13.85
2019	104 786	595 373	700 159	14.97

Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET). Data published in 2020.

▶**Appendix Table 2. Sex-wise distribution of migrants to five major destinations over the last ten years**

Year	Saudi Arabia			Oman			Lebanon			Jordan			Qatar		
	All	Women	Men	All	Women	Men	All	Women	Men	All	Women	Men	All	Women	Men
2019	399 000	62 578	336 422	72 654	12 226	60 428	4 863	1 611	3 252	20 347	19 706	641	50 292	3 741	46 551
2018	257 317	73 713	183 604	72 504	11 034	61 470	5 991	1 207	4 784	9 724	9 100	624	76 560	3 196	73 364
2017	551 308	83 354	467 954	89 074	9 199	79 875	8 327	1 642	6 685	20 449	19 872	577	82 012	3 272	78 740
2016	143 913	68 286	75 627	188 247	12 897	175 350	15 095	2 450	12 645	23 017	22 689	328	120 382	5 381	115 001
2015	58 270	20 952	37 318	129 859	16 980	112 879	19 113	8 782	10 331	22 093	21 776	317	123 965	8 642	115 323
2014	10 657	13	10 644	105 748	11 584	94 164	16 640	11 990	4 650	20 338	20 134	204	87 575	6 452	81 123
2013	12 654	167	12 487	134 028	6 068	127 960	15 098	10 750	4 348	21 383	21 243	140	57 584	2 100	55 484
2012	21 232	484	20 748	170 326	4 102	166 224	14 864	12 496	2 368	11 726	11 582	144	28 801	6	28 795
2011	15 039	166	14 873	135 265	1 061	134 204	19 169	15 610	3 559	4 387	4 338	49	13 111	4	13 107
2010	7 069	44	7025	42 641	18	42 623	17 268	15 116	2 152	2 235	2 136	99	12 085	3	12 082
2009	14 666	386	14 280	41 704	11	41 693	13 941	13 062	879	1 691	439	1 252	11 672	4	11 668
Total	1 491 125	310 143	1 180 982	1 182 050	85 180	1 096 870	150 369	94 716	55 653	157 390	153 015	4 375	664 039	32 801	631 238
Per cent	100	20.8	79.2	100	7.2	92.8	100	63.0	37.0	100	97.2	2.8	100	4.80	95.20

Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET). Data published in 2020.

▶ **Appendix Table 3. Government-ascertained country-specific migration costs for men**

Destination	Cost (BDT)
Bahrain	97 780
Brunei Darussalam	1 20 780
Egypt	1 20 080
Iraq	1 29 540
Jordan	1 02 780
Kuwait	1 06 780
Lebanon	1 17 780
Libya	1 45 780
Malaysia	1 60 000
Maldives	1 15 780
Oman	1 00 780
Qatar	1 00 780
Russian Federation	1 66 640
Saudi Arabia	1 65 000
United Arab Emirates	1 07 780

Source: BMET, 2017. See also: BMET, Annual Report 2017 (Dhaka: BMET, 2017). https://bmet.portal.gov.bd/ sites/default/
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▶ **Appendix Table 4. Union-wise migration at a glance: Arpangashia union, Amtali subdistrict, Barguna**

Village	Arpangashia Union: Females			Arpangashia Union: Males			Total Females	Total Males	Total
	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant			
Greater Chorokgacia	10	0	0	51	1	3	10	55	65
Greater Gopkhali	19	0	0	35	2		19	37	56
Kalibari	1	0	0				1	0	1
Greater Tarikata	20	2	3	50	1	4	25	55	80
Mugia	2	0	0	8	8		2	16	18
Baliatali	6	0	0	14			6	14	20
Arpangashia	6	0	0	4		1	6	5	11
Fi Arpangasia	0	0	0	4			0	4	4
Vailabunia	0	0	0	4			0	4	4
Total	**64**	**2**	**3**	**170**	**12**	**8**	**69**	**190**	**259**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶**Appendix Table 5. Union-wise migration at a glance: Choto Bighai union, Patuakhali Sadar subdistrict, Patuakhali**

Village	Choto Bighai Union: Females			Choto Bighai Union: Males			Total females	Total males	Total
	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant			
Greater Matibhanga	29	3	1	107	0	0	33	107	140
Greater Hortokibaria	18	1	0	93	0	0	19	93	112
Greater Choto Bighai	30	1	0	139	1	2	31	142	173
Greater Tushkhali	17	2	0	50	1	0	19	51	70
Purbo Matibhanga	28	1	0	65	1	0	29	66	95
Vazna	2	0	0	36	1	0	2	37	39
Total	**124**	**8**	**1**	**490**	**4**	**2**	**133**	**496**	**629**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶**Appendix Table 6. Migration trends at a glance: Kayetpara union, Rupganj subdistrict, Narayanganj**

Village	Kayetpara Union: Females			Kayetpara Union: Males			Total females	Total males	Total
	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant			
Baruna	6	0	0	52	0	4	6	56	62
Bagbari	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2
Bhawalipara	6	0	0	24	0	0	6	24	30
Boralu	2	0	1	40	0	0	3	40	43
Bashulia	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Chankhali	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2
Chonpara	69	4	1	48	1	0	74	49	123
Chonpara Bottala	1	0	0	8	0	0	1	8	9
Char Chonpara	7	0	0	15	0	0	7	15	22
Chonpara-1	55	1	2	29	0	0	58	29	87
Chonpara-2	6	0	0	13	0	0	6	13	19
Chonpara-3	20	0	0	31	0	0	20	31	51
Chonpara-4	13	1	0	8	0	0	14	8	22
Chonpara-5	3	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	4
Chonpara-6	8	0	0	3	0	0	8	3	11
Chonpara-7	15	0	0	14	0	0	15	14	29
Chonpara-8	19	2	0	24	0	0	21	24	45
Chonpara-9	5	2	0	2	0	1	7	3	10
Daktarkhali	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	10	10
Deilpara	2	0	0	6	0	0	2	6	8
Dokkhinpara	3	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	5
Horina	1	0	0	27	0	6	1	33	34
Kayetpara	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	12	12
Keodhala	2	0	0	6	0	0	2	6	8
Khamarpara	1	0	0	8	0	0	1	8	9
Koitatali	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Isakhali	0	0	0	19	0	0	0	19	19
Kamshair	0	0	0	25	0	1	0	26	26
Majina Nodir Par	0	0	0	33	1	2	0	36	36
Naora	2	0	0	59	3	7	2	69	71
Nimertek	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	3
Nagarpara	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	8	8
Noyamati	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	10	10
Paragaon	2	0	0	36	0	1	2	37	39
Paschimgaon	10	1	0	55	0	1	11	56	67
Pir Para	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	15	15

Village	Kayetpara Union: Females			Kayetpara Union: Males			Total females	Total males	Total
	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant			
Purbogaon	7	1	0	70	0	0	8	70	78
Rataldia	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	3	4
Satian	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	17	17
Sonartek	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2
Talashkut	3	0	0	16	0	0	3	16	19
Ulabo	0	0	0	18	0	1	0	19	19
Uttorpara	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2
Total	**273**	**12**	**4**	**775**	**5**	**25**	**289**	**805**	**1 094**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▲ **Appendix Table 7. Union-wise migration at a glance: Majlishpur union, Brahmanbaria Sadar subdistrict, Brahmanbaria**

Village	Majlishpur Union: Females			Majlishpur Union: Males			Total females	Total males	Total
	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant			
Amirpara	7	1	1	92	1	5	9	98	107
Anandopur	9	1	0	229	5	9	10	243	253
Boro Bakail	7	1	0	285	10	16	8	311	319
Choto Bakail	2	1	1	170	1	5	4	176	180
Chanpur	2	0	0	46	2	4	2	52	54
Darma	13	0	2	175	3	11	15	189	204
G. Majlishpur	42	6	1	473	14	12	49	499	548
G. Moindo	30	4	0	806	14	17	34	837	871
Shampur	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	10	10
Total	**112**	**14**	**5**	**2 286**	**50**	**79**	**131**	**2 415**	**2 546**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Appendix Table 8. Union-wise migration at a glance: Sayasta union, Singair Upazila, Manikganj**

Manikganj Village	Sayasta Union: Females			Sayasta Union: Males			Total females	Total males	Total
	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant	Current	Intending	Ex-migrant			
Atharopaika	2	0	0	28	0	0	2	28	30
Gopal Nagar	25	2	2	214	2	3	29	219	248
Tan Gopalnagar	41	2	3	155	3	3	46	161	207
Shayamnagar	29	2	0	78	0	0	31	78	109
Char Shayamnagar	8	0	0	171	0	0	8	171	179
Baliadangi	62	3	0	164	0	0	65	164	229
Kanainagar	44	2	1	146	3	4	47	153	200
Char Kanainagar	11	0	0	111	0	0	11	111	122
Uttor Kanainagar	21	0	1	98	1	1	22	100	122
Shaorail	25	0	0	164	0	0	25	164	189
Char Shahrail	2	0	0	3	0	0	2	3	5
Kayetpara	6	0	0	38	0	0	6	38	44
Munshipara	10	0	0	34	0	0	10	34	44
Nieltek	11	0	0	96	0	1	11	97	108
Lokkhipur	58	3	0	241	2	0	61	243	304
Char Lokkhipur	75	0	3	206	1	0	78	207	285
Bandail	31	0	1	179	2	0	32	181	213
Purbo Bandail	17	0	0	115	0	0	17	115	132
Moslemabad	37	2	1	260	1	0	40	261	301
Beguntiori	62	2	1	159	1	0	65	160	225
Boiragirtek	4	0	0	38	0	0	4	38	42
Paharpur	7	0	0	51	0	0	7	51	58
Shibpur	13	0	0	89	0	0	13	89	102
Sreepur	14	0	0	46	0	0	14	46	60
Zianagar	6	0	0	56	0	0	6	56	62
Shaista	16	0	0	51	0	0	16	51	67
Bokchar	13	0	0	34	0	0	13	34	47
Kalindi	23	0	0	138	0	0	23	138	161
Gobindanagar	1	0	0	21	0	0	1	21	22
Total	**674**	**18**	**13**	**3 184**	**16**	**12**	**705**	**3 212**	**3 917**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▲ **Appendix Table 9. Sex- and area-wise educational level**

Education level	Arpangashia		Choto Bighai		Kayetpara		Majlishpur		Sayesta		Total		All
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
No schooling	3	4	3	2	38	37	16	69	208	471	268	583	851
Up to primary	43	80	82	150	124	148	81	1 350	332	881	662	2 609	3 271
VI–VIII	14	38	31	113	92	233	16	372	144	1 148	297	1 904	2 201
IX–X	7	15	8	82	24	126	8	193	16	362	63	778	841
SSC	1	23	7	67	7	127	3	178	4	179	22	574	596
HSC	1	21	1	65	3	92	3	94	1	102	9	374	383
BA and above	0	1	1	12	1	29	2	35	0	35	4	112	116
Islamic education	0	0	0	5	0	13	2	124	0	34	2	176	178
Total	**69**	**182**	**133**	**496**	**289**	**805**	**131**	**2 415**	**705**	**3 212**	**1 327**	**7 110**	**8 437**

Source: RAPID/Drishti-ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Appendix Table 10. Sex-wise marital status of migrants**

Marital status	Arpangashia		Choto Bighai		Kayetpara		Majlishpur		Sayesta		Total		
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	All
Married	36	153	95	381	188	572	76	1 534	501	2 377	896	5 017	5 913
Unmarried	7	26	20	107	29	228	37	869	99	813	192	2 043	2 235
Divorced	10	2	9	5	33	3	8	7	39	9	99	26	125
Widow/widower	8	1	7	2	17	2	2	3	14	2	48	10	58
Separated/ Abandoned	8	0	2	1	22	0	8	2	52	11	92	14	106
Total	69	182	133	496	289	805	131	2 415	705	3 212	1 327	7 110	8 437

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶**Appendix Table 11. Sex-wise occupations prior to migration abroad**

Occupations	Arpangashia		Choto Bighai		Kayetpara		Majlishpur		Sayesta		Total	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Farming	3	82	1	173	0	67	3	739	53	1 841	60	2 902
Home maker	32	0	33	0	110	0	67	0	498	2	740	2
Day labourer	0	6	1	39	4	27	2	132	4	30	11	234
Business	0	11	1	48	14	162	2	243	6	222	23	686
Unemployed	4	7	7	45	12	74	31	201	91	453	145	780
Student	0	19	4	75	12	209	17	379	32	511	65	1 193
Fisher	0	8	0	18	0	1	0	18	0	0	0	45
Factory worker	19	16	70	9	116	99	2	68	6	14	213	206
Transport worker	0	18	0	8	0	28	0	121	0	58	0	233
Job holder	7	7	14	51	16	71	3	113	3	19	43	261
Mason	0	6	0	23	0	19	0	93	0	25	0	166
Carpenter	0	0	0	5	0	9	0	53	0	14	0	81
Tailoring	3	0	2	0	3	9	3	71	12	18	23	98
Others*	1	2	0	2	2	30	1	184	0	5	4	223
Total	69	182	133	496	289	805	131	2 415	705	3 212	1 327	7 110

Note: Other * = saloon worker, cook, electrician, motor mechanics, building painter, plumber, dock worker, goldsmith, graphic designer, quack, domestic worker, etc.
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶**Appendix table 12. Respondent's relationship with migrant (female migrant)**

Respondent	All	Arpangaashia	Choto Bighai	Kayetpara	Majlishpur	Sayasta
Self	93	6	5	15	23	44
Husband	360	16	12	70	15	247
Mother	274	9	18	77	36	134
Father	246	13	42	19	22	150
Daughter	62	0	0	23	2	37
Brother	57	6	12	12	13	14
Sister	53	1	3	29	8	12
Son	34	0	5	4	1	24
Sister-in-law	26	1	6	10	4	5
Mother-in-law	24	2	4	6	1	11
Father-in-law	31	4	7	4	0	16
Daughter-in-law	8	0	1	3	0	4
Brother-in-law	12	3	2	2	1	4
Nephew or niece	12	6	1	1	3	1
Uncle or aunt	21	1	12	6	1	1
Others*	14	1	3	8	1	1
Total	**1 327**	**69**	**133**	**289**	**131**	**705**

Note: Others* = grandfather, grandmother, neighbour.
Source: RAPID/Drishti-ILO Migrant Survey 2020

▶ **Appendix Table 13. Respondent's relationship with migrant (male migrant)**

Respondent	All	Arpangaashia	Choto Bighai	Kayetpara	Majlishpur	Sayasta
Self	236	12	12	20	108	84
Wife	1 817	31	48	162	450	1 126
Mother	1 433	17	43	169	551	653
Father	2 116	43	201	163	669	1 040
Daughter	65	0	4	13	23	25
Brother	593	37	89	116	257	94
Sister	159	6	8	45	80	20
Son	177	5	10	14	32	116
Sister-in-law	245	9	20	29	147	40
Parents-in-laws	11	0	0	5	4	2
Brother-in-law	31	1	0	20	7	3
Nephew or niece	69	4	14	15	36	0
Uncle or aunt	124	17	33	23	48	3
Others*	34	0	14	11	3	6
Total	**7 110**	**182**	**496**	**805**	**2 415**	**3 212**

Note: Others* = grandfather, grandmother, cousin, son-in-law, neighbour.
Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

▶ **Appendix Table 14. Destinations of all migrants**

Destination	All	Women	Men	Destination	All	Women	Men
Algeria	1	0	1	Total	2 851	532	2 319
Australia	13	4	9	Oman	357	100	257
Bahrain	268	19	249	Pakistan	1	0	1
Brunei	29	0	29	Paraguay	1	0	1
Cambodia	1	0	1	Poland	2	0	2
Canada	5	2	3	Portugal	2	0	2
China	8	0	8	Qatar	399	47	352
Cyprus	7	0	7	Romania	1	0	1
Egypt	5	0	5	Russia	3	0	3
France	2	0	2	South Africa	99	0	99
Germany	3	0	3	Republic of Korea	30	0	30
Greece	18	4	14	Saudi Arabia	3 750	492	3 258
Hongkong	4	4	0	Singapore	125	0	125
Iceland	1	0	1	Sri Lanka	1	0	1
India	9	3	6	Sudan	2	0	2
Iraq	116	3	113	Sweden	3	0	3
Italy	46	6	40	Switzerland	1	0	1
Japan	6	0	6	Thailand	2	2	0
Jordan	314	277	37	Turkey	3	0	3
Kuwait	610	30	580	UAE	762	143	619
Lebanon	353	153	200	UK	8	1	7
Libya	8	1	7	USA	30	10	20
Malaysia	829	10	819	Vietnam	4	0	4
Maldives	129	0	129				
Mauritius	64	16	48				
Norway	2	0	2				
Total	**2 851**	**532**	**2 319**	**Grand total**	**8 437**	**1 327**	**7 110**

Source: RAPID/Drishti–ILO Migrant Survey 2020.

Appendix 2: Questionaire

Cross-border Migrant Workers Survey

ILO, Work in Freedom
Research Conducted by: Drishti Research Centre/RAPID

- অভিবাসী জরীপ -

গ্রাম: _____ ইউনিয়ন: _____ উপজেলা: _____ জেলা : _____

থানা প্রধানের নাম: _____ থানা নম্বর: _____ তারিখ: _____

তথ্যদাতা: _____ জরীপকারী: _____

১. থানার বর্তমান অভিবাসী, অভিবাসী, অপেক্ষমান ও প্রাক্তন অভিবাসী সম্পর্কে প্রাথমিক তথ্যঃ (সারনির মোট রেকর্ড নিচে প্রথমে অপেক্ষমান ও পরে প্রাক্তন অভিবাসীর তথ্য নিতে হবে)

ক্রমিক নং	অভিবাসীর নাম	অভিবাসীর সাথে সম্পর্ক	বয়স	লিঙ্গ	শিক্ষা	বৈবাহিক অবস্থা	মোট সন্তান	বর্তমান অবস্থা	সর্বশেষ কোন দেশে কর্মরত আছেন/ যাচ্ছেন/ ছিলেন?	মোট কত বছর ধরে বিদেশে কর্মরত আছেন/ছিলেন?	অভিবাসন বাবদ টাকা
১											
২											
৩											
৪											
৫											
৬											
৭											
৮											
৯											

কোডঃ লিঙ্গ (১) :: ১=পুরুষ, ২=নারী

শিক্ষা স্তর (২) :: ০=কোন প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষা নাই; ১=প্রাথমিক পর্যন্ত, ২=৬ষ্ঠ থেকে ৮-ম শ্রেণি, ৩=৯ম ও ১০ম শ্রেণি, ৪=এসএসসি, ৫=এইচএসসি, ৬=বি.এ ও তদোর্ধ্ব; ৭=অন্যান্য (মুন্সী/হাফেজী)

বৈবাহিক অবস্থা (৩):: ১=বিবাহিত, ২=অবিবাহিত, ৩=তালাকপ্রাপ্ত, ৪=বিধবা/বিপত্নীক, ৫=আলাদা/পরিত্যাক্ত(া).

২. প্রম অভিবাসন সম্পর্কিত অন্যান্য তথ্যঃ - (সর্বশেষ অভিবাসনের সমস্যা, স্থায়ী ক্ষতি ও প্রতিকার সম্পর্কে তথ্য নিতে হবে)

ক্রমিক নম্বর:	বিদেশ যাওয়ার আগে আপনি কি কাজ করতেন বা কি পেশায় যুক্ত ছিলেন (*)?	প্রম অভিবাসনে কোন সমস্যা হয়েছিল? ১=হ্যা, ২=না, ০=জানি না বিষয়ে জানিনা	এতে কি কোন স্থায়ী ক্ষতি হয়েছিল? হয়ে থাকলে, কি ধরনের (**)?	আপনি কি কোন প্রতিকার চেয়েছিলেন? ১=হ্যা ২=না	এই জন্য আপনি কি প্রতিকার পেয়েছিলেন (***)?
১					
২					
৩					
৪					
৫					
৬					
৭					
৮					
৯					

পেশা কোডঃ (*)
১=গৃহিণী, ২=কৃষক, ৩=দিনমজুর, ৪=ব্যবসা ৫=বেকার ৬=ছাত্র/ছাত্রী, ৭=জেলে, ৮=পরিবহন কর্মী, ৯=পরিবহন কর্মী ১০=চাকর, ১১=রাজমিস্ত্রী ১২=কাঠমিস্ত্রী ১৩=দর্জি ১৪=অন্যান্য

ক্ষতি কোড (**)
১=আর্থিক ক্ষতি হয়েছে;
২= মান-সম্মান, পারিবারিক সুনাম ইত্যাদি সহ সামাজিক ভাবে নানা রকমের সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হতে হয়েছে;
৩=শারীরিক ও মানসিক স্বাস্থ্যের অনেক ক্ষতি হয়েছে;
৪=অসময়ে দেশে ফিরে আসতে হয়েছে;

প্রতিকার কোডঃ (***)
১=ব্যক্তিগত ও পারিবারিকভাবে সমস্যা সমাধান হয়েছে;
২=স্থানীয়ভাবে সমস্যা নিরসনের জন্য আবেদন করেছিলাম, থেকেছিলাম;
৩=ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের গ্রাম আদালতের দারস্থ হয়েছিলাম;
৪=থানায় জিডি বা মামলা করেছিলাম;
৫=জেলা জনশক্তি /কেন্দ্রীয় অধিকার অভিযোগ দায়ের করেছিলাম;
৬=জেলা আদালতে মামলা দায়ের করেছিলাম;
৭=কোন প্রতিকার পাইনি;

জরিপকৃত খানা বা অভিবাসী সম্পর্কে পর্যবেক্ষন (যদি থাকে):

১. মালিক ঠিকমত বেতন দেয় না;
২. মালিক আলো না;
৩. মালিক শারীরিক ও মানসিক নির্যাতন করে;
৪. কাজের বা বিদেশে যাবেন অবেগ ভাবে আছে;
৫. পরিবারে কষ্ট ও সমস্যা আছে;
৬. পরিবার আর্থিক সংকটে পড়েছে বা আর্থিক কষ্ট ও ঋণ বেড়েছে;
৭. প্রতিকার চাওয়ার অনুযায়ী কাজ পেয়নি;
৮. কাগজপত্র নাই বা বর্তমানে জেলে আছে;
৯. কাজ না থাকায় মালিক চুক্তি ভঙ্গ করে আগেই দেশে পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছে;

১০. মালিক/কোম্পানী কাগজপত্র নবায়ন করেনি/ বাইরে থেকে দেয় না / আটকে রাখে;
১১. খোঁজ নাই /যোগাযোগ নাই বা নিখোঁজ আছে;
১২. পলাতক বা লুকিয়ে জীবন-যাপন করে/কাগজপত্র নাই;
১৩. দুশ্চিন্তায় আহত অবস্থায় আছে/শারীরিক সমস্যায় আছে;
১৪. কাজ নাই বসা আছে/বেকার অবস্থায় আছে;
১৫. দেশে ঠিকমতো টাকা পাঠায় না;
১৬. দেশ থেকে অবৈধভাবে পাচারচক্র কাগজপত্র ঠিক ছিল না / ট্রাফিক /ভিক্টিম ভিকটিম হয়েছে;
১৭. টাকা পয়সা নিজে দীর্ঘ দিন অপেক্ষায় রেখেছে;

১৮. বিদেশে খারাপ কাজে দিয়েছে / খুব সমস্যাগ্রস্ত পড়েছে;
১৯. কাজ ছাড়ার পরেছে/ পারছেনা দেশে আসার জন্য চেষ্টা করছে;
২০. পাচার করা হয়েছে / বিদেশে অন্যস্থানে বেচে দিয়েছে;
২১. পুলিশ ঘরে দেশে পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছে;
২২. মালিক/কোম্পানী লেভারের টাকা না দিয়ে দেশে পাঠিয়েছে;
২৩. খারাপ কাজে/বানিজ্যিক যৌন কাজ নিযুক্ত করেছে;
২৪. যৌন হয়রানি /যৌন নির্যাতন করেছে;
২৫. খাবার ঠিকমতো দিত না বা খাবার বাইরেতে থাকার পারতাম না;
২৬. অন্যান্য (উল্লেখ করুন) -------

উপযুক্ত ঘরে টিক চিহ্ন দিন ঃ

১	২	৩	৪	৫	৬	৭	৮	৯	১০	১১	১২	১৩	১৪	১৫	১৬	১৭	১৮	১৯	২০	২১	২২	২৩	২৪	২৫

২৭. অন্যান্য (উল্লেখ করুন) -------

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অভিবাসী জরীপ সম্পর্কে বিশেষ জ্ঞাতব্য ::

১.

ক) যারা অভিবাসী জরীপে তারাই অভিবাসী কর্মী (**Migrant Worker**) হিসাবে গণ্য হবেন, যারা বর্তমানে দেশের বাইরে অদক্ষ, আধাদক্ষ এবং দক্ষ কর্মী/শ্রমিক হিসাবে কর্মরত আছেন। ডাক্তার, ইঞ্জিনীয়ারসহ পেশাদার অভিবাসীরাও এই জরীপে অন্তর্ভুক্ত হবেন।

খ) তবে যারা গত বার মাসের মধ্যে দেশে ফেরত এসেছেন কিংবা সরকার এসেছেন তারাও অভিবাসী হিসাবে গণ্য হবেন। তাছাড়া যারা দুই বা তিন বছরের কাজের চুক্তিতে লিখিত দেশে যাওয়ার পর চুক্তিতে উল্লেখিত সময়ের আগেই দেশে ফেরত এসেছেন বা ফিরে আসছেন বা ফিরে আসতে বাধ্য হয়েছেন, এমন অভিবাসনকে বার্থ অভিবাসন হিসাবে গণ্য হবে।

গ) অপেক্ষমান অভিবাসী হিসাবে তারাই বিবেচিত হবেন যারা ইতোমধ্যে অভিবাসন খরচের টাকা প্রদান করেছেন, স্বাস্থ্য পরীক্ষা, জনশক্তি ছাড়পত্র ও অন্যান্য প্রক্রিয়া সম্পন্ন হয়েছে বা প্রক্রিয়াধীন রয়েছে;

ঘ) আর্থিক ক্ষতি: শ্রম অভিবাসন প্রক্রিয়ার মাধ্যমে যে কোন অভিবাসী শিকার হয়ে প্রদত্ত নগদ অর্থের ক্ষতি কিংবা মজুরী না পাওয়া, প্রতিশ্রুত কাজ ও মজুরী না দেওয়ার ফলে আর্থিক ক্ষতি সাধনকে দুর্বলনা দুর্বানো হয়েছে।

ঙ) পারিবারিক ক্ষতি: অভিবাসনের ফলে, পরিবার বা খানার মান-সম্মান, সুনাম কিংবা সামাজিকভাবে হেয় প্রতিপন্ন হওয়াকে দুর্বলাকে বুঝানো হয়েছে;

চ) সামাজিক ক্ষতি: এটা অনেকটা পারিবারিক ক্ষতির অনুরূপ তবে এখানে ক্ষতি আরেকটু বিস্তৃত। অভিবাসনের ফলে, চুক্তভোগীর বা তার খানার পুঁজির ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত এবং সমাজে হেয় প্রতিপন্ন হওয়া ইত্যাদি;

ছ) স্বাস্থ্যগত ক্ষতি: অভিবাসন প্রক্রিয়ায় মানসিক, শারীরিক,যৌন নির্যাতনের নানাবিধ কারণে নম্বাব্য অভিবাসী বা বিদেশে কর্মরত অভিবাসীর শারীরিক ও মানসিক স্বাস্থ্যের ক্ষতির হতে পারে। কর্মক্ষেত্রের বিরূপ পরিবেশে, অতিরিক্ত কাজের চাপ, নানা রকম হয়রানি ও নিপীড়ন কারনে স্বাস্থ্য ঝুঁকি বা ক্ষতির সম্মুখীন হয়।

জরিপকৃত খানা বা অভিবাসী সম্পর্কে পর্যবেক্ষন (যদি থাকে):

২.

এখানে মোট ২৫টি কোড দেয়া হয়েছে, তবে ২৬ নং কোড ঘরে কোন তথ্য দাতা কোন তথ্য দেন তবে সেখানে ২৫ নং কোড লিখে নিচের ফাঁকা স্থানে সেটিকে লিখতে হবে।

Work in Freedom

Work in Freedom is an integrated development cooperation programme aiming to reduce vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour of women migrating to garment and domestic work. The programme works along migration pathways in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon and some of Gulf countries. Interventions focus on promoting mobility by choice, fair recruitment to decent jobs, and safety and dignity for migrant workers.

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