

Migration and Remittances: Recent Trends and Future Opportunities for Bangladesh

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Executive Summary

Bangladesh is blessed with a large and diligent work force. Bangladeshi workers working abroad are a very significant source of foreign exchange earnings for the country, bringing in annually about US\$10 billion into the economy. Labour migration is now an important issue for Bangladesh. However, this large source of earning incomes from abroad now faces huge risks due to exorbitant migration costs charged by the manpower agencies.

As a labour exporting country, Bangladesh can influence the inflow of remittances through adopting appropriate policies such as building an hassle free remittance sending infrastructure, exploring new overseas markets for workers, improving the formal channels of fund transfer, establishing specialized banks, and creating more effective investment avenues, and providing ownership in social development projects for nonresident Bangladeshis.

The financial sector can facilitate higher remittance inflows through improving transactions efficiency by introducing automation of rural bank branches, encouraging private banks to open branches in rural areas, and allowing well-established NGOs and micro-finance institutions to receive and disburse remittances through their vast rural network.

Migration as well as remittance contributes to a significant reduction in poverty and economic development of our country. Remittance flow reduces poverty at

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the rate of 6 percent in Bangladesh. The adoption of a national migration policy can go a long way in ensuring a sustained increase in the inflow of remittances along with guaranteeing the welfare of the remitters.

Remittance is one of the most important economic indicators in Bangladesh as it influences the country's balance of payments, foreign exchange reserve, national savings, reserve money, and money supply. Remittance earning is increasing day by day and is now the second largest source of foreign exchange earnings after exports. In recent years till the outbreak of hostilities in North Africa and Middle East, Bangladesh experienced a robust growth in remittances due to acceleration of demand for migrant workers in Gulf countries.

There are at present two channels of sending remittance to Bangladesh. One is the formal banking channel that remits through demand draft, traveler's cheque, telegraphic transfer, direct transfer, ATM etc. The other is the informal channel (*hundi*). *Hundi* refers to the illegal money exchange not supported by international or national laws, in particular by the country's anti-money laundering act. Yet, the *hundi* system is popular since *hundi* operators offer exchange rates that are consistently higher than the official exchange rate prevalent in the country. Additionally, *hundi* operators generally maintain the confidentiality of the recipients and have the ability to reach the money to any nook and corner of the country.

Recently, a significant number of Bangladeshi women have begun seeking opportunities for foreign employment to overcome their poverty. Female labour migration from Bangladesh was insignificant even a decade ago. The growing demand for female workers in recent times in labour importing countries has created opportunities for female workers to participate in the international labour market.

A migrant worker seeking employment abroad faces a lot of problems and challenges. In most cases, the recruiting agencies employ a sub-agent, locally called '*dalal*', to get the jobseeker a job out of specific job categories. There are, however, concerns that manpower brokers both in the labour-sending and destination countries often engage in unethical practices that cause enormous despair for the aspirant migrant workers.

Most manpower-importing countries are interested in employing skilled workers. But the reality is that most of the Bangladeshis seeking jobs abroad are uneducated and unskilled. They are grossly underpaid and very often are poorly treated by overseas employers. The government should take steps to create skilled manpower in those lines of work for which there is high demand in the destination

countries. More bilateral negotiations need to be held in order to have a safe and secure place for workers in the world market. The concerned ministry will need to establish contact with the employer companies of those countries. The manpower agencies and the government should join hands not only to revive the demand for Bangladesh workers in traditional destinations but also to explore new markets in which there is a good socio-political environment and where wages are relatively high.

Policymakers should take care of the migrants, look after their problems and support them for improving their condition, so that they can send more foreign currency to the country.

1. Background and Rationale of the Study

Bangladesh has a long history of migration and overseas remittances. It is reported that as far back as in 1942, Bengalees used to migrate to the port cities of London and Liverpool in the United Kingdom (UK). The British had at that time a scheme of issuing employment vouchers to overseas workers seeking work in Britain. The scheme opened up a great opportunity for Bengalee workers to migrate to UK. It is believed that thousands of Bengalees, especially from Sylhet, took the opportunity and created a flow of migration towards UK.

For certain reasons, however, the emigration trend weakened by the 1960s, and the direction of the migration flow also changed in the 1970s. After the birth of Bangladesh, most Bangladeshi migrants sought to look for jobs in the Middle East (ME) as well as in selected European Union (EU) destinations (mainly Germany). Then in the 1990s and onward, a tendency developed to find employment in developed countries like USA, Canada, Italy and in some Asian countries like Japan, Malaysia and Singapore. The process of migrating abroad from Bangladesh has been continuing strongly till now.

The annual growth rate of global migrant population has increased from 1.2 percent during the period 1965 to 1975 to 3 percent in early 2000s. Among all kinds of migration, movement of workers is the most dominant. Close to 80 percent of the total migrant population are workers. Increased movement of labour is indicative of increased employment opportunity in the global market. In recent time migration has enabled a section of people to attain productive, self-actualizing and creative work but for many others it has not been successful in ensuring acceptable quality of job. Instead, migration has resulted in inhumane work conditions where basic labour rights of the workers are not respected. Bangladesh is one of the major labour sending countries of the world. Each year

a large number of people voluntarily migrate overseas for long-term and short-term employment (Siddiqui, 2004).

During the period 1976 to 2010, the migration of labour totaled 7.1 million and total remittances amounted to US\$78 billion. Yearly migration and remittances were 6,087 workers and US\$23.71 million in 1976, which rose to 3,83,150 workers and US\$9,982.98 million in 2010. The huge increase in outward migration as indicated above makes Bangladesh one of the major remittance recipient countries in the world.

The World Migration Report 2010 (WMR) ranked Bangladesh among the world's leading manpower exporting countries noting the country's remarkably high remittances from its expatriate workers compared to other developing ones despite the global economic recession. The report observed that while remittances to most developing countries declined by six percent during the recession period of 2008 and 2009, remittances in some countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines kept on increasing. The report identifies labour mobility, irregular migration, migration and development, integration, environmental change and migration governance as areas expected to undergo the greatest transformation in the coming years. The WMR 2010 also recommended for generating better data on irregular migration and labour markets, combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking and improving the ability of transit countries to assist irregular migrants. The report called for a rigorous analysis of core capacities of countries to manage migration in order to assess their effectiveness and to identify gaps and priorities for the future.

International labour migration has become increasingly important now due to globalization. An estimated 190 million of the world's people live outside their country of birth, 49.6 percent of them women, and 50.4 percent men (World Bank, 2006). In the context of international labour migration, globalization has not only influenced the movement of people from one country to another in search of employment but also has extended different modes and channels of migration and employment.

The rising unemployment has motivated governments to adopt policies to make the migration process easy and transparent. Governments of both sending and receiving countries are now adopting regulatory mechanism to manage labour migration.

This study focuses on the trends in the out-migration of Bangladeshi labour and remittance inflows since the 1970s and their contribution to solving problems of unemployment and poverty in the country.

2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to highlight recent trends of migration and remittances as well as future opportunities for Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- Highlight the current patterns of migration by destination and by type of workers, i.e., skilled, semi-skilled, less-skilled;
- Highlight the recent trends in remittances of Bangladeshi migrants;
- Ascertain the needs of various type of skills in major labour-importing countries;
- Identify the potential labour markets for different types of job-seekers, i.e., skilled, semi-skilled and less-skilled;
- Indicate the need for undertaking training programmes for migrant workers jointly by government and stakeholders, for enhancing their skills;
- Identify the barriers and problems of Bangladeshi migrants in destination countries and possible interaction of government with the relevant counterpart; and
- Assess the likely contribution of increased labour migration to solving the problems of unemployment and poverty.

3. Scope of the Study

In line with the objectives stated above, the scope of this study is to shed light on the recent trends in migration as well as remittances in Bangladesh. It will also seek to identify the future opportunities of migration and overseas remittances to Bangladesh and suggest actions in that regard.

- The study also tries to explore answers to the following questions.
- What are the recruiting processes for sending workers to foreign countries?
- What are the demands of labour in international labour market?
- What are the skill development opportunities in line with the skill requirements for international labour market?
- What are the recent trends of labour migration to foreign countries? and
- What are the problems faced by migrant workers in home country and in the country of destination?

4. Methodology of the Study

The study takes into account the formal and informal sources of information. Qualitative and quantitative information are gathered to examine the manpower export situation in Bangladesh. A semi-structured questionnaire is deployed to collect the information from different government and non-government agencies working for international labour migration. Interviews were taken from executives of the following agencies:

- Bangladesh Manpower Employment and Training (BMET);
- Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL);
- Bangladesh Association for International Recruiting Agency (BAIRA); and
- Private recruiting agencies.

Secondary information was collected from published materials, newspapers, different ministries, and website of different organizations that are working on international labour migration.

5. Limitations of the Study

Comprehensive information on labour migration and remittances is difficult to obtain from the available secondary sources and the limited primary information gathered from different government, trade association and private sources. Limited information is available regarding the situation prevailing in the destination countries as it is difficult to identify the recent returnees from whom the actual situation overseas could be obtained. The people go abroad often through unofficial channels, for which there are no records. Moreover, the remittances sent by the migrants through unofficial, illegal channels are not included in the figures of remittance flow. Thus, both the number of migrants and remittances made by them are under-stated, and the overall picture regarding migrants and remittances deviates from the actual.

6. Literature Review

The available literature on international labour migration, remittance and their impact on employment generation and poverty reduction of different economies are briefly reviewed in this section.

A World Bank study (2006) notes that international labour migration has become an increasingly important feature in a globalizing world in which not only more people are on move, but also the frequency and the different modes, channels and directions of mobility have expanded and extended into every corner of the world.

This trend is set not only to continue but to increase. The migration of workers across international boundaries in search of economic opportunity has enormous implications for development. It can have significant positive impacts on household well-being and economic growth through improved income earning opportunities, knowledge transfers and increased integration in the global economy, the study says.

According to a United Nations report (2005), people move across borders for many reasons but principally in pursuit of economic opportunities. In a globalizing labour market, migrant workers seek out greener pastures in part because they have potentially competitive assets in terms of skills, wage expectations, and cultural attributes, which allow them to establish footholds in alien lands. The United Nations Population Division estimates that from 2005 to 2050, nearly 100 million migrants will leave poor countries for rich nations.

A recent study conducted by Maxwell Stamp Ltd. for the ILO's TVET Reform Project observes that while international migration has traditionally had a regional bias, a considerable migration now takes place across regions, making it a truly global phenomenon. For example, Europe has an estimated migrant population of 64 million. Although most of them are from within the intra-European region, a significant part of that migrant population originated from Asia and Africa (Maxwell Stamp, 2010).

Siddiqui (2004) notes that currently two types of voluntary international migration occur from Bangladesh. One takes place mostly to the industrialized west and the other to Middle Eastern and South East Asian countries. Voluntary migration to the industrialized west includes permanent residents, work permit holders and professionals. They are usually perceived as long term or permanent migrants. Migration to Middle East and South East Asia are usually for short term. The migrants return home after finishing their contract. Although long term migration is much older than short term, information on their type, extent and composition is not available with the government. Information on short term labour migrants who officially go overseas for employment is available with the BMET.

The study by Afsar and others sponsored by IOM observes that labour migration is not limited merely to the Middle East and South East Asia. Some African oil exporting countries, such as, Libya and Nigeria, too, attract labour migration. The migration flow to the USA, the UK, and other industrialized countries is also quite significant. For instance, Sylheties are still moving to London in order to work in family businesses, like restaurants; and negotiations between the Italian and the

Bangladesh government will most probably result in the sending of a few hundred labour migrants to the Southern European peninsula (Afsar *et al.*, 2002).

According to Siddiqui (2003), international migration to the Middle East started right after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. The infrastructure development boom following the rising oil prices in 1973 fuelled the demand for labour migrants in the Middle Eastern countries, especially in the Gulf States (i.e., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the UAE). Cheap labour was found in South and South-East Asia. Later, the newly industrialized countries of South-East Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Korea) also went through a similar expansion boom and needed migrant workers to fill the demand for unskilled workers.

Chimhowu, Piesse and Pinder (2005) examine the nature and role of remittances in household income and evaluate the impact of remittances on poverty reduction. This study reached a number of conclusions about the impact of remittances on poverty. First, remittances form an important part of household livelihood strategies and contribute directly to raising household incomes, while broadening the opportunities to increase incomes. Remittances also allow households to increase their consumption of local goods and services. However, citing some evidence the study suggests to adopt caution in drawing further conclusions on the extent to which remittances can be a broad strategy for poverty reduction. The study warns that remittances can be unreliable and hence can make specific contributions only at a particular moment in time. In the long term, they can cease altogether as migrants either return to the home country or are integrated into the host community. Second, at the community level, remittances generate multiplier effects in the local economy, creating jobs and spurring new economic and social infrastructure and services, particularly where effective structures and institutions have been established to pool and direct remittances. Where these have been set up and encouraged and where the state is supportive, remittances can make a difference, particularly in remote rural locations where state resources have not been effective. Third, at the national level, remittances provide foreign currency and contribute significantly to GDP. Fourth, remittances can redistribute resources from rich to poor countries. The increase in remittances, which now surpass official aid transfers to developing countries, reduces international inequality and promotes poverty reduction.

Azad (2006) examines the impact of migrant remittances on some macro economic factors and the dependents of the migrants in home countries. Remittances influence the social structure in terms of life standards, rural

financial and trade activities, and income and consumption levels of the people of particular community/villages both actively and passively. Many recipient families get rid of extreme poverty situation, at least marginally.

The study by Maxwell Stamp, referred to above, sheds light on the impact of remittances on the economy, in particular, in reducing the pressure of unemployment and improving the balance of payments. Bangladesh is a huge labour surplus country in the world. The higher the manpower export from Bangladesh, the higher the flow of remittances to the country. The labour outflow has not only reduced the unemployment pressure in Bangladesh, it has also enabled higher remittances received from the migrant workers. Thus, it has had a significant impact on the economy, in particular, in providing considerable support to meeting the country's balance of payments needs (Maxwell Stamp, 2010).

The same study describes how labour migration from Bangladesh has helped the country to build up healthy foreign exchange reserve while opening job opportunities for the vast number of unemployed people. The study, however, warns that migration cannot be looked upon as a panacea to address all economic ills that afflict the nation. The idea of accelerating migrants' remittances by sending skilled people to work abroad does not have universal appeal. Instead of seeing off its talented people nurtured with tax payers' money, the government may reorient the country's human resources development policy to create highly skill manpower to meet such critical domestic sectors as education, health services, and information technology (Maxwell Stamp, 2010).

However, the Maxwell Stamp study (2010) appreciates the need for stepping up efforts for raising manpower exports and suggests strengthening Bangladesh's missions abroad in addition to diplomatic overtures at the highest level in order to have positive impacts on export of manpower, especially skilled and semi-skilled workers.

Siddiqui (2005) explores the extent and nature of international voluntary migration from Bangladesh. It identifies the areas for policy intervention to increase the opportunities available for poor people to migrate beyond national borders with maximum protection. The study emphasises that through timely and appropriate intervention, migration can be turned into a major development enhancing process. It can reduce poverty and be an important sustainable strategy for the poor.

Murshid *et. al.* (2000) observes that emigration generally provides well-paid employment for those who do not get job in the country. Even for similar level of

skills it provides highly paid employment in the destination countries compared to the home country. Remittances from emigrant workers have now become one of the major sources of income in our national income accounts. The inward remittance is generating domestic employment by investing the savings out of the remittance money. Over and above the employment aspect, several other key macroeconomic variables in Bangladesh such as growth, poverty reduction, social security, and balance of payments have proven to be significantly positively related to remittances.

Sridhar (2007) examines some of the key issues facing labour migration from the South Asian region, particularly the vast inflow of remittances, problems faced by women migrant workers and the challenging nature of the international labour market. The paper also focuses on some of the problems that are often faced by the migrant workers, the contribution of remittances in poverty alleviation and employment in the South Asian region. It also looks at how migration has provided access and opportunities to many people from South Asia to make a better living by taking advantage of the international labour market. It also looks at measures that need to be taken in South Asia to further promote migration and protect the rights of the migrant workers.

7. Recruitment Process of Migrant Workers in Bangladesh

The recruitment of migrant workers from Bangladesh takes place in four ways – through Bangladesh Manpower Export and Training (BMET), Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL), private recruiting agency, and personal contact.

The BMET is a government organization which is engaged in overall planning and management for promoting manpower export to foreign countries. It is responsible for issuing licenses to recruiting agencies. It grants permission to agencies for recruitment, provides immigration clearance after verifying visa papers and employment contracts, looks after the welfare of Bangladeshi workers abroad, promotes skill development training, and performs other functions related to training and promotion of migration overseas. BMET also controls the government recruiting agency, BOESL, and private recruiting agencies. BOESL is engaged in sending high skill professionals to overseas countries. It negotiates and coordinates with the companies of labour receiving countries to get orders to send labour from Bangladesh. Accordingly, it follows the usual process to send labour and provide low cost migration. It is also treated as a reliable source by the job seekers in foreign countries. There are about 700 private recruiting agencies in Bangladesh who also take part in recruiting labour on their own network.

Recruiting agencies obtain information on the prevailing labour demand from their counterpart of labour receiving countries. Then they have to get clearance from BMET to send the labour. Once the agencies receive the clearance, they search for prospective migrants that have the desired types of skill. They ask potential workers to submit passports and necessary documents, and make a partial payment to begin the recruitment process. After receiving passport and relevant documents, Bangladeshi recruiting agency contacts its counterpart for visa processing. The sponsor-employer of the employing country will then secure visas from the relevant authority and pass them on to the recruiting agency in Bangladesh. All this procedure, from giving the passport to getting the visa, can take few weeks to several months.

Suggestions obtained from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) for simplifying the migration process are as follows:

- Private recruiting agencies should issue circulars, with details of jobs available abroad, including skills required in those jobs as well as wages and perks of the workers, in prominent daily newspapers and the media. This will help job seekers to get an idea about the nature of the job and whether their skill lines are commensurate with the job requirements. They will also learn about salary and benefits obtained from the advertised jobs.
- Special care should be taken by the government to issue passport in time for labour migration and minimize the expenses of the migrants.
- Standard pre-departure training should be mandatory for all intending migrants after getting visa, and the training should be conducted by the government authority or a government approved organization.
- As most of the potential job seekers in foreign countries live in village and semi-urban areas, training centers should be established in thana level so that the trainees do not have to incur extra expenses for food and lodging.
- Government agencies/ministries should take less time to approve the documents necessary for labour migration.

8. Trends in International Migration

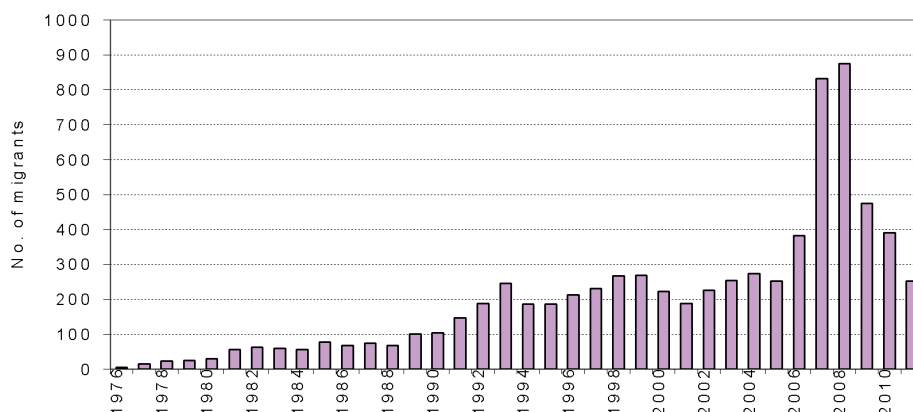
Movement of labour from labour surplus countries to labour shortage countries is an important phenomenon in the globalized world. Bangladesh has a long history of workers migrating to different destinations in search of job for their livelihood. A huge number of Bangladeshis are currently residing in various countries either with the status of permanent citizenship or as short-term worker. A remarkable

number of migrants are working in foreign countries without valid documents, for which no reliable estimate is available, and as such these are not included in the official estimate. Nor does the BMET estimate of 7.1 million people migrating between 1976 and 2010 (mentioned in Section 1 above) include those who have migrated through personal contact and those who have been living in the destination countries permanently.

Table 1 shows the outflow of migrants recorded by the BMET since 1976. A total of 3,83,150 labour migrated in 2010, compared to just 6,087 in 1976. Data indicates a positive incremental trend of labour migration throughout the period from 1976 to 2010, except for certain years. There was a sudden increase in out-migration in 2007, when 8,32,609 workers left Bangladesh for overseas jobs. The number of migrant workers rose further to 8,75,055 in 2008.

BMET has classified short term migrant population into four categories in terms of skill composition. These are professional, skilled, semi-skilled, and less-skilled. Engineers, doctors, nurses and teachers are considered as professional workers; manufacturing workers, drivers and computer operators are considered as skilled workers; tailor, mason etc are considered as semi-skilled, and housemaid, cleaner, hotel boy, labourers etc. are classified as less-skilled workers. Skilled and less-skilled workers constitute the majority of the migrant workers. Table 1 provides data on the number of workers under different skill categories that migrated to foreign countries in different years.

Figure 1: Migration of Bangladeshi Labour to the Destination Countries over the Period from 1976 to 2011



* Data of 2011 is available for Jan-June 2011

Source: BMET

During the early years of short-term labour migration, the proportion of professional and skilled labour was higher than that of semi-skilled and less-skilled labour. In recent times semi-skilled and less-skilled workers have made up the majority of migrants. Table 1 shows that from 1976 to 2010, about 2.54 percent of migrant workers were professional, 30.24 percent skilled, 14.59 percent semi-skilled, and 52.63 percent were less-skilled. Less-skilled and semi-skilled labour together constitutes 67.22 percent and the other 32.78 percent stand for professional and skill categories. The amount of remittance would have been much higher if the country could send more professional and skilled workers.

Table 1: Skill Composition of Migrant Workers from 1976 to 2010

Year	Number of workers of skill categories				Total
	Professional	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Less-skilled	
1976	568	1,775	543	3,201	6,087
1977	1,766	6,447	490	7,022	15,725
1978	3,455	8,190	1,050	10,114	22,809
1979	3,494	7,005	1,685	12,311	24,495
1980	1,983	12,209	2,343	13,538	30,073
1981	3,892	22,432	2,449	27,014	55,787
1982	3,898	20,611	3,272	34,981	62,762
1983	1,822	18,939	5,098	33,361	59,220
1984	2,642	17,183	5,484	31,405	56,714
1985	2,568	28,225	7,823	39,078	77,694
1986	2,210	26,294	9,265	30,889	68,658
1987	2,223	23,839	9,619	38,336	74,017
1988	2,670	25,286	10,809	29,356	68,121
1989	5,325	38,820	17,659	39,920	1,01,724
1990	6,004	35,613	20,792	41,405	1,03,814
1991	9,024	46,887	32,605	58,615	1,47,131
1992	11,375	50,689	30,977	95,083	1,88,124
1993	11,112	71,662	66,168	95,566	2,44,508
1994	8,390	61,040	46,519	70,377	1,86,326
1995	6,352	59,907	32,055	89,229	1,87,543
1996	3,188	64,301	34,689	1,09,536	2,11,714
1997	3,797	65,211	43,558	1,18,511	2,31,077
1998	9,574	74,718	51,590	1,31,785	2,67,667
1999	8,045	98,449	44,947	1,16,741	2,68,182
2000	10,669	99,606	26,461	85,950	2,22,686
2001	5,940	42,742	30,702	1,09,581	1,88,965
2002	14,450	56,265	36,025	1,18,516	2,25,256
2003	15,862	74,530	29,236	1,34,562	2,54,190
2004	12,202	1,10,177	28,327	1,22,252	2,72,958
2005	1,945	1,13,655	24,546	1,12,556	2,52,702
2006	925	1,15,468	33,965	2,31,158	3,81,516
2007	676	1,65,338	1,83,673	4,82,922	8,32,609
2008	1,864	2,92,364	1,32,825	4,48,002	8,75,055
2009	383	104,627	18,419	3,41,922	4,65,351
2010	387	90,621	12,469	2,79,673	3,83,150
Total	1,80,680	21,51,125	10,38,137	37,44,468	71,14,410
% of total	2.54	30.24	14.59	52.63	100.00

Source: BMET (www.bmet.org.bd)

Classification of occupations could have been done more specifically by type of occupation in which Bangladesh workers are employed abroad.

A large portion of the country's manpower export goes to the Middle-Eastern countries (Table 2). The demand for manpower in these countries fluctuates with the fluctuation in the price of oil. When oil prices go up, these countries begin hiring more people from abroad to work at construction sites to build roads and other infrastructure. In 2010, Bangladesh sent 53.06 percent of all migrant workers to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 11.13 percent to Oman, 10.19 percent to Singapore, 5.70 percent to Bahrain, and the rest of the workers were sent to other countries. Migration flows to different countries over the last ten years show that labour export to some countries declined, and to some countries increased or remained stable. For instance, labour export to KSA in 2001 was 1,37,248, which was 72.63 percent of total export in that year, but in 2010 the export stood at 7,069 only, which was 1.84 percent of the total export. In the case of Malaysia, labour export in 2001 was 4,921, which was 2.60 percent of the total. In 2007 and 2008, when Bangladesh's manpower export was at its peak, labour export to Malaysia stood at 2,73,201 and 1,31,762, which were 32.81 percent and 15.06 percent of the total labour exports in the respective years. Malaysia is a favorite destination for Bangladeshi workers but it does not have any stable immigration policy, especially for workers from Bangladesh. Malaysia allows entry of migrant workers when there is a boom in the economy but starts driving them out of the country or haul them up for imprisonment and deportation when the demand for labour goes down. Similarly, labour export to Kuwait showed more or less a declining trend over the last 10 years. As regards wages, skilled and semi-skilled migrants like masons, plumbers, welders, carpenters, rod binders and pipe fitters who work in the Middle East and South East Asian countries get relatively higher wages compared to the less-skilled workers. These people send higher amount of remittances to the country.

9. Labour Demand and Skill Development

Demand for specific types of labour and worker-friendly migration policies of the destination countries are more important in encouraging labour migration to these countries than the availability of labour supply in source countries. The current and potential labour destinations for different types of workers, as obtained from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), are shown in Table 3.

The government lays emphasis on developing the skills of potential migrants under various schemes, in particular, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project. There are 38 Government Technical Training Centers

Table 2: Migrant Labour Out-flow to Different Countries from 2001 to 2010

<i>Year/ Country</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
KSA	137,248 (72.63)	163,269 (72.48)	162,131 (63.78)	139,031 (50.93)	80,425 (31.83)	109,513 (28.70)	204,112 (24.51)	132,124 (15.10)
UAE	16,252 (8.60)	25,462 (11.30)	37,346 (14.69)	47,012 (17.22)	61,978 (24.53)	130,204 (34.13)	226,392 (27.19)	419,355 (47.92)
Qatar	223 (0.12)	552 (0.25)	94 (0.04)	1,268 (0.46)	2,114 (0.84)	7,691 (2.02)	15,130 (1.82)	25,548 (2.92)
Oman	4,561 (2.41)	3,854 (1.71)	4,029 (1.59)	4,435 (1.62)	4,827 (1.91)	8,082 (2.12)	17,478 (2.10)	52,896 (6.04)
Bahrain	4,371 (2.31)	5,421 (2.41)	7,482 (2.94)	9,194 (3.37)	10,716 (4.24)	16,355 (4.29)	16,433 (1.97)	13,182 (1.51)
Kuwait	5,341 (2.83)	15,769 (7.00)	26,722 (10.51)	41,108 (15.06)	47,029 (18.61)	35,775 (9.38)	4,212 (0.51)	319 (0.04)
Lebanon	0.00 (0.00)	2 (0.00)	3 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	14 (0.01)	821 (0.22)	3,541 (0.43)	8,444 (0.96)
Libya	450 (0.24)	1,574 (0.70)	2,855 (1.12)	606 (0.22)	972 (0.38)	104 (0.03)	1,480 (0.18)	5,067 (0.58)
Malaysia	4,921 (2.60)	85 (0.04)	28 (0.01)	224 (0.08)	2,911 (1.15)	20,469 (5.37)	273,201 (32.81)	131,762 (15.06)
Singapore	9,615 (5.09)	6,856 (3.04)	5,304 (2.09)	6,948 (2.55)	9,651 (3.82)	20,139 (5.28)	38,324 (4.60)	56,581 (6.47)
Others	5,983 (3.17)	2,412 (1.07)	8,196 (3.22)	23,132 (8.47)	32,065 (12.69)	32,363 (8.48)	32,306 (3.88)	29,777 (3.40)
Total	188,965 (100.00)	225,256 (100.00)	254,190 (100.00)	272,958 (100.00)	252,702 (100.00)	381,516 (100.00)	832,609 (100.00)	875,055 (100.00)

Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate share of migrants sent in different countries

Source: BMET (www.bmet.org.bd)

(TTCs), and a good number of technical institutes in the private sector, which impart training in more than 47 different trades. It is, however, learnt from KIIs that the quality of skill development training courses is not of the high standard desired by foreign employers. Because of the low quality of training, Bangladeshi workers face tough competition with workers from other labour exporting countries and are often compelled to work at lower wages. Moreover, costs including course fees, food expenses, lodging and other expenses incurred for completing a course are pretty high, which the trainees cannot always afford. For this reason, some of the training centers have fewer trainees than the number of seats available for the courses.

Very recently, a sudden opportunity has appeared for Bangladeshi workers in the Gulf nation Oman after thousands of the Filipino and Indian workers have

Table 3: Current and Potential Markets of Labour Migration

<i>Work type</i>	<i>Current and potential markets</i>
Construction worker	UAE, Oman, Bahrain, KSA, Singapore
Factory worker	UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, KSA, Papua New Guinea, Korea
Welder	Middle East countries
Cleaner	Middle East
Driver	Middle East
Doctor/Nurse	European countries and Middle East
Agricultural worker	Middle East, Papua New Guinea, Angola
Marine worker	Singapore
Fish processing and fishing	Korea

Source: Obtained from KIIs

departed following political turmoil in this oil-rich Arab country. In the UAE, too, where the construction industry has witnessed a boom in recent months, the opportunity for Bangladeshi workers has increased following the demand for higher wages by key manpower exporters like India, Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines. These countries accounted for a significant portion of the UAE's expatriate workforce.

In Malaysia, the number of foreign workers is expected to record a significant increase in the coming days as the Malaysian government has announced an amnesty for thousands of illegal Bangladeshi workers. Saudi Arabia, too, has made it known that it would soon start recruiting various categories of workers from Bangladesh. Demand for Bangladeshi workers remains buoyant also in South East Asia, especially in Singapore where the thriving shipbuilding industry has emerged as a key recruiter. Iraq is set to hire thousands of workers from Bangladesh as the reconstruction of the war-torn country gathers pace.

The prospects of manpower export from Bangladesh thus appear quite bright. The ministry for expatriate welfare and diplomats posted in important countries should now work hard to exploit these opportunities and at the same time remain vigilant to ensure the rights of the migrant workers in their country of work. They will also need to take pragmatic steps to augment the manpower export drawing lessons from countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India that have been immensely successful in sending a large number of both skilled and unskilled workers abroad.

Bangladesh missions abroad need to be much more proactive in searching out markets for manpower export in the old and new destinations. The positions of labour attaches and the like in the missions should go to dedicated and truly

capable persons. The missions should devote more time and energy to look after the interest of overseas Bangladeshi workers so that the latter can get their contracted remunerations and other monetary benefits from the foreign employers. These steps, if pursued diligently, can notably increase the volume of remittances.

The government will need to be serious about the expansion of the manpower export market. This is the single most sources after merchandise exports that earn the highest amount of foreign exchange. A further increase in remittance flows can be achieved by an assortment of policies in different sectors and not alone by setting up remittance houses abroad. While the latter can be a useful step, other policies do need to be pursued for augmenting remittance flows.

The export of skilled manpower, including workers and professionals, can lead to higher earnings and hence higher remittance flows because their wages would be substantially higher than those of the unskilled workers. But a large number of people will require training for the purpose, and this requirement can be met if the government operates a sufficiently large number of skill training centres across the country. The training can be imparted free of cost and those who receive such training will be able to gradually pay for their training costs, once they get jobs abroad and start earning.

The government does need to form a standing regulatory commission to expedite the manpower export and ensure the rights of the migrant workers. If this is done, the manpower sector, which is the country's second highest foreign exchange earner, can help boost the country's economy to a large extent.

10. Major Destination Countries

According to BMET data on manpower exports since 1976, KSA, UAE, Malaysia, Kuwait, and Oman were the major destination countries for Bangladeshi migrant workers (Table 4). Labour export to these destination countries fluctuated from time to time, variously depending on the country's bilateral relationship with those countries, on their economic condition, and at times on the foreign employment policy of these countries.

More than 2.5 million workers migrated to the KSA since 1976. The ranking of the destination countries in Table 4 in order of their importance to Bangladesh would show that manpower export to KSA has remained volatile, while manpower export to UAE has remained more or less stable over the past 35 years. Malaysia and Kuwait are the third and fourth highest manpower importing countries but Bangladesh's

manpower export to these countries has trended to decline in the most recent years. Malaysia was the third largest employer of Bangladeshi workers in 2000 but its rank dropped drastically to sixteenth position in 2010. The country's labour export to Oman, Singapore and Bahrain has registered a slight decline but their rank has improved in the most recent years (Table 4).

The labour migration to KSA steadily increased up to 2002, and then, after declining in the next few years till 2006, it rose to its peak in 2007 (Table 2). Since then, however, labour export to KSA has declined consistently to reach its bottom in 2010. Similarly, in the case of the second highest destination country UAE, the manpower export steadily increased till 2008 and then declined in the next two years (Table 2).

The official statistics on migration are gross underestimations since a significant proportion of intra-regional migration are through informal or unauthorized channels and thus do not get recorded. There are a huge number of Bangladesh people known to have been working in low paying jobs in informal sectors in India and Pakistan (Sridhar, 2007).

Table 4: Distribution of Migrant Workers of Bangladesh by their Destinations over time

Country	Migrants 1976-2011*		Migrants in 2010		Migrants in 2000		Migrants in 1990		Migrants in 1976	
	Number	Rank	Number	Rank	Number	Rank	Number	Rank	Number	Rank
KSA	25,86,548	1	7,069	8	1,44,618	1	57,486	1	217	5
UAE	19,19,278	2	2,03,308	1	34,034	2	8,307	3	1,989	1
Malaysia	7,00,089	3	919	16	17,237	3	1,385	7	-	-
Kuwait	4,79,644	4	48	18	594	11	5,957	5	643	3
Oman	4,54,458	5	42,641	2	5,258	5	13,980	2	113	7
Singapore	3,41,131	6	39,053	3	11,095	4	776	8	-	9
Bahrain	2,18,347	7	21,824	4	4,637	6	4,563	6	335	4
Qatar	1,73,911	8	12,085	7	1,433	7	7,672	4	1,221	2
Libya	95,194	9	12,132	6	1,010	9	471	9	173	6
Lebanon	58,469	10	17,268	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Italy	36,669	11	6,726	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jordan	29,702	12	2,235	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brunei	25,766	13	2,191	15	1,420	8	-	-	-	-
S. Korea	25,696	14	2,699	12	990	10	-	-	-	-
Mauritius	19,574	15	3,705	10	271	12	-	-	-	-
Egypt	11,765	16	2,730	11	9	15	-	-	-	-
UK	10,009	17	173	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sudan	7,833	18	14	20	54	13	-	-	-	-
Iraq	2,710	19	2,288	13	-	-	-	-	-	-
Japan	762	20	17	19	22	14	-	-	-	-
Others	1,85,831		4,025		4		3,217		1,396	
Total	73,83,386		3,83,150		2,22,686		1,03,814		6,087	

* Data are available up to June, 2011

Source: BMET (www.bmet.org.bd)

11. Remittances Inflow

Worldwide flow of remittances, including those to high-income countries, is estimated to have grown to US\$433 billion in 2008 depicting an increase of US\$53 billion or 12 percent from US\$380 billion in 2007. If unrecorded flows through formal and informal channels are included, actual remittance figures are likely to be significantly larger by at least 50 percent (World Bank, 2006).

Bangladesh has experienced a robust growth in remittances in recent years due to the acceleration of demand for blue-collar jobs in Gulf countries. The expatriate workers holding white-collar jobs seldom remit their incomes to their own country. Their earnings are generally spent in foreign countries by purchasing cars and houses, and investing in business. On the other hand, blue collar job holders remit virtually the entire amount of their earnings to their own country through different channels. The bulk of such remittances come from countries in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and some Asian countries like Malaysia. About 65 percent of the remittances come from gulf countries. Since remittances from the unskilled expatriate workforce are significant, an increase in Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserve is to a great extent dependent on remittances from these less-skilled workers.

About 35 percent of foreign exchange is earned through remittances sent by migrant workers (Siddiqui et. al., 2008). However, this share could rise much higher if the remittances were sent through official channels. There are at present two channels of sending remittance to Bangladesh. One is the formal banking channel that remits money through demand draft, traveler's cheque, telegraphic transfer, direct transfer, ATM etc. The other is the informal channel (*hundi*). *Hundi* refers to the illegal money exchange not supported by the international or national legal structure. The anti-money laundering act of Bangladesh expressly prohibits remittance by *hundi*. Yet, the *hundi* system is popular in the country because *hundi* operators offer exchange rates that are consistently higher than the official exchange rate. Additionally, *hundi* operators generally maintain the confidentiality of the recipients and promptly send the money to any nook and corner of the country.

There is no record of remittances received through informal channels. A rough approximation is that 46 percent of the total volume of remittance is channeled through official sources, around 40 percent through *hundi*, 4.61 percent through friends and relatives, and about 8 percent of the total is hand carried by migrant workers themselves during their home visits (Siddiqui and Abrar, 2003).

In absolute terms, the total receipts of remittances from Bangladeshi migrants through formal channels during 1976-2010 stood at US\$78.7 billion. In particular, the remittance received in 1976 was only US\$23.71 million. Then it continued to increase until 1983. The remittance showed a downward trend during the next couple of years. However, the remittance showed a steadily increasing trend until 2010. The remittance rose to US\$10,987 million during 2010 (Table 5). The increasing flow of remittance has helped reduce Bangladesh's external aid dependency. In fact, the growth of remittances is one of the key factors in boosting the country's foreign exchange reserves.

By making the formal sector stronger, quicker, secure, efficient, less costlier than the informal sector, private commercial banks in collaboration with NGOs can play a vital role to reach the remittance money anywhere in Bangladesh. This would on the one hand make all such transactions legal, and also help beef up foreign exchange reserves of the country.

Table 5: Yearly Data of Remittances from 1976 to 2010

<i>Year</i>	<i>Remittance (in US\$)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Remittance (in US\$ million)</i>
1976	23.71	1994	1153.54
1977	82.79	1995	1201.52
1978	106.90	1996	1355.34
1979	172.06	1997	1525.03
1980	301.33	1998	1599.24
1981	304.88	1999	1806.63
1982	490.77	2000	1954.95
1983	627.51	2001	2071.03
1984	500.00	2002	2847.79
1985	500.00	2003	3177.63
1986	576.20	2004	3565.31
1987	747.60	2005	4249.87
1988	763.90	2006	5484.08
1989	757.84	2007	6568.03
1990	781.54	2008	8979.00
1991	769.30	2009	10717.73
1992	901.97	2010	10987.00
1993	1009.09	Total	78661.11

Source: BMET (www.bmet.org.bd)

Table 6: Role of Individual Banks in Mobilization of Remittances from FY2006 to FY2011

<i>Name of Banks</i>	<i>FY2006</i>	<i>FY2007</i>	<i>FY2008</i>	<i>FY2009</i>	<i>FY2010</i>
State Owned Commercial Bank	2198.47	2320.40	2635.85	2891.82	3047.70
Sonali Bank Ltd.	1220.44	1197.20	1317.82	1263.27	1299.64
Janata Bank Ltd.	535.66	595.37	726.11	784.64	938.85
Agrani Bank Ltd.	360.47	440.01	491.60	739.19	703.70
Rupali Bank Ltd.	81.90	87.32	100.32	704.71	105.51
Specialized Banks	44.02	72.49	91.86	101.99	111.91
Bangladesh Krishi Bank	43.62	71.93	91.59	101.82	111.77
Basic Bank Ltd.	0.40	0.59	0.27	0.17	0.14
Private Commercial Bank	2354.10	3408.90	5004.23	6509.02	7617.22
Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd.	3.02	4.30	2.47	4.65	15.18
AB Bank Ltd.	56.94	79.17	118.77	245.58	234.67
Bangladesh Commerce Bank Ltd.	0.04	0.10	0.09	0.16	0.11
Bank Asia Ltd.	85.24	85.87	119.89	146.71	197.83
BRAC Bank Ltd.	70.09	207.49	400.36	558.17	594.73
Dhaka Bank Ltd.	91.08	113.49	135.61	121.08	116.05
Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd.	14.57	17.84	50.03	77.99	88.51
Eastern Bank Ltd.	54.49	115.70	154.45	153.39	153.53
EXIM Bank Ltd.	1.67	3.58	9.84	16.25	20.13
First Security Islami Bank Ltd.	0.17	0.46	4.55	4.46	6.01
IFIC Bank Ltd.	32.65	37.84	49.54	56.50	65.96
Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd.	643.78	949.76	1636.14	2339.03	2933.83
Jamuna Bank Ltd.	7.12	39.09	39.86	38.64	27.78
Mercantile Bank Ltd	7.18	33.80	76.40	52.66	48.90
Mutual Trust Bank Ltd.	5.84	65.09	91.85	78.42	80.71
National Bank Ltd.	251.73	336.27	529.01	583.81	685.12
NCC Bank Ltd.	38.52	85.46	140.78	186.52	186.63
One Bank Ltd.	5.66	4.37	2.92	6.03	8.17
Prime Bank Ltd.	80.39	175.84	238.33	267.06	301.56
Pubali Bank Ltd.	210.55	286.42	377.71	468.86	481.85
Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd.	27.92	49.94	65.94	47.56	40.02
Social Islami Bank Ltd.	1.44	2.05	2.42	11.33	7.42
South East Bank Ltd.	93.44	150.24	108.45	170.75	261.39
Standard Bank Ltd.	3.86	0.85	2.68	0.88	11.37
The City Bank Ltd.	78.56	80.29	57.83	158.19	207.87
ICB Islamic Bank Ltd.	25.52	16.30	10.36	7.68	7.18
The Premier Bank Ltd.	0.77	5.97	21.48	20.33	19.68
Trust Bank Ltd.	7.18	17.49	60.64	94.77	119.28
United Commercial Bank Ltd.	36.49	50.34	36.32	49.66	50.06
Uttara Bank Ltd.	418.19	393.54	459.50	541.90	645.69
Foreign Commercial Bank	205.28	176.66	182.83	186.41	210.60
Commercial Bank of Ceylon Ltd.	0.54	1.84	8.39	9.71	7.61
Citi Bank NA	1.35	87.41	61.83	52.27	32.46
Habib Bank Ltd.	122.95	1.92	1.63	0.47	0.16
HSBC	2.02	41.88	52.05	68.42	95.25
National Bank of Pakistan	31.33	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.07
Bank Al-Falah	0.04	0.62	1.11	0.16	0.03
Standard Chartered Bank	0.49	41.40	54.06	53.03	73.17
State Bank of India	45.61	1.57	3.01	1.30	0.77
Woori Bank Ltd.	0.95	0.00	0.70	1.03	1.08
Total (All Banks)	4801.87	5978.45	7914.77	9689.24	10987.43

Source: BB (www.bangladesh-bank.org)

Banks in Bangladesh have been playing an important role in mobilizing and channeling remittances to the beneficiaries. The group-wise role of banks depicts that private commercial banks (PCBs) are playing a pioneering role in mobilizing remittances from the overseas countries. Among all banks, Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd. is at the top in repatriating remittances in the country and contributing a lot to the development effort of the government. The role of different types of banks in mobilizing remittances is shown in Table 6.

The World Bank's recently published 'Migration and Remittances Fact Book 2011' shows Bangladesh as the seventh highest remittance receiving country in the world in 2010, receiving US\$11.1 billion during the year. India was the world's top remittance receiving country in 2010, with an inflow of US\$55 billion, followed by China (US\$51 billion), Mexico (US\$22.6 billion), Philippines (US\$21.3 billion), France (US\$15.9 billion) and Germany (US\$11.6 billion) (Table 7).

The remittance receipts in Bangladesh have not increased significantly despite a rise in the number of emigrants. In the South Asian region, Bangladesh was the second highest recipient after India, but ahead of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal (Table 8). The most important reason behind the incongruity between the number of migrants and remittance flows is that Bangladesh has increasingly been exporting more less-skilled and semi-skilled workers whose wages are lower than those of skilled and professional migrants (Siddiqui and Abrar, 2003).

12. Impact of Remittances on Employment and Poverty

Remittances can make an important contribution to development through employment generation and reducing poverty. The recipients of remittance money

Table 7: Ten Top Remittance Recipient Countries of the World in 2010

<i>Sl. #</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Remittance (in US\$ billion)</i>
1	India	55.00
2	China	51.00
3	Mexico	22.60
4	Philippines	21.30
5	France	15.90
6	Germany	11.60
7	Bangladesh	11.10
8	Belgium	10.40
9	Spain	10.20
10	Nigeria	10.00

Source: World Bank staff estimates based on the IMF's BOP statistics yearbook, 2010

meet their basic needs by using these funds. The report by Adams shows that remittance recipients are more likely to send their children to school, have more access to health care, and start small businesses (Adams, 2006). Remittance has in fact been playing a significant role in the economic development of

Table 8: Five Top Remittance Recipient Countries of South Asia in 2010

<i>Sl. #</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Remittance (in US\$ billion)</i>
1	India	55.00
2	Bangladesh	11.10
3	Pakistan	9.40
4	Sri Lanka	3.60
5	Nepal	3.50

Source: World Bank staff estimates based on the IMF's BOP statistics yearbook, 2010

Bangladesh. It is now considered one of the major weapons for fighting poverty in the country.

No doubt, migration can to some extent help relieve the acute pressure of underemployment and unemployment; it can also be a potent instrument for transferring skills, creating productive efficiency, and stimulating domestic investment. When international labour migration is accompanied by sufficient remittances, it can make a significant contribution to both economic growth and poverty reduction. According to recent estimates by the World Bank, remittances accounted for significant poverty reduction in a number of poor countries: 11 percentage points for Uruguay, 5 percentage points for Ghana, and 6 percentage points for Bangladesh (World Bank, 2006).

Adams and Page (2005) focuses on the positive side of remittances resulting from migration, which they argue reduce poverty. This study uses cross-country regression based on 74 countries and finds that a 10 percent increase in the share of remittances in a country's GDP can lead to an average 1.2 percent decline in the poverty headcount.

13. Female Migration

In recent days, a significant number of Bangladeshi women have begun seeking opportunities for foreign employment to overcome their poverty. The growing demand for female workers in labour importing countries has created opportunities for female workers to participate in the international labour market. Female labour migration from Bangladesh has been increasing in the recent years though it was insignificant even a decade ago. Female migrants in 2000 were just 0.20 percent of all migrants that went through official channel. The percentage rose to 4.78 percent in 2009 and 6.48 in 2010 (Table 9).

As gathered from KIIs, more female labour are now migrating both to take up jobs in the informal sector such as those of housemaids and cleaners and in the formal sector like garments and tailoring, fish processing and health care sectors that require specific skills in the respective areas. There is also a growing demand in particular activities in particular countries (Table 10). There is a large demand for nurses in some countries but women of Bangladesh are not able to get those jobs due to inadequate language skills and lack of proper certificate required in the destination countries.

Table 9: Percentage of Female Migrants from 2000 to 2009

Year	% of women migrants over total migrants
2000	0.20
2001	0.35
2002	0.54
2003	0.93
2004	4.29
2005	5.57
2006	4.73
2007	2.29
2008	2.38
2009	4.78
2010	6.48

Source: Calculated from BMET data

14. Problems Faced in the Home Country before Departure

A migrant worker seeking employment abroad faces a lot of problems in his/her own country prior to departure for a foreign country. We have recorded some of these problems through Key Informants Interviews (KIIs). In most cases, the recruiting agencies employ a sub-agent, locally called '*dalal*', to get the jobseeker a job out of specific job categories. There are, however, concerns that manpower brokers both in the labour-sending and destination countries often engage in unethical practices that cause enormous despair for the aspirant migrant workers.

The job seekers that eagerly desire to get employment in foreign countries do not have much knowledge about the migration process and the cost of migration. They do not even have any opportunity to get the information they desire. There is limited scope to get the information about what documents are required, how long the aspiring migrant will have to wait to migrate, and who the reliable recruiting agencies are. In many cases, job seekers were cheated by the *dalal* who had earlier promised them of tempting jobs with large salary and benefits, but these promises were more often found hollow and baseless.

Table 10: Current and Potential Markets for Female Workers

<i>Work Type</i>	<i>Current and potential markets</i>
Housemaid	Lebanon, UAE, KSA, Oman
Garments/tailoring	Mauritius, Jordan, UAE
Fish processing	Mauritius
Cleaner	Kuwait
Doctor, Nurse	KSA, Oman, Fizi, Bhutan, Maldives

Source: Obtained from KIIs

Thus, due to a flawed immigration policy and its poor enforcement, migrant workers often become victims of deception by middlemen before departure.

15. Problems Encountered in Destination Countries

As in the home country, the intending migrants in Bangladesh face a number of problems and challenges in the destination country as well. Migrant workers are exploited by the companies they work for. The present study has identified a number of such problems on the basis of information gathered from a number of KIIs that are the key actors in the migration process.

A significant number of migrants receive much lower wage than what *dalals*—local recruiting agents—promise them when they migrate from the country. In some instances, migrant workers are bound to agree upon a fake contract written in a language they do not understand and which forbids all fundamental rights. Alongside the fake one, the company makes another contract with counterfeit information to show government about the facilities provided to the migrant workers. Also, the Police and Immigration Departments force them to give money. Their travel documents are taken away by the employers after they arrive at the country of work, so that they cannot raise their voice against exploitation and are compelled to work even in low wages, delayed payment, and no medical care. Despite all this, migrant workers usually do not get cooperation from Bangladesh's diplomatic missions in the destination countries. Most of the workers in the destination countries have to work in vulnerable conditions, which are a threat to their security, health and efficiency.

There are uneven wages between the migrant workers and the nationals of destination countries. Also, there are wage discrepancies vis-à-vis the workers of other labour sending countries. The position and status of Bangladeshi workers is lower, compared to those from other labour exporting countries. Yet, the migrant workers cannot raise any complaint about the unequal treatment due to the fear of losing their job.

Most migrant workers do not have the right to change their job in the destination country before they complete the period of contract. More often than not, these workers are engaged in dangerous, dirty, and humiliating jobs with long working hours. Some of the workers, who have the potential to get a higher income job, can not avail of this opportunity due to this contractual barrier. As a result, Bangladeshi workers are deprived of the opportunity of earning higher income and the country loses a significant amount of remittances.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has proposed to bring all recruitment agencies under a legal framework to root out fraudulent practices in the workers' recruitment process and protect the migrants' rights. The GCC has also proposed that the legal fees for recruitment of migrant workers in the GCC nations will be borne by the employers, but these fees should be clearly defined by the labour-sending and receiving countries (The Daily Star, April 21, 2011).

The social unrest and political uproar in some labour-importing countries in the past one year has created an impediment to the increase of labour export to these countries.

16. Cost of Migration

Employers in foreign countries, with few exceptions, do not provide air ticket to workers and pay for their emigration related expenses. Moreover, workers have to pay to get work permit in the destination countries. The situation was not so about 20 years back. In most of the cases, employers of the labour importing countries used to bear all costs like air ticket, medical expenses, work permit and other expenses associated with migration. The wages at that time were much higher than what they receive now. Now-a-days, more and more developing countries than before are trying to enter the labour market in Middle East countries. As a result of the growing competition in the labour market, salary, wages and benefits of labour are being reduced. So, the rate of remittances has not been increasing these days, commensurate with the increasing rate of migrants over the most recent years.

17. Conclusion and Recommendations

Being a country with huge labour surplus, Bangladesh has a strong potential to contribute to the supply side of world labour market. In Bangladesh, the access for its workers to different countries for getting employment has been an issue of growing importance in recent years. The migrants have been big contributors to the national economy, remitting huge amount of foreign currency. The manpower

export sector deserves to be protected from all harm so that it can flourish and add substantially to the country's foreign currency reserves.

Most manpower-importing countries are interested in employing skilled workers. It is in fact not desirable to send less-skilled workers as their wages are always substantially lower than those of skilled workers. The government should take steps to create skilled manpower for those lines of work in which there is high demand in the destination countries. The reality is, however, that most of the Bangladeshis seeking jobs abroad are uneducated. There are grossly underpaid and face deprivation by overseas employers very often.

Government of Bangladesh has introduced a foreign employment act and policy to protect workers from exploitation. The manpower agencies and the government should join hands not only to revive the demand for Bangladesh workers in traditional destinations but also to explore new markets in which there is a good socio-political environment and where wages are relatively high. Eastern Europe, Russia and some countries of Africa can be good options. More bilateral negotiations need to be held in order to have a safe and secure place in the world market. The relevant ministry has to establish contact with the employer companies of those countries. Every mission must have a very strong press wing from which the concerned ministry will get an idea about job openings in the respective country.

There is a huge demand for trained nurses in the developed world. Major labour exporting countries are providing various incentives to private sector educational institutions to produce trained nurses. Bangladesh government, too, should not hesitate to provide incentives for creating skilled nurses in order to exploit opportunities for exporting trained nurses to the developed world.

The most important task of the government now should be to create training opportunities in diverse areas as per the requirements of the labour importing countries. It would need to set up adequate number of skill training centres throughout the country to facilitate the enrolment and training of a large number of people. The private sector, too, can establish more high quality technical, polytechnic and vocational institutes that will add to the supply of skilled and professional workers. Admission seekers in these skill training centers should be admitted free of charge or at concessional cost on the condition that they would pay back for their training costs once they get employment. Both the training institute and the trainee would benefit from such an arrangement.

Finance is another frightening barrier faced by people planning to go abroad. Government can play a very useful role by asking the country's nationalized commercial banks to extend, low interest, collateral-free loans to people aspiring

to go abroad on the express commitment by the loanees that the loans would be progressively repaid with interest after they reach their destinations and start working abroad. Neither the lending banks nor the loan recipients stand to lose anything but only gain from such an arrangement. The outcome of such a move will be the sending out of a large number of workers abroad where they will be earning higher incomes from relatively high-wage jobs which will ultimately lead to a higher level of remittance flow to the country.

Recruiting agencies, too, should be brought under some strict rules and regulations and all of their activities will need to be monitored so that no migration seeking person becomes their victim. The government should make all migration-related information easily accessible to the people so that they become aware of the present and the potential market and learn the pros and cons in the process of migration.

The foreign missions of the country will have to be sufficiently active. They will need to have separate wings for promoting manpower export and monitor the welfare of the workers. They would be expected to assess the prospects for our manpower export to the country when they are located, establish government-to-government contact or facilitate direct contact between our manpower exporters and foreign employers. They should be obliged to intervene if foreign employers break the terms of their contract with the workers, involving underpayment, fraudulent practices and other abuses. The missions should send reports to the concerned ministry on a regular basis.

Instances of cheating and fraud are very common and occur both prior to and after the departure of workers from the home country. The prevailing complex and time consuming recruitment process is largely responsible for the rise in fraudulent acts of the stakeholders. A simplification of the recruitment process is therefore strongly warranted.

The targeted increase in the remittance flow through exploring new labour markets in the coming days may face stiff challenges unless the country is in a position to export more and more skilled workers abroad.

Remittance is an important source of foreign exchange earning, and if a part of the sums is used in productive investment, it can make a significant contribution to the country's economic development. Policymakers should take care of the migrants, look after their problems and support them for improving their condition, so that they can send more foreign currency to the country.

Further study is needed to assess the costs and benefits of migration and also evaluate the prospect and potential of using remittances in productive sectors.

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