

# Gender Analysis of Migration from Bangladesh

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## Introduction

Migration has become one of the primary concerns of various countries of the world. In the context of existing potential of manpower and the constraint to local employment opportunity, overseas employment is now considered as an obvious development alternative of economic emancipation and empowerment for Bangladesh. It has become an added advantage particularly for poverty alleviation of women in Bangladesh. International migration of manpower has in recent years emerged as the most important issue in the development discourse in Bangladesh. Remittances from Bangladeshi migrants have constituted a larger share of the country's development budget than foreign aid. Thus migration is now considered as important livelihood strategy for the people of Bangladesh.

Worldwide, during the past twenty-five years, the volume of migrant workers, both internal and international has more than doubled, from 84 million to 175 million in 2000. It was estimated 190 m in 2005. Number of global migrants is estimated at about 300 million. Feminisation of labour migration in Asia depicts that- since late 1970s; women constitute an increasing proportion of migrant labour force. From 15% in 1976 it grew to 50% in 2000 in Asia & Latin America. In Asia, for some countries like Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, etc. the number of women migrant workers exceeded that of male workers.

As per available record, Bangladesh started sending manpower abroad officially in 1976. Inaugurating with the number of 6078 in 1976, it reached at 8,75,055 in 2008. It crossed an aggregate figure of 6.6m up to September 2009. Bangladeshi migrants are spread over five continents: Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia and North America.

## Trend of women migration in Bangladesh

With an equal potential to contribute towards the economic development of the country, womenfolk constitutes almost half of the population of the country. Women migration from Bangladesh constituted only 1% up to 2004, after 2004, this trend reached about 5% in the subsequent years. But it dropped in percentage again in 2007 and 2008. It is interesting to note that the number of women migration is ever increasing from 1998 to 2009 even the overall migration declined due to global economic recession. Although international migration from Bangladesh was started officially from 1976, female migration expressed its notable existence only from 1996. There were several bans on women migration from Bangladesh on lower level of jobs up to 2001. After withdrawal of major bans on female migration in lower level of occupation, it shows positive trend. Up to 2008, more than 80,000 women migrated to overseas employment in 17 countries. In Bangladesh, the female migration is still within the figure of 2-4% of the total migration.

Percentage of women migration in the international average is about 49% and this figure in the Philippine and Sri Lanka is about 70-90%. Bangladesh and Nepal entered the overseas labour market lately and still cover a very low percentage in comparison to overall migration.

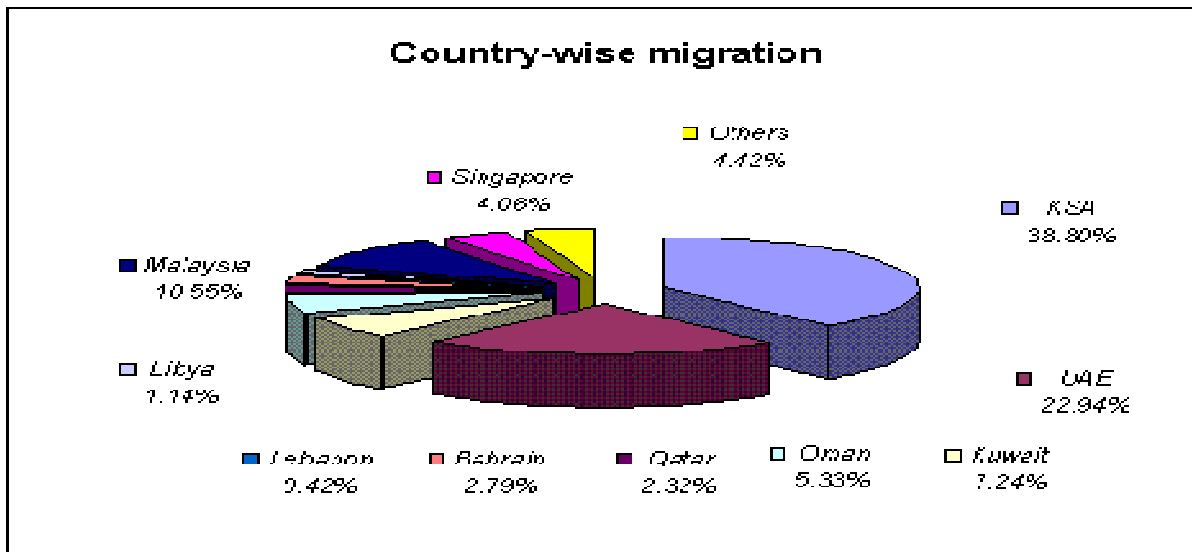
Presently women's employment opportunity in the overseas labour market is mostly confined to some specific occupation like house keeping trade, cleaner and garment workers. These workers usually come from the village and sub-urban areas with poor economic background. There exists a good demand of women workers in some other trades like nursing, care giving, cashiering, catering, electronics factory, etc. To avail the opportunity of this skilled migration, it is essential to take up a comprehensive program of skill development and enhancement of their communication skills.

Presently about 48% of the migrating workers are less skilled in professional category. Practically they do not possess any specific skill to perform a particular form of work. In case of women workers, the proportion of less-skilled workforce is more than 90%.

### **COUNTRY-WISE OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT**

From 1976 – 2009 (September) (Top 10 countries)

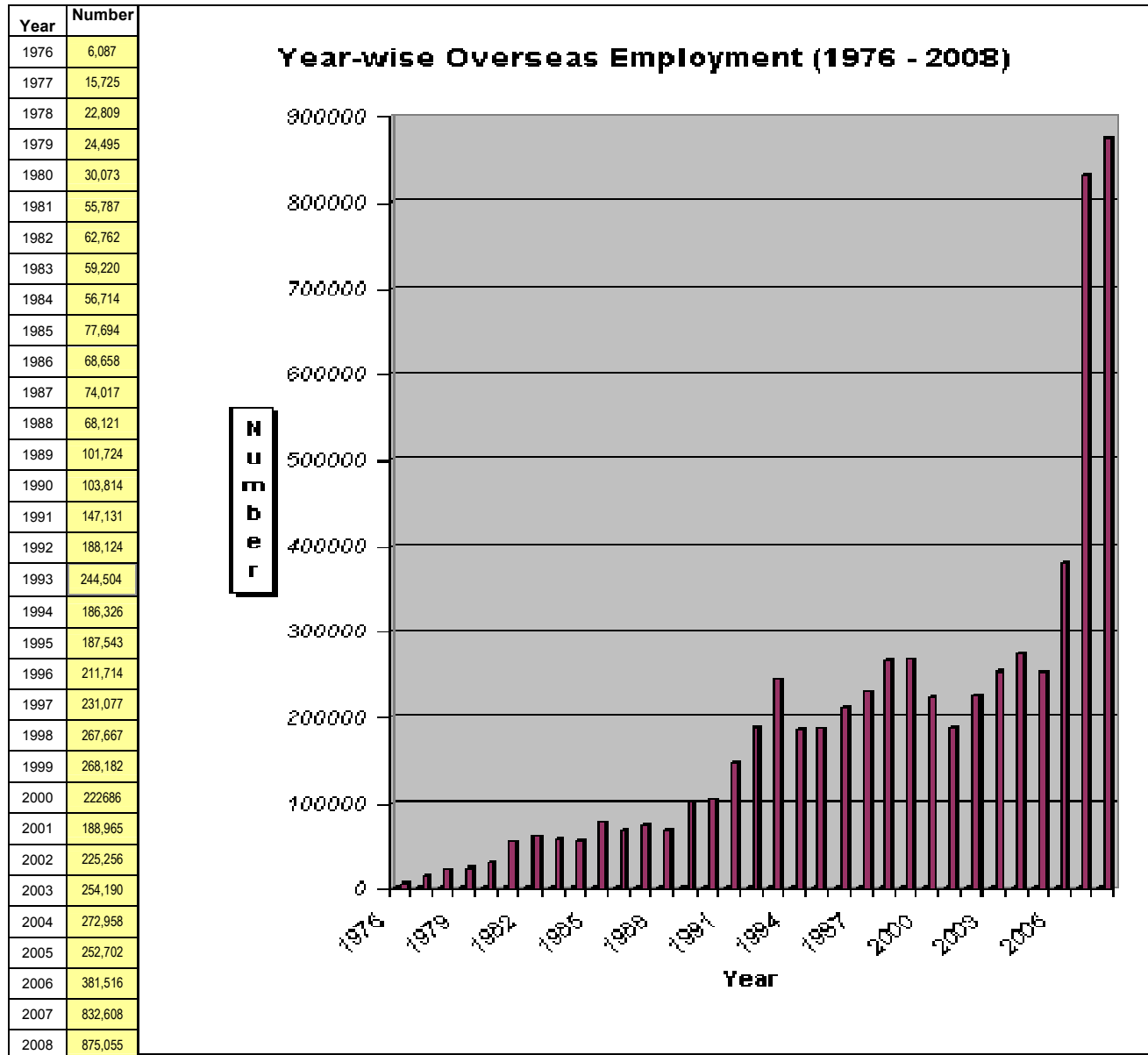
| Country | KSA       | UAE       | Kuwait  | Oman    | Qatar   | Bahrain | Lebanon | Libya  | Malaysia | Singapore | Others  |
|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|----------|-----------|---------|
| %       | 38.80     | 22.94     | 7.24    | 5.33    | 2.32    | 2.79    | 0.42    | 1.14   | 10.55    | 4.06      | 4.42    |
| Number  | 2,570,086 | 1,519,735 | 479,567 | 352,899 | 153,566 | 184,875 | 27,560  | 75,253 | 698,573  | 268,945   | 293,021 |



### Year-wise women migration from Bangladesh

| Year | Number |
|------|--------|
| 1991 | 2189   |
| 1992 | 1907   |
| 1993 | 1793   |
| 1994 | 1995   |
| 1995 | 1612   |
| 1996 | 1994   |
| 1997 | 17629  |
| 1998 | 939    |
| 1999 | 366    |
| 2000 | 454    |
| 2001 | 659    |
| 2002 | 1216   |
| 2003 | 2353   |
| 2004 | 11259  |
| 2005 | 13570  |
| 2006 | 18045  |
| 2007 | 19094  |
| 2008 | 20827  |

## Year-wise Overseas Employment (1976 – 2008)



### Country-wise female migration in the recent years from Bangladesh

Country-wise overseas employment of female workers is shown below. Female migrants are employed mainly in the trades of housemaids, nurses and garment workers, etc. Table below shows in detail:

| Name of Country      | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Oman                 | 114     | 255     | 1050    | 937     | 11      |
| Ireland              | 03      | -       | 02      | -       | -       |
| Sudan                | 06      | 04      | 06      | 01      | -       |
| United Arab Emirates | 5396    | 4820    | 6474    | 4735    | 6715    |
| Jordan               | 1797    | 1139    | 29      | 21      | 416     |

| <b>Name of Country</b>   | <b>2004-05</b> | <b>2005-06</b> | <b>2006-07</b> | <b>2007-08</b> | <b>2008-09</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| United Kingdom           | 07             | 15             | 28             | 23             | 21             |
| Brunei Darussalam        | 03             | 02             | 02             | 06             | 02             |
| Northern Mariana Islands | 02             | 01             | -              | -              | -              |
| Syria                    | 19             | 26             | 10             | 01             | 73             |
| Malaysia                 | 02             | 05             | 141            | 622            | 908            |
| Saudi Arabia             | 4267           | 7765           | 7881           | 8188           | 758            |
| Maldives                 | 13             | 38             | 06             | 03             | 05             |
| Pakistan                 | 01             | -              | 02             | 07             | 06             |
| Palau                    | 02             | -              | -              | -              | -              |
| Kuwait                   | 1557           | 630            | 516            | 13             | -              |
| Cyprus                   | 08             | 01             | 03             | -              | 29             |
| Mauritius                | 499            | 564            | 891            | 588            | 766            |
| Singapore                | 08             | 06             | 09             | 20             | 55             |
| Libya                    | 03             | 36             | -              | 274            | 03             |
| Bahamas                  | 02             | -              | -              | -              | -              |
| Qatar                    | 01             | 07             | 03             | 05             | 04             |
| Lebanon                  | 02             | 110            | 1828           | 3777           | 13283          |
| Bermuda                  | 01             | -              | -              | -              | 01             |
| Bahrain                  | 1541           | 149            | 144            | 264            | 109            |
| Italy                    | 30             | 22             | 71             | 118            | 60             |
| Iran                     | 01             | -              | -              | 01             | -              |
| Hong Kong                | 01             | 01             | 03             | 07             | 10             |
| Thailand                 | -              | 01             | -              | -              | 01             |
| Fiji                     | -              | -              | 01             | -              | 01             |
| Spain                    | -              | -              | 01             | -              | 01             |
| Egypt                    | -              | -              | 01             | 01             | 02             |
| Canada                   | -              | -              | 02             | 02             | 04             |
| Japan                    | -              | -              | 03             | 01             | 01             |
| Poland                   | -              | -              | --             | 01             | -              |
| New Zealand              | -              | -              | -              | 02             | 04             |
| India                    | -              | -              | -              | 02             | 01             |
| Hungary                  | -              | -              | -              | 01             | -              |
| Czech Republic           | -              | -              | -              | 01             | 02             |
| Denmark                  | -              | -              | -              | -              | 01             |
| South Korea              | -              | -              | -              | -              | 01             |
| Latvia                   | -              | -              | -              | -              | 01             |
| Afghanistan              | -              | -              | -              | -              | 01             |
| Yemen                    | -              | -              | -              | -              | 14             |
| Tunisia                  | -              | -              | -              | -              | 04             |
| Netherlands              | -              | -              | -              | -              | 01             |

**Major countries of women migration from Bangladesh are as follows:**

1. UAE
2. Lebanon
3. Saudi Arabia
4. Jordan
5. Kuwait
6. Oman
7. Bahrain
8. Mauritius
9. Maldives

**District-wise migration from Bangladesh showing women in number**

|    | District     | Male  | Female | Male  | Female | Male  | Female | Male  | Female | Total  |
|----|--------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
|    |              | 2005  |        | 2006  |        | 2007  |        | 2008  |        |        |
| 1  | BAGERHAT     | 681   | 68     | 836   | 87     | 2735  | 100    | 3733  | 107    | 8347   |
| 2  | BANDARBAN    | 27    | 2      | 50    | 1      | 128   | 5      | 205   | 4      | 422    |
| 3  | BARGUNA      | 607   | 103    | 793   | 118    | 2329  | 124    | 2758  | 116    | 6948   |
| 4  | BARISAL      | 2833  | 426    | 3879  | 501    | 11322 | 520    | 11631 | 540    | 31652  |
| 5  | BHOLA        | 1196  | 62     | 1923  | 74     | 5078  | 85     | 6464  | 93     | 14975  |
| 6  | BOGRA        | 2301  | 106    | 3938  | 142    | 13744 | 171    | 13979 | 138    | 34519  |
| 7  | BRAHMANBARIA | 13275 | 417    | 22428 | 546    | 42941 | 581    | 36227 | 538    | 116953 |
| 8  | CHANDPUR     | 9956  | 314    | 16172 | 364    | 33624 | 350    | 33456 | 283    | 94519  |
| 9  | CHITTAGONG   | 21435 | 103    | 30063 | 144    | 55315 | 187    | 88219 | 166    | 195632 |
| 10 | CHUADANGA    | 682   | 34     | 926   | 68     | 4881  | 143    | 4613  | 86     | 11433  |
| 11 | COMILLA      | 26650 | 653    | 45459 | 823    | 89428 | 982    | 80173 | 773    | 244941 |
| 12 | COX'S BAZAR  | 1424  | 23     | 2000  | 48     | 4762  | 59     | 8173  | 41     | 16530  |
| 13 | DHAKA        | 12571 | 2356   | 17146 | 2921   | 36174 | 3273   | 33395 | 3757   | 111593 |
| 14 | DINAJPUR     | 349   | 28     | 525   | 29     | 1666  | 36     | 2305  | 49     | 4987   |
| 15 | FARIDPUR     | 3416  | 551    | 5925  | 1085   | 17296 | 1271   | 14690 | 1309   | 45543  |
| 16 | FENI         | 7008  | 50     | 10852 | 67     | 20500 | 83     | 23706 | 46     | 62312  |
| 17 | GAIBANDHA    | 708   | 30     | 1113  | 28     | 3639  | 43     | 4116  | 73     | 9750   |
| 18 | GAZIPUR      | 6614  | 1102   | 9591  | 1249   | 20622 | 1276   | 18254 | 1266   | 59974  |
| 19 | GOPALGANJ    | 963   | 61     | 1546  | 90     | 5235  | 121    | 6333  | 110    | 14459  |
| 20 | HABIGANJ     | 2768  | 97     | 4620  | 157    | 9560  | 233    | 14920 | 233    | 32588  |
| 21 | JAIPURHAT    | 343   | 31     | 619   | 27     | 2393  | 50     | 2363  | 35     | 5861   |
| 22 | JAMALPUR     | 1670  | 70     | 2450  | 83     | 7341  | 94     | 8768  | 91     | 20567  |
| 23 | JESSORE      | 1705  | 247    | 2585  | 405    | 13689 | 540    | 15418 | 427    | 35016  |
| 24 | JHALAKATHI   | 853   | 105    | 1127  | 113    | 2728  | 120    | 2806  | 128    | 7980   |
| 25 | JHENAIDAH    | 1484  | 92     | 1918  | 189    | 8579  | 328    | 9691  | 260    | 22541  |
| 26 | KHAGRACHARI  | 106   | 9      | 131   | 2      | 245   | 4      | 594   | 7      | 1098   |
| 27 | KHULNA       | 580   | 80     | 902   | 91     | 2889  | 141    | 3628  | 158    | 8469   |
| 28 | KISHOREGANJ  | 5024  | 408    | 8611  | 484    | 18817 | 545    | 16841 | 508    | 51238  |
| 29 | KURIGRAM     | 266   | 20     | 374   | 14     | 1427  | 16     | 1771  | 14     | 3902   |
| 30 | KUSHTIA      | 1650  | 65     | 2749  | 123    | 9896  | 159    | 11908 | 130    | 26680  |
| 31 | LAKSHMIPUR   | 5003  | 78     | 8461  | 92     | 19683 | 93     | 19457 | 71     | 52938  |

|    | District    | Male          | Female       | Male          | Female       | Male          | Female       | Male          | Female       | Total          |
|----|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
|    |             | 2005          |              | 2006          |              | 2007          |              | 2008          |              |                |
| 32 | LALMONIRHAT | 83            | 5            | 107           | 11           | 505           | 9            | 835           | 12           | 1567           |
| 33 | MADARIPUR   | 2397          | 246          | 3887          | 306          | 11234         | 295          | 11220         | 286          | 29871          |
| 34 | MAGURA      | 681           | 53           | 1007          | 79           | 4278          | 90           | 4957          | 74           | 11219          |
| 35 | MANIKGANJ   | 4968          | 1337         | 6930          | 1755         | 14684         | 1855         | 13502         | 2586         | 47617          |
| 36 | MEHERPUR    | 854           | 48           | 2358          | 79           | 8243          | 91           | 6829          | 44           | 18546          |
| 37 | MOULVIBAZAR | 5038          | 64           | 6820          | 113          | 10282         | 79           | 16693         | 87           | 39176          |
| 38 | MUNSHIGANJ  | 7467          | 533          | 12716         | 629          | 29448         | 604          | 25293         | 669          | 77359          |
| 39 | MYMENSINGH  | 5234          | 329          | 8559          | 420          | 19092         | 461          | 18957         | 423          | 53475          |
| 40 | NAOGAON     | 1228          | 61           | 1959          | 100          | 6904          | 157          | 6839          | 141          | 17389          |
| 41 | NARAIL      | 809           | 27           | 991           | 62           | 3923          | 60           | 4044          | 64           | 9980           |
| 42 | NARAYANGANJ | 5345          | 1061         | 8983          | 1352         | 22601         | 1449         | 19551         | 1488         | 61830          |
| 43 | NARSINGDI   | 7136          | 716          | 11051         | 825          | 26611         | 925          | 22175         | 968          | 70407          |
| 44 | NATORE      | 864           | 62           | 1313          | 60           | 4716          | 83           | 5198          | 69           | 12365          |
| 45 | NAWABGANJ   | 2820          | 40           | 6032          | 18           | 12619         | 43           | 10756         | 22           | 32350          |
| 46 | NETROKONA   | 512           | 46           | 810           | 54           | 2425          | 72           | 3539          | 110          | 7568           |
| 47 | NILPHAMARI  | 160           | 36           | 333           | 41           | 911           | 26           | 1317          | 36           | 2860           |
| 48 | NOAKHALI    | 8244          | 107          | 13686         | 134          | 29594         | 171          | 32936         | 119          | 84991          |
| 49 | PABNA       | 1925          | 102          | 2921          | 123          | 10829         | 162          | 12825         | 154          | 29041          |
| 50 | PANCHAGARH  | 45            | 20           | 62            | 7            | 297           | 8            | 380           | 6            | 825            |
| 51 | PATUAKHALI  | 617           | 117          | 819           | 120          | 2853          | 140          | 3154          | 177          | 7997           |
| 52 | PIROJPUR    | 1217          | 123          | 1785          | 160          | 4332          | 177          | 4272          | 161          | 12227          |
| 53 | RAJBARI     | 890           | 109          | 1536          | 159          | 5759          | 230          | 6174          | 227          | 15084          |
| 54 | RAJSHAHI    | 737           | 45           | 1457          | 59           | 4748          | 64           | 5420          | 87           | 12617          |
| 55 | RANGAMATI   | 38            | 6            | 73            | 1            | 161           | 5            | 310           | 5            | 599            |
| 56 | RANGPUR     | 568           | 27           | 833           | 26           | 3385          | 38           | 3806          | 57           | 8740           |
| 57 | SATKHIRA    | 778           | 49           | 990           | 77           | 4156          | 151          | 4147          | 135          | 10483          |
| 58 | SHARIATPUR  | 2467          | 300          | 4572          | 316          | 11637         | 315          | 12219         | 353          | 32179          |
| 59 | SHERPUR     | 345           | 52           | 428           | 56           | 1393          | 53           | 1949          | 50           | 4326           |
| 60 | SIRAJGANJ   | 1039          | 45           | 1388          | 72           | 6802          | 107          | 10586         | 135          | 20174          |
| 61 | SUNAMGANJ   | 2028          | 33           | 2346          | 66           | 5057          | 96           | 9096          | 72           | 18794          |
| 62 | SYLHET      | 7008          | 61           | 7823          | 72           | 13783         | 113          | 19755         | 93           | 48708          |
| 63 | TANGAIL     | 15044         | 366          | 25356         | 446          | 48094         | 468          | 42039         | 344          | 132157         |
| 64 | THAKURGAON  | 135           | 22           | 237           | 7            | 794           | 13           | 1294          | 16           | 2518           |
|    |             | <b>222869</b> | <b>14039</b> | <b>349880</b> | <b>17970</b> | <b>800816</b> | <b>20343</b> | <b>842662</b> | <b>20827</b> | <b>2289406</b> |

In analyzing district-wise figure of women migration it is observed that the following districts scores top positions in women migration:

1. BARISAL
2. BRAHMANBARIA
3. COMILLA
4. DHAKA
5. FARIDPUR
6. GAZIPUR
7. JESSORE
8. KISHOREGANJ

9. MADARIPUR
10. MANIKGANJ
11. MUNSHIGANJ
12. MYMENSINGH
13. NARAYANGANJ
14. SHARIATPUR

### **Wages of women migrants**

The average wages of Bangladeshi women workers ranges from US \$ 100.00 to US \$ 200.00 for house keeping workers. For cleaning workers, this amount varies from US \$ 100.00 to US \$ 150.00. In other professions like garment workers, nurses and some other categories of employment the wages are as good as the male workers. It also varies from country to country.

### **Benefits accrued through migration from Bangladesh**

Migration from Bangladesh facilitates the following socio-economic benefits of the migrant and the country as well:

1. Overseas employment reduces the unemployment problem
2. It leads to poverty alleviation.
3. Remittances enhance the economic condition of the migrants ensuring the economic development of the country. It is the highest amount of net foreign currency earning sector for the economy.
4. It helps reducing the frustration among the youths, drug addiction, social unrest, etc.
5. It develops the capability of investment for self-employment and entrepreneurship.
6. For the movement of migrant workers, business related to hotel, traveling, transportation, etc. gets momentum in the country.
7. It enhances the financial capability and purchasing power of the migrant workers.
8. It enhances transfer of technology through technical knowledge and expertise acquired by the migrant workers working abroad.
9. It creates motivation and develops awareness of the migrant workers towards cleanliness, hygienic environment, importance of literacy, discipline and uplift the standard of living.

### **Causes of women migration from Bangladesh**

Migration from Bangladesh is mostly caused by the following reasons:

1. Demand for cheap labour
2. Scope of better earning
3. Loyalty of Bangladeshi worker
4. Ageing population in western countries
5. Increased participation of women in the labour force in both countries of origin and employment
6. Poverty and insecurity of livelihood
7. Desire for a better living standard

## **Demand of women workers from Bangladesh**

Demands for Bangladeshi women workers are prevailing mostly in the middle-eastern countries. Demand in the countries of European Union and USA in the profession of caregiver also exists due to the ageing problem in these countries. Bangladesh has a good opportunity to be absorbed in this demanding employment market with significantly higher wages. To accrue this achievement, the basic need is training in specific trade and in communication skill. European and Nordic countries also feel the shortage of appropriate hands for baby care, old age care and sick persons care. A simple package of training to the mid-level educated women would be able to make them capable for employment in these countries. There are a large number of occupational areas where huge global demand exists. Bangladesh is trying to improve the skill and quality of the workforce to penetrate the markets of the developed countries.

## **Vulnerabilities of women in migration**

Sometimes migrant workers moving to various destinations both in regular and irregular channels, find themselves in vulnerable positions at several stages of their journey. This is mainly due to lack of information regarding migration and its formalities, cheating by some agencies handling migration and lack of professional skills and knowledge in the context of destination countries. Some Bangladeshi migrant workers leave the country through irregular channel, without valid travel and employment documents, requisite information on the working and living conditions, knowledge about the destination country and without having any idea regarding their protection and rights. This, coupled with the lack of communication in the language exposes them to risks of exploitation and abuses in the destination country. Women migrants are more vulnerable and the nature of their overseas job restricts them to avail services resulting in difficulties to get useful information regarding job security and availing emergency services in the overseas locations.

Multiple forms of discrimination may expose women migrant workers in the following situations:

1. As woman compared to a man
2. As a foreigner compared to a national
3. As a low skilled worker in an isolated work environment
4. Exploitation and abuse at three stages of migration, viz:
  - a. At recruitment
  - b. While in employment
  - c. On return at home country
5. There are some critical concerns for women migrant workers
6. Restrictions on freedom of movement and to get organized for protection of rights
7. Engagement in 3D works
8. Gender-based violence at workplace
9. Problem in social reintegration and very limited opportunities for investment at home
10. Lack of facilities in market oriented skills development for women
11. Less access to information, education and training than men
12. Economic exploitation by recruiting agents and other service providers
13. Non-recognition of women's work as real work and xenophobia against women migrant workers
14. Violations of the right to health, safety and privacy



15. Physical, sexual and psychological harassment
16. Possibility of Trafficking

### **Problems of women migration in Bangladesh**

Female migrants are usually facing the following problems:

1. Lack of a common understanding on a gender sensitive and right based approach to employment. This gap exists among both the aspiring migrant workers as well as all other stakeholders.
2. Access to information for potential migrant workers is inadequate.
3. Concentration of employment opportunities in a few low paid and unskilled conventional jobs limits their opportunity for overseas employment.
4. Lack of skill in using household appliances

Most of the female migrant workers are illiterate or less educated which lead them to more vulnerability of exploitation. The workers are not aware about the proper use of the remittance through savings and investment, which direct them towards similar economic conditions as previous status or sometimes worse than before.

### **Policy measures in women migration in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh adopted Overseas Employment Policy in 2006 to organise overseas employment sector and to ensure welfare of Bangladeshi workers abroad. It commits to protect the rights, dignity, and security of all migrant workers in and outside the country. Plan of action to implement the provisions in the overseas employment policy is yet to start. Bangladesh has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with KSA, Qatar, Oman, South Korea, Malaysia, UAE and Libya. Signing of MOU is under process with Bahrain and Jordan. Government arranges some welfare measures for the migrant workers and their family: This approach may ensure protection of rights of migrants to some extent.

The Recruiting agent is allowed to receive a maximum of Tk. 84,000.00 for male workers including air ticket as migration cost for middle eastern countries and Malaysia, non compliance of which make liable for punitive action, cancellation of license and forfeiture of security deposit, etc. This figure is Tk. 20,000.00 only for women migrant workers in house keeping trade. The employer provides air ticket.

Government has recently adopted 9-point strategies to ensure sustainable safe migration in which safe women migration has been emphasized.

1. Exploring new markets for overseas employment.
2. Expansion of existing labour markets.
3. Skill development training to promote export of more skilled workers.
4. Special efforts to emphasise export from downtrodden people.
5. Strengthening welfare activities for the migrant workers.
6. Establishment of more transparency in the recruitment process.
7. Efforts to increase the flow of remittance through proper channel.
8. Special focus on export of female workers.
9. Strengthening of capabilities of Bangladesh Missions abroad.

## **Government has promulgated a new circular to facilitate women migration process.**

The provisions in this circular are as follows:

1. Strengthening training for women workers.
2. Establishment of safe houses in the Bangladesh Mission abroad.
3. Monitoring of the workers in housekeeping by Missions.
4. Special briefing for the women migrants.
5. Awareness campaign for safe channel of women migration.
6. Reporting in the mission by the Recruiting agencies about migration of women workers.

CED<sup>1</sup>AW is an international tool to ensure women rights in their overall working life. Its major features are as follows:

Article 1 : Gender based discrimination

Article 5 : Non-discriminatory gender role

Article 6 : Trafficking

Article 10 : Equal rights to education

Article 11 : Equal rights to employment

Article 12 : Equal rights to health, safety and privacy

Article 15 : Equality before law, laws related to freedom of movement, association, choice of residence and domicile

Article 16 : Equal rights within the family including property rights

Provisions of CEDAW may also be useful in protecting the rights of migrant workers but unfortunately these are not complied by the migrant receiving countries.

### **Remittances from women migrants**

Remittance is the main benefit accrued from migration to the family of the migrant workers. Remittance figure attained US\$ 9.01 billion in 2008 in Bangladesh from the migrant workers. In 2009, it is US \$ 7.89 b in first nine months. Amount of remittance constitutes 11% of GDP<sup>2</sup>, 5 times of ODA<sup>3</sup> and 10 times of FDI<sup>4</sup>. It occupies the highest level of net foreign exchange earning sector of the country. Remittance increases with the expanding migration process and accelerating movement of people for overseas employment market. Some study predicts an ambitious achievement for the flow of US \$ 30b remittance by 2015 in Bangladesh. To attain this level of remittance, skill development training and more women participation in the migration process are two essential factors among others. The countries like Philippine, Sri Lanka and Indonesia are sending more women workers, thus they ensures earning more remittance through women migrants. Remittance from the women workers constitutes a considerable amount, which is not identified properly. It is noted that women workers save more from their income and remit more percentage of income. Women prefer investment of remittances in education and health of the family members.

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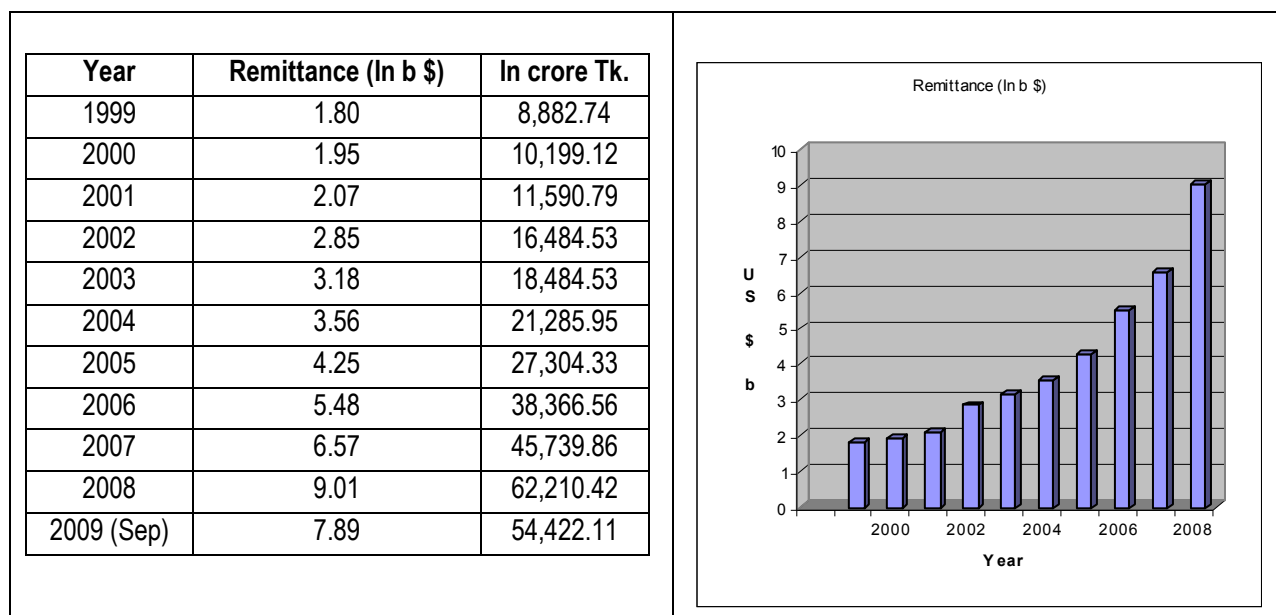
<sup>1</sup> CEDAW stands for Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

<sup>2</sup> GDP is Gross Domestic Products

<sup>3</sup> ODA is Overseas Development Assistance

<sup>4</sup> FDI is Foreign Direct Investment

## Year-wise remittance statistics



## Awareness Campaign of women migrant workers

Awareness campaign and information dissemination are identified as two major contributors towards elimination of problems in the overall women migration. BMET arranges regular pre-departure briefing sessions to make them aware about agreement of service conditions, working environment, culture, wages and other benefits, remittance system, local language of the host country, etc. To develop awareness on the use of legal channel of migration, campaign through electronic and print media is also going on.

## Creation of facilities

Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) has arranged awareness campaign and other promotional activities in relation to stimulate the conception regarding safe migration. BMET is implementing some projects in collaboration with RMMRU<sup>5</sup>, UNIFEM<sup>6</sup>, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) in this regard. Following components are specifically implemented in these projects:

1. Mass awareness raising for the women migrant workers and general masses including all stakeholders on safe women migration from Bangladesh.
2. Establishment of Women Migrant Resource Centre at BMET head office, Dhaka to provide all sorts of information regarding safe women migration.
3. Preparation of Leaflets, Posters, Brochure, Information-booklets, etc. for awareness raising and information dissemination.
4. Preparation of Short Docu-drama for TV publicity and Awareness through Radio.
5. Awareness raising Workshops at district level for safe women migration.

<sup>5</sup> RMMRU (Refugee and Migratory Movement and Research Unit) is a research organization on migration working under Dhaka University

<sup>6</sup> UNIFEM is United Nations Fund for Women

## 6. Orientation for the Officers in charge of Probashi Kalyan Desks at DC<sup>7</sup> Offices.

Some NGOs, like BRAC<sup>8</sup>, Manusher Jonyo Foundation<sup>9</sup>, BOMSA<sup>10</sup>, WARBE<sup>11</sup>, etc. also operating some progress regarding awareness raising. Even that all these approaches are insufficient in comparison to the required ones.

### **Skill training for Women in foreign employment: Need and present perception**

The issues of poverty alleviation and sustained economic growth emphasize the human capability development. Development process in Bangladesh is accompanied by planned human resource development activities. Women workforce constitutes a considerable component towards sustainable economic and social development of the country. In the context of the globalization process, it is felt necessary to develop appropriate human resources to meet the demand of international market aiming at improving effective skill and knowledge. In a resource-poor country with a big population like Bangladesh, utilization of human potential has been adopted as a development strategy to use the real resources for Improvement of productivity. To reap the fruit of technological advancement, Bangladesh is preparing to build up skilled workforce. In Bangladesh, there exists significantly excess supply of unskilled labour, on the other hand a serious dearth of labour with specific skills.

Skill development training is an essential approach towards improving the skill and knowledge to perform their job more efficiently and enhance the capability to cope with the adverse situation in the country of destination. Training can upgrade their behavioral nature and attitude to face the every day life in a disciplined manner. This development will ensure their better and long lasting stay with the employer. It increases the wage level and enhances their employability. Trained manpower always deserves better demand and acquainted with fewer problems. Philippine and Indonesia have well organized training system for upgrading the skill of women workers in house keeping trade. Gradual transformation of these huge unskilled workers into an organized trained workforce will create a better image of Bangladeshi women migrants and will help in branding Bangladesh with a substantial demand of skilled manpower. Its ultimate effect will result in higher level of earning of remittance and ensures better standard of living.

In the context of the existing potential for employment of women workers in the developed countries, Bangladesh is trying to create infrastructural facility to train the women workers in their relevant trades for the overseas employment market. Although there exists a good number of public and private training facilities for local market in some traditional skill like garments, computer, electronics, etc. only two technical training centers under the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training provide quality training on house keeping trade. It also faces pressure from the outgoing workers for overseas employment.

Bangladesh is earning a significant amount of foreign currency each year by exporting manpower to Middle East & many other parts of the world. If it can be made possible to export more skilled workers instead of unskilled labour, foreign currency earning would be much more. Ensuring employment of more skilled workers, remittance can be enhanced to a great extent through their higher wages. Wages of a skilled worker is three to four times than that of an unskilled one. It also creates better image of the country. The need for skilled manpower both at home & abroad is increasing day by day and in the context of this ever-increasing need, vocational training activities should be

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<sup>7</sup> Probashi Kalyan Desks at DC are the welfare desks established at the District Commissioner's Offices in 64 districts

<sup>8</sup> BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) is a leading NGO of the country

<sup>9</sup> Manusher Jonno Foundation is an NGO

<sup>10</sup> BOMSA is an NGO working with migration and development

<sup>11</sup> WARBE is Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees working in relation to migration

expanded to face competitiveness in the world market. To create more employability, Language and soft skills of aspiring migrants also need to be improved. BMET along with other organizations develops human resource by providing vocational skill training through its institutional capacities.

### **Re-integration of women migrant workers**

Migrant workers return to the country after completion of the agreement of two to three years. Normally they come back with skill and experience. It has an impact on the economy for absorption of the returned migrants in the domestic employment market. In a good number of cases utilization of remittance for the benefit of the family are not ensured properly. There is lack of opportunity for investment and appropriate counseling in this regard. There are very few approaches towards effective social and economic re-integration of returnee migrants particularly for women both from the government and private or NGO sector. This issue is to be considered as one of the most important ones.

### **Issues in gender-sensitiveness of migration**

With the increasing importance of migration, it is necessary to maximize the contribution of manpower export for economic growth and poverty reduction of the country. It is now well accepted that the safest, shortest and lasting route to economic emancipation for Bangladesh lies in manpower export sector. The total migration process needs to be addressed with an integrated approach towards creating a congenial environment for safe migration for all.

Almost half of the population of the country constitutes women folk with equal potential to contribute towards the economic development of the country. The overall human resource development of the nation is not possible keeping them outside the mainstream of development activities. It is essential to eliminate the disparity between women and man to ensure alleviation of poverty. To achieve the target of faster national development, it is important to analyze and explore the potential of women resources.

Bangladesh is committed to adopt policies aiming to take advantage of the opportunities of globalization. If Bangladesh can enhance the skills and productivity of her labour force providing appropriate training she will also be able to achieve greater success to participate in global employment market. Economic empowerment at the micro-level is the basic pre-requisite for upholding the status of women and to reduce the discrimination among men and women in achieving the millennium development goal (MDG) and reducing poverty particularly for the women. This will be possible through systematic export of women power.

Female labour force is appreciably increasing day by day. Country's development activities may get momentum with the active participation of women. An integrated program should be adopted to prepare the vast womenfolk for employment generation specifically for the poor and disadvantaged women. There exists a good demand of women workers in the overseas employment market particularly in the jobs of nurses, garment workers, care givers and house keepers.

Protection of rights of the migrant workers and establishment of safe migration management may be possible on the smooth flow of information in four phases of migration. There is need to provide orientation to the aspirant migrant workers about all necessary information to reduce migration through irregular channels and protecting the migrants against exploitation. This will enrich the workers providing the migrants with knowledge, information and skills

essential for the better management of the entire migration process including their re-integration. This campaign is needed for Pre-migration, Post-migration and also for Returnee Women Migrants. In the existing situation of women migration it may be notably mentioned that recognition of women's visibility in overseas employment and remittance through gender-disaggregated data should be established. Successful migration can be ensured only when feminisation of migration is practically possible.

Empowering the women migrant workers may be possible through the following measures:

1. Simplifying and regularizing the migrant women's departure with adequate and accurate information.
2. Bilateral agreements between the governments of sending and receiving countries ensuring their rights and safety.
3. Gender sensitive rights perspective overseas employment policies in both sending and receiving countries.
4. Compliance to the international human rights frameworks and instruments.
5. Adequate skills training before placement abroad.

### **Recommendations:**

Awareness campaign and information dissemination are two major tools for ensuring safe migration of women workers through raising their awareness and knowledge. This program may be designed at pre-decision making, pre-employment and pre-departure stages. The major contents of the information may be as follows:

1. Information on legal migration cost
2. Minimum wages in different countries
3. Facilities and problems of migration in various countries.
4. Cost and benefit analysis of migration
5. Legal channel of migration
6. Do's and don'ts in the migration process
7. Training opportunities and requirement for the job
8. Checking of papers from BMET

Economic and Social re-integration of the returnee migrant is another important issue particularly for the woman migrant workers. This may be facilitated through the following approaches:

1. SME information regarding sector selection, business formation and other operational info.
2. Information on micro credit facilities
3. Information on saving procedures
4. New job opportunities abroad
5. Relevant job information in the country
6. Various training opportunities for further skill development

Returnee women migrants, those have been faced problems in the country of workplace, assistance may be provided for reporting to police, filing complaints to BMET & special courts and liaison with law agencies.

Women can play a pivotal role in the development of human resources with appropriate competence level. To achieve the target of faster national development, it is important to analyze and explore the potential of women

resources. It needs special emphasis to dedicate more public funds to skill development particularly for womenfolk in the fiscal as well as in the perspective plan. To meet the future demand for skill training it is essential to encourage private sector and NGOs in a big way in the vocational training field. The focus of world economy has been changed from the cheap unskilled labor to highly skilled and organized workforces. In the coming decade, computerization is becoming an utmost importance. The international market for computer-related services is also expanding at an unprecedented rate. The nature and extent of skills in the labour force should change accordingly. The main thought is to be given on developing human resources through institutional and informal training. This also needs international recognition or certification of the training courses. With these views, skill development training program of women workers should be strengthen and be made effective to cater to the needs of the overseas market.

Specific demand may be explored for women workers in different trades other than house keeping, comprehensive program may be adopted in this regard in line with the implementation of 9-point strategy paper formulated for migration development.

A study may be conducted to assess the present situation of the women migration, their problems, migration cost, socio-economic profile and the use of remittances. The overall objective of the study will be identification of the overall comprehensive scenario on the migration of women workers from Bangladesh.

#### **The specific information may be collected to draw**

- 1) The socio-economic profile of women migrant workers.
- 2) Pattern of remittance sending.
- 3) Use of remittance and its impact on standard of living.
- 4) Problems faced in the migration process.
- 5) Migration cost and the role of intermediaries.
- 6) Work load and working environment.
- 7) Risks and vulnerabilities in women migration.
- 8) Problem faced by women workers in the destination countries and work place.
- 9) Problem faced by women workers in economic and social reintegration.
- 10) Needs of training.

#### **Projects may be taken to facilitate the following activities:**

- To arrange orientation programs for pre-decision making, pre-employment and pre-departure stages of women migrants.
- To organize awareness program.
- To facilitate remittance transfer through formal channel.
- To provide personalized adequate info support for returnee women migrants to be an entrepreneur through SME/Micro credit possibilities.