



A Newsletter on Refugee and Migratory Movements

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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE VULNERABILITY OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE GULF

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Several factors in the home country and the receiving country contribute to the vulnerability of the migrant worker. These factors are present in the entire process of migration, and may involve different types of intermediaries at different points. The following factors may be considered as the major ones:

- a. Misinformation or lack of information
- b. Fraudulent practices of agents, in sending as well as receiving countries
- c. Dependence on employer or kafeel
- d. Gender of worker or type of work done
- e. Weakness of legal protection, and laws that do not cover all workers
- f. Impotence of sending country governments
- g. Illegal visa status

Each of the above factors are discussed below with illustration from previous research.

Misinformation or Lack of Information

It has frequently been reported that migrants to the Gulf are subject to a large amount of misinformation. Informal channels such as friends and relatives and formal channels such as recruitment agents both tend to exaggerate the benefits and perks from the job that the migrant is likely to get. Also, the increasing cost of living is rarely mentioned by those providing information. Friends and relatives do not want to appear as failure and therefore one behaviour that is typical is to carry home many gifts during visits, another behaviour is to spend a lot of money during these trips on obvious consumption. The message that this sends to the prospective migrants is that the rate of saving in the Gulf is high which fuels the motivation to migrate for work. However, the new migrant often find the situation to be less rosy than painted by the

informers. A survey of migrant workers in Kuwait in 1996 showed that one-third of the migrant workers to Kuwait found the salary and conditions of the jobs to be worse than they had been told. The misinformation was reported to be especially large in case of those who migrated through recruitment agents.

Fraudulent Practices of Agents, in Sending as well as Receiving Countries

The major practice that affects many migrants adversely is the overcharging of the fees for arranging a work visa. Most sending countries in South and Southeast Asia have devised a legal system and published rules and procedures specifying the fees to be charged. In reality, however, the agent often charges a much higher amount than licensed. The migrant worker is sometimes a party to the exploitation since he is willing to pay the higher fee in order to get the visa.

Part of the reason for the higher charge is the fact that the intermediary in the host country (recruitment agents or private sponsor) charges a certain amount of fee, which may be illegal. An elaborate systems of visa trading exists in the Gulf. Through these systems, the prospective sponsor sells a work visa to the migrant. The charge for the visa often varies according the nationality of the migrant seeking a visa.

A second fraudulent practice is the frequent presence of two contracts, one that is presented to the “protector” of migrants in the sending country, and one that is the actual contract the migrant receives once in the host country. The amount of wages and work condition stipulated in the latter contract are frequently worst than the ones presented to the protector who gives approval for he migrant to leave.

A third fraudulent practice is abandonment of the migrant in a third country or territory, other than the one the migrant was destined for. Cases of Bangladeshi women stranded in Pakistan have been reported, for example.

Dependence on Employer or *Kafeel*

It is well known that once in the host country, the migrant becomes dependent on the sponsor in several ways. To begin with, no expatriate can reside or work in the Gulf without a local sponsor who may be a government agency (e.g., the university), a private company or business (e.g., a cleaning company) or a private individual (e.g., sponsor of a housemaid). The rules frequently stipulate that the migrant workers can not change his/her sponsor before two years. In case of changing the sponsor, the initial sponsor must give a transfer paper to the employee and some sponsors may not be willing to do so. The sponsor almost always keeps the passport of the employee, with the exception of some professional. No individual who has a work visa can leave country without an exit permit, or permission of employer and release of the passport. The freedom of movement within the host country may be restricted by the employer in case of some occupations such as those of housemaids.

While some of the above practice may be seen as minor nuisances, the major dependency of the employee consists of the fact that the latter has only limited choices in case of non-payment, or delay in payment, of his/her wages. The above is more likely to happen in the private sector. The legal system in the Gulf countries provide for the redress of grievances against the employer. However, the migrant worker is usually not well versed with the producers and in case of new arrivals the lack of Arabic language is also a handicap. There are almost no labour unions of expatriate workers.

Gender of Worker or Type of Work Done

An occupation that may be singled out as one that maximizes the potential vulnerability of a migrant worker is that of a housemaid. There are several reasons for the above. First, the domestic service visa on which a housemaid works is not covered by the labour laws in some Gulf countries such as Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Second, a housemaid lives and works in the privacy of a home and is relatively isolated and secluded. Finally, the gender of the housemaid makes her more vulnerable to abuse of various types, including sexual harassment and in a few cases, crimes such as rape. Data on offenses against migrant workers are frequently absent. Philippines is one of the few sending countries that

maintain some statistics on reported cases of complaints against employers. It was reported for 1994 that among the 11,946 cases reported to the Philippines administration looking after migrant welfare, 3.4% were cases of rape, sexual assault, or pregnancy.

In case of abuse the housemaid sometimes escapes and runs away from the house she is working in. Runway maids present a special problem. Embassies of some countries set up shelters to accommodate them. In Kuwait, for example, India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines have shelters for runway maids. However, the Sri Lankan embassy is hardly equipped to handle the 400 runway maids seeking refuge. The embassy allows them to stay at its premises, but really lack the sources to house or feed them. Some kind of an insurance scheme that would provide resources to manage such cases is urgently needed.

Another occupation that puts the worker (male or female) at relative disadvantage is unskilled work. Not only the salary for this type of work is the lowest but the worker is easily dispensable. In the Gulf, almost half of the migrants from South Asian countries, including Bangladesh are in such occupations. These workers are in abundant supply and overtime, the wages have actually declined. Many of them try to augment their income through part-time jobs, such as washing cars. By doing so, they put themselves at the risk of deportation if caught since they are not allowed to work anywhere except for their sponsor. Some unskilled workers take up jobs as part-time helpers on a daily wage basis. Again, this is illegal and they may be deported if caught.

Weakness of Legal Protection, and Laws that Do Not Cover all Workers

As mentioned above, the legal system that exists in the host country for the protection of the workers is weak. For those on work visas, the legal system does make certain provisions for protection. However, the mechanisms that would enable the worker to make use of such laws are either ill developed or non-existent. All administration procedures and court cases are in Arabic language and for workers not well versed in the language, obtaining any kind of justice is very difficult. Also, the worker does not have the time to pursue a court case since many work on daily wages and would have to lose a day's pay if absent from work.

Laws in some countries do not cover all categories of workers. Domestic servants, males and females, are an example of such lack of coverage. Men who work as drivers, cooks, gardeners or helpers in private homes

are in the category of domestic service. The absence of labour laws for such workers further reduces the possibility of their protection.

Impotence of Sending Country Governments

South Asian countries who send migrant to the Gulf are often competing with each other since the supply of workers is much larger than the absorptive capacity of the host country markets. The recent decline in oil prices has intensified this competition and has been driving wages down. At the same time, remittance received from the migrant workers are very major source of foreign exchange earnings for several countries. Furthermore, politicians and officials sometimes try to gain personal or political advantage by sending workers abroad.

In this competitive labour market, the sending country governments do not wish to jeopardize the cordial relations with the host country government by being too vocal about the occasional mistreatment of their workers. Most sending countries therefore do not have any proactive programmes for the protection of their nationals in the Gulf. In cases of dispute the sending country embassy intervenes mostly with the objective of finding an amicable solution through negotiation and without going to the court. Sometimes, the embassy staff are not competent to represent or defend the rights of the workers.

Illegal Visa Status

Perhaps the most serious factor that makes a migrant worker vulnerable is an illegal visa status. One factor that perpetuates the demand for foreign workers consists of a hidden economy whereby private sponsors (kafeels) engaged in visa trading in the host countries are the major beneficiaries. In addition to the initial amount paid for a visa, a worker must pay the *kafeel* an agreed upon sum money to renew the residence visa, usually every two years. Some benefits of this system also accrue to intermediaries in the sending countries. The selling, or buying, of a visa illegal. In Kuwait, the procurement of a work visa from a kafeel willing to sell it does not guarantee a job. If a migrant worker arrives without job, he tries to find one through the social network, or in response to advertisements. The kafeel must give him a release to transfer the residence status to the new employer. However, a transfer can not be made unless a person has been in the country for at least two years. Thus, the migrant takes up the job for an employer who is not the kafeel. This situation makes him an illegal worker,

and may result in lower wages than he might have earned otherwise.

Another situation in which the migrant becomes an illegal worker is by overstaying one's permitted duration. While some illegal workers have been present in the Gulf historically, stern action to deal with them was taken during the last two years. Each of six GCC countries announced periods of amnesty during which workers could either leave or regularize their stay. Punishments their living in the Gulf illegally include fines ranging from US \$ 240 in Oman to several thousand in Saudi Arabia, and jail terms ranging from one to six months in different countries. A tabulation of various data sources indicated that more than one million persons were repatriated during 1997 – 1998 from the GCC countries as a result of the amnesty programs.

Concluding Remarks

The Gulf migrants need protection in the sending as well as receiving country. There is a need to evolve legislation to provide such protection in countries where certain categories of workers are not covered by the laws. Agreements between the sending and receiving countries about ensuring a minimum wage and living standards for migrant workers would be highly desirable but seem unlikely at the present time. Sometimes, minimum wage standards may exist as part of receiving country legislation but are not implemented due to a tight labour market where many migrants are competing for limited jobs. One may present humanitarian arguments advocacy is likely to be at odds with the labour market realities. Even when they have grievances and the labour law of the host country theoretically protects them, workers rarely get organized or complain unless the situation becomes really miserable, such as not getting paid for 4-6 months, getting severely beaten, or raped. The only long term solution for improving the condition of migrant workers is development of the sending country so that workers are not pushed out but can choose the terms on which they are willing to migrate.

Dr. Nasra Shah is Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kuwait. The paper was presented at a conference organised by RMMRU.

SECOND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP FOR

COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ACTIVISTS ON LABOUR MIGRATION PROCESS

Over the last few years a number of research projects were undertaken by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU). Findings of these initiatives suggest that one of the most neglected fields was advocacy to raise awareness about the existing reality of the labour migration process. This prompted RMMRU to embark on policy advocacy and develop training programmes for the protection and promotion of the rights of the migrant workers. The first such workshop was organised in Dhaka on 27 – 28 April 2001.

RMMRU organised the second *Awareness Campaign Workshop for Community Leaders and Activists on Labour Migration Process* at BIAM on 3-4 November 2001. It was a part of the process of developing a training module for raising awareness among the people at the grassroots in order to minimise the cost and maximise the benefit of orderly labour migration from Bangladesh. The two-day workshop was arranged for the *Union Parishad* chairmen and members, *imams* (religious leaders), and grassroots NGO workers. Researchers, government officials, returnee migrants, legal experts and bank officials were present as discussants in the workshop. A wide range of issues was covered in seven working sessions. These included the national and global context of labour migration, migration procedure, information about the host country, rights and duties of migrant workers in the country of employment, the process of sending remittance, post-return rehabilitation and reintegration, trafficking in women and children and identification of the method of information flow about migration.

The workshop began with Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui, Director, Research and Training of RMMRU, explaining the need for creating awareness about different aspects of labour migration. Chaired by Dr. C R Abrar, Coordinator of RMMRU, the first working session highlighted the national and international dimensions of labour migration. Dr. Syed Refaat Ahmed, lawyer and researcher, discussed the nature and extent and typology of migration. The session also focused on the need for identification of problems by the aspirant migrant workers in the recruitment process and proper documentation. Anisur Rahman Khan, Secretary General of Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE), identified various problems that a migrant worker

faces during migration process, in the host country, and after return. Professor Nazrul Islam, Chairperson of Virology of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, spoke on the need for reducing the vulnerability migrant workers to HIV / AIDS.

The second working session highlighted the role of government and recruiting agencies in the migration process. Dr. Nurul Islam, Project Director of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), discussed the role of the Labour Ministry and BMET in maintaining rules, regulation and implementation of migration policy. Mr. Ghulam Mustafa, Secretary General, Bangladesh Association for International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), explained the nature of involvement of legal and illegal private recruiting agencies to recruitment process. The cost benefit analysis of labour migration was discussed by Dr. C R Abrar. He touched upon the issues of rationale, expenditure and output of migration in his presentation. Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), chaired the session.

The third working session dealt with country specific information on climate, legal rights and duties, customs and culture of the major labour receiving countries. The session was chaired by Mr. M A Mannan, Senior Vice President of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd., and covered Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Singapore, Malaysia and South Korea. In this session the participants were informed that on many occasions migrant workers face difficulty to adapt to local norms, customs, food, climate, culture and condition of workplace in the host country. Presentations were mostly based on the knowledge and experience gained by the returnee migrant workers associated with WARBE and government officials who at one time or the other were posted in these countries.

The fourth working session dealt on legal protection for migrant workers in the receiving countries. S M Akram, Research Associate of RMMRU, in his presentation dealt with the rights and obligations of the migrant workers under national and international law. Masood Aziz, Director General, West Asia, Central Asia, Africa and Welfare of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discussed the role of Bangladesh missions abroad in providing welfare and legal support to the

migrant workers. Saiful Haque Asif, Vice Chairman of Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE), presented a case study of Milon, a Bangladeshi migrant worker in South Korea.

The fifth working session discussed different aspects of remittance transfer of migrant workers. M A Mannan, Senior Vice President of Islami Bank, discussed various implications of sending remittances through formal and informal channels. Nurullah Azad of RMMRU spoke on the effective use of remittance and role of private banks and micro finance institutions in the rehabilitation of the returnees through proper investment and utilisation of money sent by migrant workers. Saiful Haque Asif emphasised the rationale behind the creation of migrant workers' associations and their role in promoting welfare of the migrant workers.

In view of its linkage with orderly labour migration, trafficking in women and children and human smuggling was taken up for discussion. This session was chaired by M Shahidul Haque of International Organization for Migration (IOM), and comprised of three presentations. Dr. Sumaiya Khair made a

thematic discussion on trafficking and human smuggling. The causes and consequences of trafficking were explained by Syeda Rozana Rashid. The session concluded with Farah Kabir's presentation on methods of avoiding and combating trafficking.

An open discussion on the identification of the process of free flow of information on labour migration was arranged in the last working session of the workshop. Coordinated by Dr. C R Abrar, the session explored possible role of the government in dissemination of information about the migration process. The participants at the session also discussed the methods through which the community leaders can reach the message to the aspirant migrant workers and warn them against possible exploitative and fraudulent activities. The two-day workshop was formally concluded with speeches made by the special guests, M Shahidul Haque of IOM and Charles Nuttall of The British Council.

Reporter:
Syeda Rozana Rashid

Seminar Urges for UPHOLDING THE SPIRIT OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Participants in a seminar expressed the view that humanitarian principles must be upheld in all armed conflicts. They also stated that the spirit of the Geneva Conventions should be respected. These views were expressed in a day-long seminar titled *International Humanitarian Law*, jointly organised by International Committee for Red Cross, Delhi, Faculty of Law, University of Dhaka and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), at BIAM on 5 March 2002. Dr. Kamal Hossain, former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, chaired the inaugural session.

The first working session titled *An Overview of International Humanitarian Law* introduced the participants to the basic principles of international humanitarian law (IHL). Ram Doraiswamy, Legal Officer, ICRC Regional Delegation, New Delhi, conducted the session. He began with an introduction of the concept of 'Use of Force' and explained that consensus among European states for restricting the use of force, resulted in the emergence of IHL. The evolution of the process of IHL took off in 1864 with the enunciation of first Geneva law and culminated in

1977 through compilation of Additional Protocols to Geneva and Hague laws. Geneva laws enjoy the highest number of ratification after UNCRC. So far, 189 countries have ratified these conventions.

In a separate presentation Doraiswamy dealt with sources and origins of IHL. In order to illustrate the role of IHL in controlling the means and methods of warfare, he discussed seven fundamental principles of IHL. These are:

- life and dignity of persons who do not or can no longer take part in the hostilities should be protected;
- an adversary who surrenders cannot be killed or wounded under any circumstance;
- the wounded and sick must be collected and cared for by the party to the conflict which has them in power;
- combatants and civilians captured by the adverse party should be protected against all acts of violence of reprisal with full respect shown to their life, dignity, personal rights, and their political, religious and other convictions;

- universal basic judicial guarantees from physical or mental torture or cruel or degrading corporal punishment;
- ban on methods and means of warfare that are likely to cause unnecessary losses or excessive suffering; and
- compulsive responsibility of parties to distinguish between civilian population and combatants at all times in order to spare the civilian population and civilian property.

The second session on *International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights* was conducted by Dr. T M R Chowdhury. He highlighted the differences and similarities of IHL and human rights laws. He argued that human rights have earned greater relevance in respect of IHL since 1970s. That decade witnessed intrastate conflicts outnumbering interstate conflicts both in terms propensity and ratio. This was a stark new reality for IHL, which, up until then, contained only one article on intrastate conflict. That lone article was a direct consequence of the Spanish Civil War. Lack of proper international legal regime left people unprotected, combatants and civilians alike in intra-state conflict situations. To mend the situation, two additional protocols were framed in 1977. The second of them, Additional Protocol II is wholly devoted to non-international or intra-state conflict termed as 'Low-Intensity Conflict'. Dr. Chowdhury then discussed some key features of the protocol.

Protection of Defenseless Persons in International Humanitarian Law was the topic of third working session conducted by Dr. Borhan Uddin Khan, Associate Professor, Department of Law, University of Dhaka. He started the session with clarification of two

key terms of the issue: 'Protection' and 'Defenseless Persons'. The term 'Protection' means to guard 'defenseless persons' against measures that could do them harm: violence, deprivation of their basic rights, attacks on their physical or moral being. It also includes, assistance to them with what they lack to maintain a minimum level of existence: food, clothing, care and shelter, moral, intellectual and spiritual relief. Assistance and protection are twin pillars of relief, he

added. 'Defenseless Persons' are those who do not participate in the hostilities or who are no longer taking part in the hostilities. Thus, they may include sick, wounded, shipwrecked members of the armed forces, prisoners of war, and those who did not take part in the hostilities but provided support to armed forces and civilians who never took part in hostilities. Dr. Khan stated that the first three Geneva Conventions deal with protection of the combatants and the fourth Geneva Convention deals with the protection of civilians. In the international humanitarian law the protection of defenseless persons is twofold: protection of defenseless persons in international armed conflict and protection of defenseless persons in non-international armed conflict. Then Dr. Khan discussed principles and mechanisms of general and specific protection for different categories of defenseless persons.

The programme was participated by faculty members of Departments of International Relations and Law from Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Islamic Universities, and representatives from Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Reporter:
K N M Hossainul Haque

- **life and dignity of persons who do not or can no longer take part in the hostilities should be protected;**
- **the wounded and sick must be collected and cared for by the party to the conflict which has them in power;**
- **combatants and civilians captured by the adverse party should be protected against all acts of violence of reprisal with full respect shown to their life, dignity, personal rights, and their political, religious and other convictions;**
- **universal basic judicial guarantees from physical or mental torture or cruel or degrading corporal punishment;**
- **compulsive responsibility of parties to distinguish between civilian population and combatants at all times in order to spare the civilian population and civilian property.**

Call for Establishing a NATIONAL NETWORK TO MINIMISE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Participants at a workshop urged for minimising violence against women in this society. They identified the factors responsible for the widespread nature of violence against the female members of the society, and discussed on the need to develop an operational and sustainable network to eliminate such violence. The discussion took place at a two-day workshop organised on *Violence against Women: International and Bangladesh Perspective*, at the British Council Auditorium, Dhaka on 11-12 November 2001. This event was part of Gender and Development-Higher Education Link Programme with the University of North London, UK, and funded by the Department for International Development (DfID), UK and managed by the British Council. The workshop took place based on two research papers on *Male Perception on Violence against Women in Bangladesh*, one conducted in Dhaka and the other in Rajshahi. The two studies were conducted by two groups of young researchers – one from the Department of Sociology of Rajshahi University, and the other from the Young Researchers' Forum of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Dhaka University. Professor Kazi Tobarak Hossain, Department of Sociology, Rajshahi University, and Dr. Sumaiya Khair, Department of Law, Dhaka University, supervised the research teams respectively.

The first session of the workshop started with a presentation by Dr. Mahmuda Islam of Women for Women. In her paper Dr. Islam underscored different types of violence occurring in different situations such as households, public places, work places and educational institutions. She identified that historically existing unequal power relation between men and women is responsible for violence against women. She viewed that domestic violence is widespread in our society, but in most cases, they remain unexposed. She further added that though home should be the safest place, women's greatest risk comes from their partners. Dr. Islam stated that due to definitional gap, violence such as verbal abuse is not considered as violence in our society. She also stated that marital rape, psychological abuse, emotional torture lead towards higher rates of suicide. Dr. Islam mentioned other forms of violence like forced marriage, forced prostitution, and dowry as causes of increased rate of suicide. She identified cultural, economic, legal and political factors that are responsible for such violence.

All these have adverse effects on physical and mental health of the victim, leading to non-fatal or fatal consequences. She mentioned that such kind of violence may have adverse impact on the children's behaviour. She urged for minimising violence against women through rethinking of men's role in domestic as well as workplace behaviour.

Abdullah L Baki, Additional Superintendent of Police, Dhaka, stated that there had been no specific definition of violence against women up to 1980. He observed that since then migration of women for jobs abroad put them in a better economic condition. The potential grooms began to demand more dowry from the families of these women. This led to increased rate of physical offence on females. Baki described how new law specifically addressing the issue of violence against women and children was developed. He also informed that sometimes the Women and Child Repression Act 1997 is often misused, which led to an amendment in 2000.

In the second session, findings of the two research studies were presented. In her brief presentation, Dr Sumaiya Khair highlighted some of the major findings of the field investigation in Dhaka City. Dr. Khair explained the objective, rationale, target group and methodology of the research, and the limitations that were faced during fieldwork. She informed the audience regarding female members' participation in income earning activities, whether they take their own decisions, how problems are resolved within the family. She described the findings on how the respondents identified actions as acts of child abuse, what impact these acts may bring upon the child, and how parents should take care of their children. She further described the respondents' notion of sexual harassment, how they identified acts of harassment, why such incidents take place, and to what extent women are responsible. On the issue of domestic violence, Dr. Khair described the responses of the interviewees, how they perceive domestic violence, why these incidents occur, whether they are familiar with such incidents, and what should be the victims' reaction. She mentioned that most of the respondents lacked adequate knowledge of the relevant laws against gender-specific violence. Many of them felt that both the electronic and print media often had a negative impact.

Professor Kazi Tobarak Hossain, Department of Sociology, Rajshahi University, in his presentation, highlighted some of the major findings of the field investigation on Rajshahi area. Apart from the common issues explored in the Dhaka study, Professor Hossain informed regarding the respondents' perception on the reasons for the subordinate position of women in the society, unequal opportunities and rights, perception on *purdah* (veil), parents' discrimination between boys and girls, perception on female literacy, and participation of females in economic and political activities. On the respondents' perception regarding domestic violence, he described the findings on types of domestic violence, violence on housemaids, and reasons behind these incidents. On the issue of sexual harassment, respondents were asked what kind of actions can be termed as sexual harassment, the most widely practised forms of harassment, reasons for acid throwing, reasons that provoke males to harass females, role of media, reasons of sexual abuse of female child, and violence on female child workers in households.

While commenting on the two research papers, Shafia Azim, Department of Psychology, University of Dhaka, pointed out that legislation has no great impact in changing behaviour in societies like ours where day by day there is diminishing respect for the law as well as law enforcing agencies. Referring to the studies, she explained that in the current cultural context Bangladeshi women are devalued in comparison to men, and policy makers in positions do not challenge age-old cultural norms and relegate violence against women to the status of a 'woman only' issue. According to her, it is a question of how men value themselves with regard to providing protection to female members of their respective families, and how men feel about their own rights, as they too are often subject to violence. Azim explained how poverty itself cannot be a cause of violence against women, but the fact is that due to lack of privacy, violence committed against women of the poorer segments of the society, the incidents are exposed to others. According to her, among upper classes, violence happens behind closed doors and not much can be seen and heard; and forms of harassment and violence change and get more insidious and harmful. On the mental aberration of

males, she pointed out that such incidents is not regarded as an aberration in this society, rather it is the norm. Azim further stated that media and education i.e., mass literacy are the two most powerful instruments in addressing the issue. She also put emphasis on changing our value system through proper socialisation, development of behaviour codes and learning to deal with conflicts through dialogical as opposed to confrontational process that have to be inculcated in childhood, and can be part of our education system.

Professor Kamal Ahmed Chowdhury of Department of Sociology, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, drew attention to the ingrained patriarchal values. He stated that due to NGO activities involving women for a long period of time, females have become more aware while the male counterpart remained in the same belief system. This situation led to a big gap between the men and women with regard to economic management, internal dynamics of in-law relationship, and freedom of movement. Professor Chowdhury identified that the actual problem lies with

... policy makers in positions do not challenge age-old cultural norms and relegate violence against women to the status of a 'woman only' issue.

our mindset where women are considered as the weaker part in human relationship.

Dr. Linda Regan of Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit, University of North London, UK discussed on the situation of violence against women in the developed countries. From her presentation it was evident women are also quite vulnerable to all kinds of violence in those societies.

On 12 November the workshop continued comprising only the two team members of Dhaka and Rajshahi University. Dr. Linda Regan conducted the training session focussing on problems faced by the team members, different issues of violence against women, different methods and tools that can be used in generating a movement against such violence, and her experience in such movement in the UK. In the second half of the day Dr. Regan guided the two teams in developing their respective plan of action to help develop a movement against violence against women.

Reporter:
Md. Mahbubur Rahman
Shahzada M Akram

WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS' REINTEGRATION: Problems and Prospects

The Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE) arranged a daylong workshop on problems and prospects of reintegration of women migrant workers on 24 November 2001, in Shimultali, Gazipur.

It was evident from the presentations that many migrant workers, especially the females, become victims of misfortune. The middlemen play a vital role in this regard. In many cases they are the relatives of or closely known to the victims. These middlemen embezzle the hard-earned money, often providing the migrants and their families with false information. In addition, the recruiting agents deceive them in many ways. Although the agents are permitted to receive no more than Tk 50,000, often they take two or three times the amount. After going abroad migrant workers are often compelled to be engaged in dangerous and difficult work. The fortunate ones can return often as destitutes, others are unknowingly sold forever. In the name of migration many are trafficked to India, Pakistan, and other countries of the Middle East.

Most of the migrant workers' living standard is quite pitiful. They are not treated equally with the nationals of receiving states. Taking advantage of their undocumented status and ignorance, they are given less salary. This makes them live from hand to mouth and in many cases they starve. Some manage to escape from job but could not flee from his/her doleful life. Because of their ignorance and lack of skill, they face difficulties everywhere and ultimately have to return as wretched people. Many have to face embarrassing situations after coming back, often being accused of loose character, which is a great impediment for their reintegration in the society.

International crises are also liable for their misfortune. Malaysia has taken steps to retrench a large number of Bangladeshi female workers. The question is – after coming back what the future of these returnees will be. Many workers remained unsettled. After return, they may face problem of unemployment.

Regarding different issues at pre-departure and post-return phase of migration process, the following issues were discussed:

- Outgoing migrant workers need adequate knowledge of the language of the country he/she is leaving for. Besides, they have to be cautious enough of the environment of that country and have to have enough information regarding the jobs they are going to perform.
- Before going abroad they should plan what they would do after coming back.
- From the amount deposited in the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund, investments may be made into enterprises such as mills, factories, garments, educational institutions, and hospitals so that these people may be employed. To this end, a 'migrant bank' can also be established.
- Many institutes may help the returnees by providing loan so that they can engage themselves in farming, sewing and many other activities.

The participants opined that it will be better for them if the government and different institutions provide loan or arrange training so that they can be self-dependent. The returnee migrants emphasised that in this way, they will be able to earn a living, and they do not have to suffer from mental or physical distress. The participants stated that although it is quite late, the government has taken the right step of establishing a ministry for migrant workers. They hoped that the government pays adequate attention to this neglected category of people. They also pointed that if awareness among the people at the grass-roots is created, it will be a great achievement for the marginal section.

The programme was attended by a good number of returnee migrants and members of WARBE. Md. Shahidul Haque, Regional Representative, IOM, was the Chief Guest and Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science of University of Dhaka, and Dr. Syed Refaat Ahmed, Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court were present as Special Guests.

Reporter:
Tareq Hasan Siddiqui
Advocate, Dhaka Bar

Seminar Recommends

RATIFICATION OF ILO AND UN CONVENTIONS ON MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS

In order to mark the International Human Rights Day, the Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE) organised a seminar on *Importance of the Ratification of ILO and UN Conventions for Migrants' Human Rights* at BCTU-Labour Hall on 10 December 2001.

The key-note speaker was Shahzada M Akram, Research Associate, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, University of Dhaka. In his presentation, Akram first explained the avenues how a labour sending country can ensure its workers' rights abroad. He informed the audience what international mechanisms have been created to offer protection to migrant workers. But unfortunately most of the labour sending countries, let alone the labour receiving countries, have not either signed or ratified the 1990 *UN Convention on Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families*. The speaker laid emphasis on creating awareness among the migrant workers regarding their rights along with the importance of ratifying the 1990 Convention.

Reaz Ahmed of the Daily Star, stated that most of the news and reports published in dailies regarding migrant workers create negative impacts on labour migration, which is not desirable. According to him, after the 11 September terrorist attack on the World Trade Center at New York, there has been adverse impact on international migration, resulting in a slower rate of population movements at global level and growth of mistrust on people from developing, especially Muslim, countries. Ahmed viewed that it is the best time to organise such programmes on human rights of migrant workers. He opined that implementation of the 1990 Convention is critical for ensuring rights of migrant workers of our country, which will help the government to recognise undocumented migrant workers, as it failed to be responsive to the issues of migrant workers like Milton.

Abul Hossain, President, United Labour Front, demanded that, as part of globalisation, labour should be free to move beyond boundaries, like capital, technology and information. He was rather skeptical regarding the role of government and private organisations in ensuring protection of migrant workers, stating that there are a lot of laws and legal frameworks but they are not implemented.

Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui of RMMRU stated that migration is a big factor in national and foreign policies of Bangladesh due to remittances sent by migrant workers. She advocated for the ratification of the 1990 Convention where women and undocumented migrants are included, as no other instrument is available for the ensuring protection for these groups. She further hoped that as there is a new government the forum can push for ratification of the Convention.

Dr. Syed Refaat Ahmed, lawyer and researcher, in his presentation, identified that a direct linkage should be formed between migrant workers and the government. According to him, rights should be forcibly enforced. He also urged for a common migration policy within South Asia, which is a major labour producing region.

Dr. C R Abrar, Coordinator of RMMRU, viewed that Bangladesh should provide the leadership in ratifying the 1990 Convention in the South Asian region. According to him, by ratifying it our commitment to the migrant workforce will be demonstrated.

Justice Naimuddin Ahmed, Chief Guest of the session, informed the audience that a vested interest is responsible for non-ratification of the Convention. He stated that the manpower agents and an international racket may be responsible for this delay. He further suggested that an appeal might be sent from this forum to ratify 1990 Convention.

URDU-SPEAKING YOUTH GROUPS DEMAND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

A newly floated organisation of the Urdu-speaking community has claimed the Bangladeshi nationality for the members of their community by virtue of their birth. Chief advisor of the organisation Stranded Pakistanis Youth Rehabilitation Movement (SPYRM) Mushtaque Ahmed at a press conference at the national press club demanded the government to allow

them to enjoy all privileges and rights as legitimate citizens of Bangladesh. So the question of repatriation to Pakistan or any other third country does not arise at all. They demanded that they had never been stranded, neither been Pakistanis; rather they are Bangladeshis as they claimed. They claimed that their ancestors had been living here even prior to the division of Indian

sub-continent. They further claimed that no government act or ordinance has canceled their citizenship. Therefore, they are legally citizens of this country (*Daily Sangbad* and *The Independent*, 7 November 2001).

Speakers at a discussion forum urged for recognition of the rights of Urdu-speaking community as Bangladeshis. The forum was organised on the occasion of International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2001, by the Association of Young Generation of Urdu-speaking Community. Advocate Sultana Faizun Nahar, in her speech, alleged that successive governments of Bangladesh have been responsible for the prolonged problem of the Urdu-speaking community. Asad Chowdhury, an eminent poet, termed their deplorable and inhumane condition to be a great shame for independent Bangladesh. Ahmed Ilias, Executive Director of Al Falah, stated that this community had never gone for a movement in order to establish their rights. He said that this group of people had problems even before the independence of Bangladesh. Professor C R Abrar, Department of International Relations of the University of Dhaka, urged all concerned to work for the establishment of

the rights of this community (*Daily Inquilab*, 12 December 2001).

At another seminar held on 27 February 2002, speakers underscored the need for the establishment of the rights to express in mother language by the different linguistic minority communities of Bangladesh. They also highlighted the active role that a section of conscious and democratic minded Urdu speaking people played in the 1952 language movement. In his speech, Dr. C R Abrar urged all to support the movement of all the linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities for establishing equal rights to that of the majority Bengali Muslims. He appreciated the effort of the members of the new generation Urdu-speaking community towards establishing their rights as Bangladeshi citizens. In his welcome address, Mr. Mohammad Hasan, convenor of the meeting, demanded that the residents of different camps be termed as 'Urdu speaking Bangladeshis'. Mr. Ahmed Ilias of Al-Falah also spoke in the occasion (*The Independent*, 30 March 2002).

Reporter:

Shahzada M Akram

FURTHER ACCESS OF BANGLADESHI LABOUR IN MALAYSIA URGED

Speakers at a discussion stressed the need for improving the access of Bangladeshi labour into the Malaysian market. They urged the governments to engage in a dialogue to lift the present restriction on employment of fresh Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, effective from September 2001. The discussion took place following a talk by Dr. Petra Dannecker of the University of Bielefeld, Germany, titled *An Exploration of the Experiences of Bangladeshi Migrants in Malaysia*. The Dhaka University based Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) organised the talk at the Centre for Advanced Research in Social Sciences, University of Dhaka on 11 March 2002.

Dr. Dannecker, in her presentation, argued that Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia are contributing to redefining and renegotiating gender roles in Malaysian labour market. As a case, she pointed to the fact that Bangladeshi male migrant workers have increasingly found employment in ready-made garments and electronics factories, believed to be the sole preserve of female workers in last decades, as they alone were considered eligible to do such delicate and boring work. She also informed that female Bangladeshi

migrant workers are much less visible compared to their male counterparts. She argued that Bangladeshi migrants tend to reproduce home country's social practices and norms in Malaysia that may not necessarily conform to Malay cultural practices. She, however, expressed doubt on the myth that Bangladeshi male workers marry Malay women, claiming that there is no data to prove the case. Dr. Dannecker also noted that most Malaysian human rights organisations and trade unions are not much interested in taking up the issues of migrant workers'. She pointed out that Malaysian government is sensitive to keep the balance of the multi-ethnic composition of the local communities.

The talk was followed by a lively discussion. The session was chaired by Dr. C R Abrar, Coordinator of RMMRU. A host of academics, development workers, representatives of international organisations, students, and migrants' rights activists participated in the programme.

Reporter:

Shahzada M Akram

TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN: NEED FOR CROSS BORDER COLLABORATION STRESSED

In today's world human trafficking is a much-discussed topic. An interview was held with Mr. Manabendra Mondol, Executive Director, Socio Legal Aid Research and Training Centre, a Kolkata based NGO, in April 2002. Nahid Alam, Project Director, Capacity Building for Combating Trafficking of Women and Children of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, conducted the interview.

Nahid Alam: What kind of work is your institution mainly associated with?

Manabendra Mondol: Socio Legal Aid Research and Training Centre (SLARTC) is associated with different kinds of activities. This institution gives free legal aid and advice to women and children. It also takes up elderly people, individual cases where there are no trade unions, cases of marital discord, and provides family counseling and counseling for aged persons and traumatised children. It also raises awareness-building programme on laws related to women, children and working people.

NA: What do Indian organisations do with trafficked in children and women after they are rescued?

MM: Rescued trafficked in women and children are taken to different homes. There are different types of homes, some are governmental while others are non-governmental. Women and children are taken to their nearest homes after rescue. Or those who are rescued from a particular state are kept in state homes.

NA: How about taking legal actions against the women and children traffickers?

MM: SLARTC gives various kinds of aid for taking legal action against traffickers. We have so far filed about 25 to 26 cases. There are about 200 lawyers associated with this kind of cases.

SLARTC also provides counseling. Help is given in repatriation and if necessary, support is given to victims outside the country.

NA: What kind of aid does this organisation give to trafficked in Bangladeshi citizens in West Bengal and is there any other similar organisations taking part in repatriation?

MM: SLARTC plays the role in repatriation to Bangladesh. Different Bangladeshi organisations such as Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, *Ain-o-Shalish Kendra* are contacted in doing this. Another fifteen such organisations in West Bengal are engaged in different activities related to repatriation.

NA: For what reasons do you think some of the trafficked in women do not want to return home?

MM: Generally speaking, poverty or stigmatisation are some of the reasons when women do not want to return. But many want to return home.

NA: What are the major destinations of trafficked in women and children in India?

MM: Trafficked in women and children are taken to three main cities of India – Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai. Women are mainly used for prostitution. Traffickers do not use any single specific route. They use any route that is suitable for their purpose. Traffickers of the receiving country play an active part in helping foreign traffickers to traffic in citizens of their own country.

NA: How does the traffickers' network function? How do the middlemen of the receiving countries and the middlemen living in India or the traffickers communicate?

MM: Traffickers have a huge network. Big businessmen may also be involved in this. For every crime there has to be the hand of someone big behind it. Otherwise these unlawful practices cannot be run. The middlemen of receiving countries and those living in India communicate with the aid of the people of the bordering areas. The trafficked in women and children are often taken by one group of people of that country to the border to be handed over to the middlemen of another country.

NA: In your opinion what steps should be taken to create awareness in preventing trafficking in women and children?

MM: The following activities should be undertaken: (a) Interpol should play active role; (b) flag meetings should include trafficking issue on their agenda; so far flag meetings never discussed this matter; (c) there should be bilateral agreements on trafficking with provision for extradition; and (d) law reform with provision for severe punishment is necessary.

FACTS FROM THE FIELD

EXPERIENCES OF CAMP-LIVING URDU-SPEAKING WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

Introduction

A good number of Urdu-speaking people came to Bangladesh, then part of Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947. Since the emergence of Bangladesh, this group of people has been suffering from various types of social, cultural and economic problems. About two hundred and fifty thousand of them have been languishing in more than 66 camps set up by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) soon after Bangladesh's independence.

In the beginning, amidst chaos, confusion and in a hostile environment they opted to go to Pakistan. The ICRC registered them for their possible repatriation to Pakistan without any formal approval from the governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan. But after repatriation of a section of them, the repatriation issue was thrown into the cold. Now the Urdu-speaking community is a neglected and distressed minority population in Bangladesh.

Field Visit

RMMRU organised a study with the target to have a general understanding of the problems and perceptions of women members and community leaders of the camps. Dr. C R Abrar, Coordinator of RMMRU, is conducting the study. A four-member research team visited eleven Dhaka based camps located at Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Adamjee and Narayanganj, seven camps in Chittagong and eight camps in Syedpur. One hundred women from the camps were interviewed of three age groups – 15 to 24, 25 to 50 and more than 50 years of age. The team collected qualitative information on the experiences of the respondents of three periods – 1947 and its aftermath, 1971 and its aftermath, and at present.

Field Findings

Experiences during 1947

The respondents with the experience of the 1947 mass exodus, informed that most of the Urdu-speaking families that migrated to the then East Pakistan owned land, or were otherwise gainfully employed in India. But the communal riots devastated these families. They informed that they fled into Pakistan only to save

their lives, leaving behind land, homestead and sources of earning. Some of them came here because their relatives while returning to India, were already residing here. They held the view that Pakistan was created for the Muslims. Some respondents stated that in some cases those who had come here only to visit relatives were informed at the border that they would not be able to return. Most of the railway workers opted to come to Pakistan with families. The respondents informed that all faced problems in the new country. Many started their own business, and those who came through option, found places in their respective jobs. Those who had to leave India due to communal riot had to go through manifold problems, but gradually they recovered from their adverse situations.

Experience of 1971

The respondents from Dhaka camps informed that after 25 March 1971 a large section of the Urdu-speaking males were killed in Mymensingh. Often, those were in retaliation of the excesses committed by some members of the community. Before independence, camps were formed in Dhaka and Mymensingh for the Urdu-speaking community. Since they were the majority at Syedpur, the Urdu-speaking community did not face such problems, but others living at Nilphamari, Dinajpur and adjacent areas faced severe casualties. Later they took shelter in the camps located at Syedpur. After 16 December 1971, most lost their jobs. Homes of many were looted and seized, and where their number was the least, killing was most rampant. The whole community had to go through a number of problems – they lacked food for many days, and suffered from the inadequacy of drinking water. In order to save themselves, some of the male members of this community were dressed as females wearing veils. The occupied land and homesteads were never returned to them. Some occupants forcibly took the owners' signature on the documents. A number of female members of this community were victims of rape and incidents of mass rape were reported in Dinajpur, Mymensingh and Chittagong.

Post 1971 Experience

All the respondents informed that after 1971 they became homeless and jobless. Many had to accept the camp life after being penniless, as all of their belongings and assets were looted. They had to depend on the relief provided by the ICRC. Since then they have been living in camps. Lack of space has been the major problem in the camps, as in many cases eight to ten persons have to live in one room. But most of the respondents identified lack of sanitation facilities as another problem. Inaccessibility to formal jobs work against moving out of camps for better living. Inability to get their girls married has been identified by some as yet another problem. They also informed that none of the camp dwellers has voting rights.

Most of the camp dwellers are jobless and are not able to bear the expenses of education of their children due to financial constraints. As a result their children remain illiterate and have to be engaged in different menial jobs. While questioned regarding the issue of citizenship, respondents between the age group of 18 to 40 considered themselves as citizens of Bangladesh

for being born and brought up here. But some respondents above the age of 50 considered themselves as citizens of Pakistan. Some of them informed that they do not mind camp life, since all are living together at the same place, and share their joys as well as sorrows. But most of the respondents expressed their wish to live in a better place other than the camps, and informed that they cannot materialise their wish due to economic condition.

The Urdu-speaking camp dwellers have been struggling for a place in the Bangladeshi society. They want to come out of the adverse situation and overcome the agony that their community has been suffering for the last three decades. The community leaders stated that there should be an end to this frustration and wanted to lead a socially and politically stable future.

Reporter:

Afroz Jahan

Mohammad Hasan

PUBLICATIONS

Beyond the Maze: Streamlining Labour Recruitment Process in Bangladesh, Tasneem Siddiqui (ed.), RMMRU, Dhaka, February 2002, pp. 153. Tk 200.00, US\$ 10.00.

This volume is the outcome of a joint effort of the Government of Bangladesh, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit and Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies to develop strategies for efficient management of the labour recruitment process in Bangladesh. The project was conceived by Ms. Rokia A Rahman, Advisor in charge of the Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Caretaker Government of Justice Latifur Rahman. Two researchers of the Dhaka University based Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui and Dr. C.R. Abrar, prepared a Strategy Paper with inputs from different ministries/agencies of the government, including Foreign Affairs, Home, Labour, Civil Aviation and Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training and others involved in labour migration process. Considering the value of this collective effort, RMMRU has decided to publish the document for its further dissemination and to help the policy-making process. It suggests specific steps for curbing undocumented migration, and for reducing fraudulent practices and costs in labour recruitment process. The need for institutional separation of functions for local and overseas employment; and inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination is also stressed. In the second section, the proceedings of the workshop, held on 24 September 2001 have been included. Policy makers, lawyers, academics, civil society activists, members of the media and representatives of international agencies attended the workshop. In the final section, documents prepared by different ministries, Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), association of migrant workers and NGOs, have been incorporated.

Tasneem Siddiqui is Associate Professor in Political Science at the University of Dhaka. She did her Ph.D from Griffith University, Australia. She has written extensively on different aspects of labour migration. Her books are *Transcending Boundaries: Labour Migration of Women from Bangladesh*, Dhaka, UPL, 2001, pp. 215, and *Temporary Labour Migration of Women: Case Studies of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka*. San Domingo: Amigo del Hogar, INSTRAW and IOM, (co-authored) 2001.

National Refugee Law: The Bangladesh Context C R Abrar (ed.), Occasional Paper 8 (in Bangla), RMMRU, Dhaka, March 2001, pp. 42, Tk 20.00.

This volume under Occasional Paper Series constitutes a part of RMMRU's ongoing campaign for the enactment of national laws for refugees in South Asia. The campaign gained impetus following the adoption of the Model National Law for Refugees at the Fourth Consultative Meeting of Eminent Persons Groups (EPG) of South Asia in November 1997 in Dhaka. RMMRU feels that both enacting a national law on refugees and acceding to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees are important for Bangladesh in order to deal with the issue in a more structured way.

The first part of the paper comprises of the Bangla translation of the Model National Law for Refugees, adopted at the Dhaka Meeting of Groups of Eminent Persons of South Asia in 1997. The second part consists of the proceedings of the first and second National Consultations on this issue organised in August 1999 and October 2000 respectively by RMMRU. In these consultations, members of parliament, representatives of civil society and human rights organisations, international organisations and government functionaries.

ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIT

October 2001 – March 2002

Workshops: The second *Awareness Campaign Workshop for Community Leaders and Activists on Migration Process* was organised at BIAM on 3 – 4 November 2001. The workshop was participated by 25 representatives from NGOs, *imams* (religious leaders) of local mosques, *Union Parishad Members* (grassroots level public representatives), and workers' associations. This programme was jointly sponsored by The British Council and International Organization for Migration, Dhaka.

A two-day workshop was organised on *Violence against Women: International and Bangladesh Perspective*, at the British Council Auditorium, Dhaka on 11-12 November 2001. This event was part of Gender and Development-Higher Education Link Programme with the University of North London, UK, and funded by the Department for International Development (DfID), UK and managed by the British Council. The programme was participated by the two groups of young researchers – one from the Department of Sociology of Rajshahi University, and the other from the Young Researchers' Forum of RMMRU, Dhaka University.

A three-day Training Workshop on *Social Science Research and Migration* was organised at BIAM from 19 to 21 March 2002. Young faculty members and researchers of the Departments of Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Public Administration, and Law of Universities of Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Jahangirnagar, Department of Humanities of BUET, and various national research and human rights organisations participated in the workshop.

Seminars and Talks: A day-long international seminar on *International Humanitarian Law* was jointly organised by International Committee for Red Cross, Delhi, Faculty of Law, University of Dhaka and RMMRU, at BIAM on 5 March 2002. The programme was participated by faculty members of International Relations and Law from Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Islamic University, international organisations like UNHCR and IOM. The inaugural session was chaired by Dr. Kamal Hossain, former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh.

A talk on *An Exploration of the Experiences of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia* by Dr. Petra Dannecker of University of Bielefeld, Germany, was organised at the Seminar Room, Centre for Advanced Research in Social Sciences, University of Dhaka, on 11 March 2002. Over 40 students, faculty members of Social Sciences, NGO and human rights activists and migrant workers' associations participated at the programme.

Publications: Issue 18, October – December 2001 of the Unit newsletter, *Udbastu* (the Uprooted) was published in December 2001.

A book titled *Beyond the Maze: Streamlining Labour Recruitment Process in Bangladesh*, edited by Tasneem Siddiqui, was published in February 2002.

Occasional Paper 8 on *National Refugee Law: The Bangladesh Context* edited by C R Abrar, 42 pp. (in Bangla) was published in March 2001.

Visits: Two exchange visits took place under the Higher Education Link. Mr. Sean Loughna, Research Officer, Refugee Studies Centre (RSC), University of Oxford, paid a visit from 18 to 21 March 2002. During his stay, Mr. Loughna participated in the training workshop on Social Science Research and Migration.

Syeda Rozana Rashid, Research Associate of RMMRU, paid a visit to RSC, Oxford from 11 to 19 January 2002. During her visit, Ms. Rashid gave a talk on *Comparative Analysis of Vulnerability and Coping Mechanism between Rohingya Refugee and Chakma IDP Women of Bangladesh*, participated in seminars, conducted library work on psychosocial stress and statelessness at RSC, and had meetings with the RSC researchers.

Monthly Meetings: In the monthly meeting of December 2001, a paper was presented on *Condition of Afghan and Palestinian Refugees in the Context of WTC Terrorist Attack* by Md. Mahbubur Rahman, undergraduate student, Department of Political Science, and Student Associate, RMMRU.

In the monthly meeting of Young Researchers' Forum in January 2002, findings of RMMRU research project on *Violence against Women in Bangladesh* was presented by Shahzada M Akram, Research Associate, RMMRU.

In February 2002, Bushra Hasina Chowdhury, Lecturer, Department of International Relations gave a talk on *Implementation of CHT Peace Accord: Building Lasting Peace*.

In March 2002, Shashanka Saadi, Coordinator – Disaster, ActionAid Bangladesh, gave a talk on *Lessons Learnt from the Gujarat Earthquake*.

Field Work: Field visits were organised in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Syedpur and Chittagong in February – March 2002 for a study on *Experiences of Urdu-speaking Camp-based Women in Bangladesh*. The study is being conducted by Dr. C R Abrar.

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