



## Camp Dwelling Urdu Speaking Community Demands REHABILITATION IN BANGLADESH WITH DIGNITY

A consultation on *Camp Dwelling Urdu Speaking Community's Own Perception about their Future in Bangladesh* was jointly organized by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of Dhaka University and the Forum for Safe Migration held at CIRDAP Auditorium on 8 December 2005. The programme was attended by a number of organisations and individuals working for the rights of Bihari community living in the camps in Bangladesh.

*Dr. C R Abrar* in his introductory statement drew attention of research and past advocacy activities of RMMRU with regard to camp dwelling Urdu speaking community. He stated that under international law everyone has the right to nationality and the Bihari community should not be any exception. He stated that although soon after the War of Liberation of Bangladesh many in the community opted for repatriation to Pakistan; now a number of them, particularly the generation that was born after the War, consider themselves to be Bangladeshis. He cited a number of pronouncements of higher judiciary that accorded them to be Bangladeshi nationals. *Dr. Abrar* regretted that so far very little has been done for the community. While the Bangladesh government absolved itself of any responsibility on the ground that they were aliens (Pakistanis), the non-governmental sector also failed to engage in any meaningful way with the community. It was in this context RMMRU organised the consultation, to provide a platform to the members of the Urdu speaking community how they viewed their own future in Bangladesh.

*Mohammad Feroze*, (Chairman, Anjuman I Ittehad, Mymensingh) noted that Biharis have no basic rights in Bangladesh. They are yet to get the citizenship of Bangladesh after languishing in camps for the last thirty-five years. They have been deprived of their basic rights to education and employment. One of the fundamental pre-conditions therefore is to accord citizenship status to the community. Without such explicit recognition the members of the community will not be able to enjoy their rights and freedoms. *Mr. Feroze* strongly urged the government to take necessary steps to enroll the camp dwelling Biharis as voters and to undertake meaningful programmes to rehabilitate them as soon as possible.

*Md. Ashraful Haque Babu*, (Chairman, Shamsul Haq Foundation, Nilphamari) stated that Urdu-speaking people of Bangladesh are discriminated because they

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have been alleged to have supported Pakistani occupation forces in 1971. He said the whole community could not be branded as collaborators. Babu stated that the nomenclature *atkepora Pakstani* (stranded Pakistani) itself has become a liability for the community. The new generations of Biharis do not want to go to Pakistan. In fact many in the older generation have now given up hopes for repatriation. They see themselves as Bangladeshis and are not comfortable with the term stranded Pakistanis. 'This really hurts us', stated Babu. He emphasised that all forms of discrimination emanates from the phrase '*stranded Pakistani*'. When the use of such a phrase comes to an end the Biharis will be treated as Bangladeshis. That will help them claim their rights as Bangladeshis, he noted.

*Zamir Uddin*, (Mohajir Welfare Association) stated that Urdu-speaking people in the sixty six camps of Bangladesh are suffering a lot. Some of their relatives live in Pakistan and others are in Bangladesh. The absence of Bangladeshi passports has precluded them from meeting each other. He requested government to be more sensitive to the plights of the Bihari community and take meaningful steps to bring an end to their sufferings. He noted that a proper rehabilitation scheme needs to be framed for the community to think themselves as Bangladeshis.

*Mohammad Nisar* (Presidium Member, Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC)) informed that SPGRC has been struggling for the repatriation of the community to Pakistan. He said his organization has been actively engaged with the issue for a long time and had taken up the matter with both Bangladesh and Pakistani governments. Unless repatriation is organised, the sufferings of the stranded Pakistanis will keep on getting intensified. He informed that SPGRC favoured a tripartite meeting/dialogue involving governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan and the SPGRC. He further informed that if any member of the community wanted to be rehabilitated in Bangladesh, it will be his or her prerogative to do so.

*Md. Selim* (Al Hera, Khulna) underscored the point that new generations of Biharis identify themselves as Bangladeshis. They are against repatriation to Pakistan. In that context there is a generational gap between the older and the younger generations. He said both the government and the non-governmental organisations need to join hands to rehabilitate the Biharis.

*Mohammad Hassan* (General Secretary, Association of Young Generation Urdu-Speaking Community) traced

the background of the plight of the camp dwelling community. He strongly objected to the use of the term 'stranded Pakistanis' while referring to the camp dwellers. Hassan noted that they can be called Urdu-speaking Bangladeshis, because constitutionally they are Bangladeshi citizens. He highlighted the following demands of Association of Young Generation of Urdu-Speaking Community:

- Protect linguistic and cultural identity of this minority group.
- Recognise their social and political rights to ensure their basic human rights.
- Prepare a strategy paper to rehabilitate them as early as possible and integrate them with the mainstream population as per the guidelines of the paper.
- Continue to provide all the existing facilities of camps until permanent rehabilitation is completed.
- Give access of education to all children of camp dwellers at the primary and secondary levels.
- Stop discrimination in employment
- An active role of the mainstream Bangladeshi civil society.

*Md. Khurshed Alam* (Bangladesh Mohajir Welfare Trust) stated that his organisation believed that all Biharis are citizens of Bangladesh, but they are deprived of their rights. Alam stated that rehabilitation should be the first priority of any welfare efforts geared towards the community. He stressed that they should be rehabilitated in their present locations where they have lived for 34 years. Any effort to relocate them will bring in new problems for the community, he stressed.

*Mohammad Mostaq* (Stranded Pakistanis Youth Rehabilitation Movement) pointed out that no government called this community '*atkepora Pakistani*' in the period between 1971 and 1977. The Biharis identified themselves as '*atkepora Pakistanis*' to highlight their non-Bengali identity at that time. He, however, claimed that despite such self-identification they still consider themselves to be citizens of Bangladesh. He regretted that they do not enjoy the right to vote. He blamed the political parties for the plight of the community. He also apportioned blame on the Pakistan government for not honouring its commitment for taking them to Pakistan.

*Ahmed Ilias* (Chairman, Al Falah Bangladesh) mentioned that no step has been taken to solve the problems of the Urdu-speaking people of Bangladesh even after 34 years of liberation. He felt that rehabilitation should be the primary demand for the

community. Camp dwellers want to live as human beings not like animals. Ilias noted that the debate about citizenship is superfluous because Bangladesh constitution and other laws of the land have already accorded such status to the Biharis. He also objected to the use of the term 'stateless' that are often ascribed to the Biharis. Ilias regretted that lack the consensus among the community acts as the biggest impediment in the realisation of their rights and freedoms.

*Hazi Mohammad Harun* (President, Urdu Bhashi Mohajir Moshwarti Committee) stated that about five hundred thousand Urdu-speaking people are living inhuman condition in various camps across Bangladesh. "Most of the people call us '*atkepora Pakistani*', but our basic identity is that we are Urdu-speaking Bangladeshis" stated Harun. He pointed out that language was the root cause of their discrimination and regretted that successive governments ignored their problems. He believed that these problems should be addressed properly. Harun proposed the following measures to address their problems:

- Ensure all constitutional rights to Bihari people as they are citizens of this country by birth.
- Recognize Biharis as Urdu-speaking minority group of Bangladesh and preserve their cultural rights in line with the declaration of the International Mother Languages Day.
- Take steps to give back their properties which were forfeited after the liberation and later.
- Rehabilitate all Biharis in camps and continue to give the relief and other facilities until rehabilitation process is completed.

*Niaz Ahmed* (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assembly) stated that his organisation has articulated several demands. Some of those were:

- Eliminate all the barriers to the Biharis' claims to Bangladeshi citizenship rights
- Rehabilitate them where they are living now.
- Give Tk. 300.000 to each family to compensate them.
- Continue to provide free water, gas and electricity for two years.
- Provide free education to Bihari people.

*Mohammad Sadakat Khan* (Stranded Pakistanis Youth Rehabilitation Movement) stated that being deprived economically, politically and socially, young generation of Biharis cannot develop their human potentials. Their camp identity contributes to their plight, for example,

getting enrolled in educational institutions or as voters. He said that the Government of Bangladesh has thus far not taken any effective action to address these problems. The government treats the community as burden, said Khan. He urged government to take proper steps to solve their problems through developing appropriate rehabilitation programmes.

*Dr. C R Abrar*, moderator of the session, summed the principal issues raised in the consultation. These were:

- An overwhelming number of participants favoured rehabilitation with dignity in Bangladesh. The community needs to discuss and articulate more clearly what it means by rehabilitation.
- Some favoured explicit reaffirmation of their citizenship status by the Government of Bangladesh, while others did not think it was necessary. The latter felt that the Biharis already enjoyed citizenship status as per the constitution and the laws of the land, what the community needs is to assert their rights.
- Many participants felt that rehabilitation effort should be made without displacing the community from their current locations. Access to income opportunities, education and health should be the key elements in any such rehabilitation package.
- The current support mechanisms, including food ration, free power and water supplies, should be maintained to the camp dwellers until formal rehabilitation scheme comes into effect.
- Pakistan should facilitate repatriation of those who still favoured repatriation to that country and whose families remain split due to repatriation of some members of the families concerned.
- The international community should assist the Bangladesh government in implementing the rehabilitation programme. .

Dr. Abrar thanked the participants for their valuable contributions. He stated that RMMRU will widely disseminate transcript of the proceedings of the deliberations. It will also organise a follow up consultation of the mainstream Bangladeshi civil society organisations to inform them of the concerns of the camp dwelling Urdu speaking community, Abrar noted. .

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Transcript prepared by Zohra Akhter, Member, Young Researchers' Forum of RMMRU

### Call for Designing of

## APPROPRIATE POLICIES FOR CHILD MIGRANTS

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) organised a workshop on *Migration for Livelihood: The Case of Children in Bangladesh* on 17 December, 2005 at the CIRDAP auditorium, Dhaka. The workshop discussed findings of a research carried out by Dr. Sumaiya Khair, Professor, Department of Law, University of Dhaka for RMMRU and the Development Research Centre (DRC) on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, based at the University of Sussex.

The workshop was divided into two sessions. The first session, presided over by Prof. Firdous Azim, Dept. of English, BRAC University, focused on the methodological aspects of the study. The findings of the research were presented in the second session that was presided over by Dr. Shahdeen Malik of RMMRU. Prof. H.K.S. Arefin, Dept. of Anthropology and Prof. Munirul Islam Khan, Dept. of Sociology, both of the University of Dhaka, were the designated discussants. Ms. Rokia Afzal Rahman, former advisor to the Caretaker Government, attended the workshop as the Chief Guest.



Dr. Sumaiya Khair making her key note presentation. Also seen are Dr. Shahdeen Malik and Chief Guest Rokia Rahman

In his welcome speech, *Dr. C R Abrar* stated that children constitute a very important research group of RMMRU. The Unit has been involved in research, training and advocacy activities on children since 1995. He informed that RMMRU is a partner organisation of the multi-country DRC consortium on migration. In explaining the rationale of this exploratory study, Abrar

mentioned that children's migration is often subsumed under the trafficking discourse. He stated that there is a burgeoning evidence that children migrated for work and called for drawing a distinction between trafficking and voluntary migration. He stressed that one of the important objectives of the study was to suggest policy reforms.

### Keynote Presentation

In the first session on 'Concepts, Methodology and Analytical Framework' Dr. Sumaiya Khair introduced the concept of 'autonomous child migration' saying that it is commonly believed that when children move, they do so in the company of their immediate families. However, there is growing evidence of children migration through social networks consisting of friends, neighbours and relatives and at times, entirely on their own. Her study concentrated on the children's migration through social networks or on their own other than in the company of their immediate families. During the field-work, 105 internally migrant children and parents of such children were interviewed through structured questionnaire. Moreover, other aspects of their lives were covered through in-depth interviews. She informed that purposive sampling was conducted for the study and '14 years' was regarded as the age of upper threshold for determining a 'child'. Some Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were also conducted for the study. Her area of study was Dhaka city since it attracted internally migrant children most. The interviews were conducted in various bus and launch terminals where such children are generally found.

### Open Discussion

During open discussion, following the first presentation, in response to a query about the areas of origin of these children, Dr. Khair informed that such migrant children mostly hailed from adjacent districts of Dhaka such as Comilla, Manikganj and Chandpur and rarely from distant areas such as Chittagong. When inquired about the methods employed by the researcher to identify 'autonomous child migrants' Dr. Khair elaborated the process: that one of the first questions that the children were asked

was how they had come to Dhaka (whether accompanied by immediate families or not). If the children responded that they had come without being accompanied by their immediate families, then they were asked further questions and thus after being satisfied were identified as autonomous child migrants. Prof. Khan, who put forward the question, stated that that the ratio of autonomous child migrants vis-à-vis child migrants in general is of great importance for future research. He said it will be quite useful to know how many children were asked this first question before the 50 children were identified.

### **Presentation on Research Findings**

In the second session, Dr. Khair presented principal findings of her research and offered recommendations and policy actions. The presentation focused on \the socio-economic profile of child migrants, child migration and decision-making process, children and social networks, factors contributing to children's migration, living conditions at place of destination, working conditions at place of destination, impact of migration on children and policy implications and directions for the future.

She observed that a good number of child migrants were autonomous migrants though in the decision of migration, immediate families had a role to play and that boys tend to migrate autonomously more than girls. The work and living conditions at place of destination were not satisfactory. She said the child migrants were often exploited by their employees both in terms of wage and physical abuse.

She recommended that instead of viewing child migrants as undesirable elements in an urban setting, policies and laws should be developed to provide child labour migrants with enabling environment whereby they can lead exploitation-free lives.

### **Designated Discussants**

*Prof. H.K. Arefeen* of the Dept. of Anthropology of the University Dhaka, noted it was perhaps the first exploratory study ever conducted in Bangladesh on children migrants. He raised some important questions with regard to the methodology followed and made some comments on the organisation and contents of the study. He suggested tracing a historical background of

child labour practices in Bangladesh. Prof. Arefeen questioned the very concept of 'voluntary migration' which he thought was quite a wide concept. The circumstances behind migration of children would provide interesting insights, he added.

He questioned the methodological premises of defining a child as a person aged up to 14 years as the maximum threshold. Regarding the sampling, he felt that it would have been better if sample were made on the basis of bio-demographic characteristics rather than using purposive sampling. He further noted that visit to villages of child migrants would have brought important insights and make the study more representative. Arefeen noted that the issue of feminisation of labour did not come out very strongly as the study barely represented the girls as autonomous child migrants. He stated that the concept of kinship is very important in an agro-based social structure

prevailing in Bangladesh. He noted that this important aspect has not come out strongly in the study.

Prof. Arefeen also took issue of FGD as a methodological tool. To him, FGD is not suitable for countries like Bangladesh. Terming the policy recommendations put forward by Dr. Khair 'wishful', he opined that the study could have

focused on the ways of addressing the structural constraints instead. At the end, Dr. Arefin suggested replacing the word 'polygamy' with 'polygeny', which is anthropologically more accurate to mean a man having more than one wife.

*Prof. Munirul Islam Khan* of the Department of Sociology of Dhaka University questioned the basic idea of 'autonomous migration'. He argued if parents had control over the income of the children even after their migration, as is evident in most of the cases from the study, then there is no reason to term it 'autonomous migration'. He further questioned the notion of 'happiness'. It was shown in the study that a good number of such children were happy on one hand but on the other hand, it was revealed that they were being exploited in various forms. Terming these findings 'contradictory', Prof. Khan maintained that the happiness should not be equated in financial gains. To him, happiness means more than material gains. With regard to policy recommendation, he suggested

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focusing on education sector. He opined that our schools should be designed in such a way so that these schools could keep the children in class rooms.

### Open Discussion

During the open-floor discussion, *Prof. Firdaus Azim* of BRAC University expressed her reservation about presentation of findings based on statistical data sets. She commented that there was no use of having in-depth interviews or FGDs if qualitative issues were not reflected in the report. She also questioned the notion of 'autonomy'. She stated that it is not possible for 7/8 years old children to understand the concept of 'autonomy' in real sense of the term. A 'child' should be defined in psychological terms, rather than legalistically, she observed.

*Mr. Salahuddin Ahmed*, a retired senior government functionary, wanted to know how many children (out of 105 children/parents interviewed) hailed from the *monga*-stricken areas of northern Bangladesh. In her reply, Dr. Khair informed that there were some children who hailed from *monga*-stricken areas while majority of them came from adjacent areas of Dhaka.

*Mr. Asif* of the daily Prothom Alo observed that the income range (600-3000 for example) shown in the paper could not reveal the nature of exploitation. It would have been better if the amount of income were shown against the types of work. He further felt that it is difficult to measure job satisfaction/happiness.

*Ms. Yasmin Ali*, a development practitioner, observed that the study heavily focused on the economic factors and did not take into consideration the social and physiological factors in its analysis. In other words, it overlooked the emotions and sensitivity of the children. She suggested that such issues should be looked into. She further observed that sometime such statistical data fails to reflect the real picture especially when the sample size is small, as has been the case with this study.

### Presenter's Response

Following the open-floor discussion, Dr. Khair clarified some issues raised by the designated discussants and other participants. In reply to the criticism of presentation based on statistical data she informed the audience that since the study was exploratory,

quantitative aspects were emphasised. However, there were also qualitative observations that were not adequately covered in the presentation due to time constraints. With regard to the observation about historical account of child labour, she maintained that since the focus of the study was not child labour *per se* rather child migration, this historical account was kept brief. On the issue of defining and/or measuring 'happiness', she maintained that it is a very difficult task. However, she tried to reflect the perspectives of the children concerned in defining and/or measuring happiness. With regard to the use of the word 'polygamy', she maintained that she used it as a legal term rather than as an anthropological term.

### Chair's Address

*Ms. Rokia Rahman*, the Chief Guest of the programme, stated that in eastern cultures children get priority since mothers attach a great value to their children. She regretted that realities of economic life force households to send their children to urban areas for work. Sometime they have to do so in a harsh and unwanted environment, which is not desirable at all. She observed that given our economic conditions, these children are still allowed to work in the informal sector while child labour has been abolished in the formal sector. Therefore, it was

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imperative to formulate policies in a way that would gradually facilitate the removal of child labour from the informal sector. Children can be encouraged to stay in rural areas where they would be able to get the support of their families which is of crucial importance for a child. At the end of her speech, she put forward the idea of introducing technical and vocational training in both public and NGO-run schools in rural areas so that the children can learn useful skills and need not migrate to urban areas for livelihood where they face a very unfriendly environment detrimental to their growth.

### Conclusion

It was a well attended programme. Many experts and activists working for the rights of children participated in the workshop. The study was highly appreciated for breaking new ground on migration of children. The critical observations and comments were welcomed by the author for further revision of the report. The vent was widely covered both in the print and electronic media.

Transcript prepared by Towheedul Islam, Member, Young Researchers' Forum of RMMRU

# QUALITY TRAINING OF NURSES STRESSED

A workshop on 'Mobility of Skilled Labour from Bangladesh: The Case of Nurses' was organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of Dhaka University under the auspices of the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty and was held at CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka on Thursday, 16 February 2006. Findings of a recently conducted research under the DRC by Dr. Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman of the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka were presented at the workshop. Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin, President of East West University and former Governor of Bangladesh Bank chaired the session.

Dr. Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman divided his presentation in two parts. In the first part he discussed key questions, methodology and the global demand for nursing while research findings and recommendations were presented in the second part. Prof. Omar Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Health, Population and Development, Independent University, Bangladesh; Ms. Khadija Begum, Principal of Nursing College; Mr. Amir Hossain, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment; Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, Managing Director, Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Ltd and Mr. Ali Haider Chowdhury, Secretary General, Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies were the designated discussants. After an open discussion the session was concluded with an address by the Chair.

### Introductory Statement

In his introductory statement, *Dr. C R Abrar*, Coordinator of RMMRU introduced RMMRU and the DRC on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. He said both the institutions along with other partner organisations in Ghana, Egypt, Albania and the UK were engaged in research, training and policy advocacy work on migration, refugee and displaced people. The partner institutions work with other stakeholders in their respective countries, such as the ministries and concerned government agencies, returnee migrants and their associations, non-government, human rights and women's rights organisations and International agencies.

Dr. Abrar stated that RMMRU mooted the idea of conducting this study some time ago. He noted that

with ever increasing demand for care providers in the western world, health care is turning out to be an important sector in the global labour market. It opened new opportunities for labour sending countries like Bangladesh. It is in this context that the study was commissioned and thus has major policy relevance for the country.

Dr. Abrar viewed that the policy of sending skilled labour from a skill-deficit country like Bangladesh needed to be framed carefully. Such policy may bring in unintended consequences for the health care system of the country. The contra argument that possibilities of employment in the international market are likely to induce younger generation to explore training and career opportunities may also prove to be true, he contended. Under such conditions, the local health care system is likely to benefit from such a policy.

Dr. Abrar argued that if it was possible to locally train accountants, chemists and engineers for international market in the past, there is no reason why we should hesitate to train health care professionals for the world market. He said that it was high time that we have a better appreciation of the dynamics of accessing this segment of international skilled market and prepare ourselves accordingly.

### Keynote Presentation

*Prof. Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman*, began his presentation stating that despite the fact that remittances by Bangladeshi migrants constitutes around 5.2% of the GDP and human resource export remains an important policy goal, the government has so far invested little in developing the country's human resource for external market. He said so far Bangladesh has essentially targeted and been largely successful in accessing the unskilled labour market with relative ease. Recent entry of other countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia and Nepal has brought about stiff competition in this traditional market. In this context he stressed that there was a need to explore other sectors of international labour market, including that of skilled nurses. He informed that over the years in health care services of western world nationals of English-speaking African countries like Ghana and Kenya as well as countries like India and the Philippines have established a significant presence. He stated it was under such context this research was conducted with following key questions:

- Is there any effective demand for Bangladeshi

nurses in the Gulf region, South East Asia and selected Western countries?

- Can Bangladesh send trained and skilled nurses to these countries as part of its skilled and safe manpower export strategy?
- Do the existing Nursing Training Facilities (NTF) provide high quality and state of art training to the nurses that can cater the international health care market? Are the training curricula of the NTFs up-to-date and at par to international standards?
- What are the major institutional and strategic limitations that the NTF face in order to produce high standard human resources in nursing keeping in view both national and potential international demand?

With regard to methodology Dr. Aminuzzaman informed that the study was based on primary and secondary data obtained through the internet, literature review and brainstorming sessions with concerned stakeholders (Ministry of health, Directorate of Nursing, administrators of private and government nursing colleges & Institutions, hospitals and medical colleges). Information was also collected through officials of selected diplomatic missions abroad. One survey was conducted to get the opinion and perspectives of returnee nurses and the aspirant migrant nurses. Another was conducted among a group of 100 University undergraduate students. Dr. Aminuzzaman noted that the methodology of conducting the surveys was not very rigorous, as they were essentially meant to gauge the perception of concerned groups about nursing as a profession.

In the second part of the discussion on *Opportunities and Challenges: The Bangladesh Perspective*, he presented the findings of the research and discussed on the pattern of Bangladesh's human resource migration, insufficiency on tapping the market, existing capacities of its institutions (government and private), curricula and the course content. In his presentation, Dr. Aminuzzaman identified social stigma attached to nursing profession as a major stumbling bloc. He also stressed development of focused strategic vision for sending skilled nurses, upgrading of curricula to offer graduate training in nursing, improvement in communication skills and imparting of cultural orientation on host communities.

Dr. Aminuzzaman recommended that effective strategies for specialised nursing training programmes in the private universities should be introduced with the assistance of international development partners. He suggested positive image of nursing profession and the growing opportunities in the international market make women of middle class background interested in the

profession. The likelihood of overseas employment, particularly in the developed world, may encourage their families invest in graduate training in nursing, he noted.

### **Designated Discussants**

*Professor Omar Rahman* of Independent University of Bangladesh, highlighted the significance of the topic. Terming the paper comprehensive and suggestive rather than definitive, he agreed with the author's contention that nursing as a profession has a huge international market and that developed countries such as the UK urgently need to fulfil the shortage by receiving nurses from the developing countries. Accessing international market would necessitate raising the quality of nursing, he noted.

With regard to concerns that migration of nurses would affect the national health care system he said that there is no need to be protective about migration of nurses. He introduced the notion of 'brain-gain' as against that of brain-drain, saying that the departure of skilled professionals should not necessarily be seen as a problem. He contended that it also has a positive side because it would induce others to take nursing as a profession. Terming it a 'win-win situation', he said the desire to go abroad may encourage many to be trained in the profession. Not all those getting trained would have the opportunity to migrate and many would be locally employed at a higher salary. The newly established hospitals and private clinics will create niche for this group of trained nurses, he contended.

Dr. Rahman also highlighted the need for the involvement of the private sector in producing large number of nurses. He reckoned that the Government cannot perform this task for lack of resource and logistic capabilities. He, however, strongly recommended that the government should play an enabling role in developing the sector through removing constraints so that the private sector can be operational.

*Ms. Khadija Begum*, Principal of the College of Nursing, in her discussion highlighted the recent initiatives undertaken to strengthen the nursing institutions. She also informed the audience about a project titled 'Nursing Education Service', which was run by the Health Ministry in collaboration with different donor agencies. She informed that currently there are 38 nursing institutes and another 20 would be operational by 2010 and recently nine trainers were sent to Bangkok for higher training in nursing. An initiative has also been undertaken to train batches of 80 nurses in English or Arabic language courses and this will continue until 2010.

*Mr. Amir Hossain*, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriate's Welfare and Overseas Employment stated that the government saw no problem in sending nurses abroad. Mr. Hossain felt that catering and nursing are the two most important potential sectors for Bangladesh to send skilled personnel. He noted that the single most important problem in this regard has been the mindset of students who are least interested to get trained in nursing or catering industry and that needs to change. He informed that the government has stipulated certain guidelines for the private sector in training of nurses.

Mr. Hossain noted that currently there is no bar on women to take up overseas employment. There are some restrictions on migration as house maids. These, he stated, are essentially to make their migration safe.

He informed that there is a large demand of nurses in the United States. Nursing is also a very well paid job there. But nurses have to pass two professional examinations to qualify for employment. These examinations are rather expensive. The absence of an examination centre in Bangladesh put additional burden on the candidates. They have to sit for these examinations either in Bangkok or Delhi.

Mr. Hossain strongly underscored the need for inter-ministerial coordination in accessing international labour markets, such as that of nurses. He said diploma course of nursing was not adequate, and hence degree course should be introduced in nursing institutions.

*Mr. Mahbubar Rahman*, Managing Director of the Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Ltd., underscored the need for according due respect to nurses. He said as a profession nursing is not attractive to the young generation and there is a need for dissemination of information about the global demand of nurses. He wondered why students would not get attracted to be trained in such a lucrative profession, when there is very little scope for employment with degrees in traditional disciplines.

*Mr. Ali Haider Chawdhury*, Secretary General of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) regretted that the government lacked necessary vision and long term plan to access this important segment of international skilled labour market. He also highlighted that the lack of coordination between different ministries and agencies. He drew attention to the fact that in the Middle Eastern countries there is a huge demand for nurses and care providers. A demand for 20,000 nurses has been created in Saudi Arabia, a figure that is likely to rise in future. This gap was created due to movement of the Filipina nurses from Saudi Arabia to the western world.

Chawdhury noted that in his interaction with the Saudi

authorities he learnt that nurses from Bangladesh have difficulties in adjusting to local culture of destination countries and therefore need proper orientation training before they migrate. He also stated Bangladeshi nurses are not trained in the state of the art equipment that Saudi health facilities are equipped with.

The Secretary General of BAIRA informed that BAIRA has started a language course at its own training centre. He suggested that Bangladesh missions abroad need to be more proactive in securing information about the market demands for nurses. He expressed his disappointment at the lack of government's response to BAIRA's proposal for develop the Mirpur Technological Training Institute. Mr. Chawdhury underscored the need for active collaboration of the government, the private sector and the educational institutions in training and migration of nurses.

### **Open Discussions**

After the deliberation of the designated discussants a lively open-discussion took place in which Tanzimuddin Khan of Dhaka University, Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui of RMMRU, Sumaiya Khan of the Bangladesh Female Migrants' Association, Abdul Mannan of Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees, Taslima Meiji of the New Age and Prof. M. A. Mannan, Dean of Faculty of Social Science of East-West University took part.

They underscored the need for dissemination of information on new opportunities that are being created worldwide in nursing. Encouraging the young generation to get trained in vocations that created opportunities for global mobility and competitiveness was also highlighted. Some regretted the lack of government initiative in accessing this important sector. Others demanded that the government review its current guideline that stipulates stringent conditions for the private sector to train nurses.

### **Address by the Chair**

*Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin*, President, East-West University, Dhaka and Chair of the workshop agreed with Prof. Omar Rahman that it was time to open up the nursing sector. He said that nursing is a highly skilled profession and requires intensive and quality training. With burgeoning share of the services sector in the country's GDP time has come to have a critical assessment of our overall human resource development policy, he noted.

He observed that the demand for nurses is not only increasing in other countries but also in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has already started recruiting nurses from India and this dependence on foreign nurses will grow if the country does not develop facilities for advanced

courses in nursing. Dr. Farashuddin strongly urged change in the mindset and called for the removal of stigma attached to nursing as a lowly respected profession.

He stated that as an institution the government favours maintaining status quo and does not want change. But we need to break this mode. He also drew attention of the house that contrary to expected rise in demand, increased automation and dependence on machines may in reality reverse the trend. Dr. Farashuddin cited that under the rules framed by the government establishment of dormitories for students have been made mandatory if institutions wanted to offer nursing courses. Such provisions were inappropriate and discouraged private universities and institutions to offer courses on nursing, he argued. Dr. Farashuddin demanded removal of all such constraints without any further delay.

The Chair felicitated the author for this important research and thanked RMMRU and DRC for sponsoring this timely work.

### Conclusion

The study was highly appreciated by other participants attending the programme. Officials of ministries, nursing institutions, nurses' directorate, returnee migrant nurses, experts, journalists and students actively took part in the workshop. The comments and insights of the designated discussants, participants and the Chair greatly enriched the session. Views were expressed that this work will provide a sound basis for policy discussions on this issue of national import. The workshop called for wider dissemination of findings of the research through publication of a monograph, policy brief and newspaper articles.

Transcript prepared by Marufa Akhter, Member, Young Researchers' Forum of RMMRU

## **RMMRU-DRC Upcoming Workshop on Marginalised Migrant Workers and Social Protection**

**7-9 October 2006, Dhaka**

Social protection is one of the key sub-themes of the Development Research Centre (DRC) on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty at the University of Sussex. Social protection concerns emerge at all stages of migration: before departure, in transit, at destination and upon return. It impinges on internal and international migrants, irrespective of their status (regular or irregular) and also on members of their families. Quite a few research projects are currently being conducted under the DRC initiative that cover social protection issue in Bangladesh and West Bengal and by other partner institutions in Ghana, Egypt and Albania.

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, a partner of the DRC consortium, is organising a three-day workshop on *Marginalised Migrant Workers and Social Protection* on 7-9 October 2006 in Dhaka. The workshop will mainly showcase findings or partial findings of DRC research projects being conducted; while others working on the issue will also be invited.

The workshop among others will address the following issues:

- What kinds of informal measures do migrants take themselves in securing social protection? How effective are these?
- How much social protection vulnerable migrant workers and those they leave behind receive from the state and other formal agencies? To what extent those are accessible?

- Is integrated (formal and informal) social protection a feasible proposition? If so, what role can various actors play (government, development partners, civil society and migrants' networks) in ensuring an integrated social protection strategy for migrants?
- Where does the rights discourse fit in migration and social protection discussions?

The workshop will be attended by academics, civil society activists including migrant support groups and concerned government and development partner agencies in Bangladesh and India. At least one working session will be set aside for the civil society activists to share their experiences. A photo exhibition on experiences of migration has also been planned.

Abstracts of papers need to be sent to the workshop organisers by 15 June 2006. Participants will be sent out formal invitations by 30 June. Full papers are to be submitted by 15 September 2006. Contributors will send revised texts of their papers for a volume on the theme by December 2006. The volume will be published by March 2006.

A registration fee of US\$400 will cover 4 nights' accommodation, all meals, conference dinner and hotel transfer. All correspondence relating to the workshop may be directed at <[www.samren.org](http://www.samren.org)>

Information on the workshop will be periodically updated at and [www.migrationdrc.org](http://www.migrationdrc.org)

# LABOUR MIGRATION FROM THE CHARS

Jessica Skinner

An exploratory research to understand the dynamics of labour migration from the vulnerable riverside chars (islands) on the Jamuna River was commissioned by the Char Livelihood Programme (CLP), DFID. The study was carried out by RMMRU in August 2005 and was based on fieldwork in 9 villages on 7 chars in Gaibandha and Kurigram districts of north-west Bangladesh. In-depth qualitative interviews were carried out with 26 households, and 8 focus group discussions were held with villagers, male migrants and women (*de facto* heads of house).

The study set out to assess the patterns of labour migration and the impact of this livelihood strategy on char residents. Migration is a key livelihood strategy for a vast majority of those living on the chars and is not simply a reaction to shocks, but a well planned household management strategy. Although, in most cases, it has not led to any accumulation of assets this is not entirely out of reach and some char residents have already successfully harnessed some of the benefits of this livelihood. The main benefits of migration in the context of the chars are remittances and livelihood diversification.

Previous studies have recorded that little over 50% of households in the chars contain migrants, while the perceptions of those interviewed for this study were that in each village 70-95% of the households were migrant households. Labour migration from the chars not only supports those who migrate, but also those too poor to migrate benefit from remittance based credit and charity. The importance of this livelihood is thus very clear.

In general only men migrate. Only in exceptional circumstances were women found to migrate for work – either domestic work locally or work in the garments factories of Dhaka. Persons of all ages migrate, including sometimes children as young as 12. Migration from the chars is in general temporary, seasonal and circular. Migrants go away to work for an average of 6-7 months per year, although this ranged from between 3 and 12 months. They frequently alternate employment between an agricultural season and an earthworks contract. Over the year they carry out 3-6 jobs and often go to at least 2-3 destinations. They return home every 1-2 months often between jobs, to rest, give money and check on things back home.

Men migrate in groups to carry out agriculture and earthworks in rural and urban destinations all over Bangladesh. A few men also migrate to carry out road construction or rickshaw pulling. Rickshaw pulling was scarce and thus contrasted with mainland migration patterns. No cases of skilled employment were found. Destinations depend on the availability of work and the socio-economic networks. The groups range in size depending on the occupation and time of year – small groups for agriculture, especially in seasons with limited work – large groups for earthworks and construction. Groups, especially large groups, usually travel with a labour leader. Labour leaders seem to play a significant role in managing the vulnerability of migrants. In some cases they would not only find work for the group and negotiate contracts, but also offer certain forms of social or financial support.

The migrant household were generally very poor and few owned significant amounts of land. Many owned land that was under water, eroded or damaged. While livestock and cultivation of small amounts of land were two important sources of income, migration was the main livelihood for all. Remittances are thus very important for household security. Systems for sending money varied by person and by village; in general remittances are carried by a member of the group, by the labour leader or by the migrant himself. Only one location used the 'money transfer' service at the Post Office.

Even though women in general do not migrate from the chars they are an essential part of the migration process. They stay at home and look after the homestead, the livestock, any land cultivated by the migrant and any dependents. Women also contribute by taking care of finances at home, saving for emergencies and ensuring an adequate supply of in-kind income and food.

Risks involved in migration include covering the initial costs and access to loans, finding good and timely employment, sickness, under- or non-payment, sending remittances, maintaining contact between migrant and household and paying back loans. Migration from the chars is in general tied into a cycle of debt and debt repayment. Loans are taken to cover household expenses during the lean season and to cover initial costs of migration. Remittance money must firstly pay back loans before other household items can be purchased. In general, the system seemed relatively

well balanced, but a shock at any time could tip the household into a downward spiral of debt. The ability to manage money and repay loans shows a huge potential for accumulative migration if debt could be reduced.

Households rely on migration and it is thus important not to restrict their access to it. Instead the priority should be to reduce the risks and costs and maximise the benefits for the household and the community. Risks and costs could be reduced if households were given more opportunities and more choices. Livelihood options need to be diversified and labour markets opened up to char residents. Limited communication with the mainland has restricted access to both cattle

and labour markets. The introduction of new productive activities, skills or information may improve their opportunities both at home and away. Access to alternative credit options would also allow migrant household to better utilise their remittance and invest money in productive assets. Women should also be targeted as key players both socially and economically, harnessing their financial management skills and community networks.

*\* This study was carried out by RMMRU -DRC Intern Jessica Skinner and Tasneem Siddiqui with the support of Pierre Beaudouin, Md. Abdul Manan and Md. Mohshin Sarker.*

## Facts from the Field

# LIVELIHOOD AND SOCIAL PROTECTION OF BANGLADESHI LABOUR MIGRANTS

*Syeda Rozana Rashid*

In October 2004, the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, commissioned a doctoral research titled *Livelihood and Social Protection in International Labour Migration: A Case Study of Bangladesh*.

The research, being conducted by Syeda Rozana Rashid, Research Associate of RMMRU, under a Migration DRC bursary, aims at examining the determinants and consequences of temporary labour migration from Bangladesh to Gulf and other countries of Asia, in terms of individual, family and households. The project seeks to examine inter-relationships between migration and poverty, livelihood, social protection and gender and generations. It aims to explore under what circumstances and economic conditions, marginalised households use international migration as a means to diversify the pattern of household earnings and activities, to improve capacity and flexibility to respond to risks. Migration has been used in this research as a lens to understand social protection available to migrants and their families to fight against risks and losses.

The fieldwork of this research commenced in June 2005 using a combination of methods to gain a better understanding. It was mostly ethnographic in nature and conducted in two villages – Jhautoli and Mohonthon. The villages are located at Daudkandi Upazila of Comilla district 52 kilometres south-east of Dhaka. The Comilla district is known to be one of most migration intensity districts of the country.

During the first two months (June- July 2005) of field work the initial task was to map out the villages. Key areas such as houses, schools, mosques, markets, ponds, roads and bridges were identified in the map. Village maps and documents on land ownerships were also

collected from the Upazila land office. Access to the villages was not a problem as prior contacts were established. Two research assistants were employed from two villages to assist in social mapping, social survey and gain access to households. They also worked as key informants. As part of the plan to develop contacts, the researcher paid her first visits to all migrant and non-migrant houses and explained to them the rationale of the study. This introductory phase was important and fruitful in building rapport with research subjects.

During the next couple of months, a house-to-house sociological survey was conducted in the two villages using a semi-structured questionnaire. Although it is a qualitative research, quantitative data has supplemented and supported qualitative findings. The survey generated information regarding population, households, land distribution, individual and household income in cash and crops, other economic activities, migration history, migrants' background, flows and use of remittances. The researcher has also collected the genealogy along with the sociological survey in order to get kinship data. The socio-economic profile of a significant number of non-migrant households in two villages was also gathered by using a separate questionnaire.

During November 2005- March 2006 period, qualitative data from selected households of these two villages were collected using anthropological tools such as long drawn participatory observation, formal and informal interviews, case studies, life histories and maintenance of a diary. Considerable time was spent in this phase to observe people's way of life, all types of economic activities performed and change in activities according to the season.



Rozana Rashid presenting preliminary research findings at an in-house RMMRU seminar

At this phase, the researcher observed two most important religious festivals. Eid ul Fitre and Eid ul Azha. She also observed a funeral and attended wedding ceremonies to understand expenditure patterns and social change in migrant households. Follow up visits were made to migrant and non-migrant households in order to assess changes in their livelihoods and social protection mechanisms over

time. Different members of the same household were informally interviewed to understand generational and gender issues. Migrants who returned on leave or for good were interviewed because they were in the best position to provide information about their life abroad, problems, ideological change and modernisation impacts of migration on them. More than 20 such returnees were interviewed and monitored during this period. The researchers came across a few migrants-cum-middlemen in the research area who narrated their own involvement in migration business.

According to the research plan, the next three months (June to August 2006) will be a period for processing and analysing data and information collected. During the same period, occasional visits to the villages will be continued to fill up information gaps.

With its mixed methodology and approaches, the research hopes to shed light on socio-economic realities of a migrant community in a migration intensity area of Bangladesh. It is hoped that findings of the research will enrich the knowledge base on labour migration from Bangladesh at individual, household and community levels as well as have major policy implications.

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## RMMRU-NTS Workshop on POPULATION MOVEMENTS: NON-TRADITIONAL ISSUE IN SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY DISCOURSE

22-23 August 2006, Dhaka

Although irregular population movement is increasingly being considered as a source of threat to the security of South Asian countries, it has largely remained unexplored and unexplained. The project looks at national security concerns of the five South Asian states and their implications on human security of those who migrate. The research studies have been carried out to understand the nature and processes of irregular movements, from and within South Asia. It attempts to examine: why migration is being securitised, who are the referent objects, who are the securitising actors, how migration is being securitised, whether migrants do actually constitute threat to security, what are the impacts of securitisation over the human security of migrants, and what are the outcomes of securitisation of migration?

Eight distinct types of flow of population within South Asia and from South Asia to other parts of the world are being studied under the project. The principal researchers of the eight projects are: (1) Haris Gazdar and Rashid Memon of the Collective for Social Research, Karachi; (2) Professor S.T. Hettige of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka; (3) Professor Mahendra P. Lama of Jawaharlal Nehru University, India; (4) Mr. Sanjoy Hazarika of the North-east Institute, India; (5) Dr. Jagannath Adhikari of the Nepal Institute of Development Studies; Kathmandu (6) Dr. C R Abrar of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), (7) Dr. Sumaiya Khair of the University of Dhaka; and (8) Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui of the University of Dhaka

RMMRU is coordinating the research titled *Population Movements: Non-traditional Issue in South Asian Security Discourse* and the project is being supported by The Ford Foundation. In order mark the completion of the project RMMRU is organising a two-day International Workshop on ***Population Movements: Non-traditional Issue in South Asian Security Discourse*** on 22-23 August 2006 in Dhaka. The workshop will mainly showcase findings of NTS studies being conducted; while others working on the issue will also be invited.

The workshop among others will address the following issues:

(a) Irregular Migration and Non-traditional threats to State Security: the Case of Karachi; (b) Securitisation of Migration: The Case of Immigrant Domestic Workers in Delhi; (c) Migration between India and Nepal; (d) Migration for Livelihood to Northeast India; (e) Human security Concerns of Trafficked in Persons; (f) Bangladeshi Workers in Irregular Status in the Gulf States and South-east Asia; (g) Irregular migration from India and Neighbouring countries: Nature, Dimensions and Policy Issues; and (h) Irregular Migration from Sri-Lanka.

The workshop will be attended by academics, civil society activists including migrant support groups and concerned government and development partner agencies.

# DIALOGUES ON TRANSNATIONALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

## LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF TOMMY MIAH

**British Council Auditorium  
4 February 2006**

The first dialogue under the project Transnationalism and Development was titled *Learning from the Experiences of Tommy Miah* was organised by RMMRU at the British Council auditorium at 3:00 pm on Saturday, 4 February 2006 by the Unit in collaboration with the British Council and the British High Commission.

The purpose of the dialogue was to share the experiences of Tommy Miah, the celebrity chef of the UK, a British Bangladeshi, with the students of various tertiary institutions of Dhaka. Speakers at the dialogue highlighted that the country can gain a lot from its large pool of emigrant population. They stressed that the knowledge, skills and expertise that people gain overseas can also be linked with the development process of the country through innovative programmes and initiatives.



Richard Sunderland of the British Council, keynote speaker Tommy Miah and Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui of RMMRU at the Dialogue

Dr. C R Abrar, coordinator, RMMRU, welcomed the participants and briefed about RMMRU objectives and activities. Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui in her introductory statement, observed that increased mobility in this age of globalisation are creating conditions for individuals to become transnationals and efforts are to be made to make maximum gain out of such condition. She gave a summary of the project objectives and work plan and

emphasised on bridging the gap between the British Bangladeshis and their Bangladesh counterparts.

The keynote presenter of the dialogue, entrepreneur and celebrity chef Tommy Miah, narrated his own experience. He mentioned how he attained his success from a humble beginning as a young migrant to the UK. He said diligence, commitment to work, ambition have been the keys for success in his life. Miah said that there is a huge scope of skilled labour in catering and hospitality sectors both at home and abroad and urged young generation to seek newer avenues for employment in this fast changing world. He said more training centres should be created to impart skills on the youth. He urged for the necessity of involvement of Government to increase the opportunity of vocational training in the field of catering and hospitality. There was lively discussion following his presentation.

Special guest Richard Sunderland, Deputy Director of the British Council thanked the speaker for sharing his positive experience with the participants. Among others Professor Mahmudur Rahman of the Department of Psychology, Dhaka University, Mr. Rizwan Bin Farouk and Mrs. Rubina Faruk participated in the discussion. More than a hundred students of various Universities and Tommy Miah's Institute of Hospitality Management as well as NGO representatives participated in the dialogue.

## CONNECTING THE YOUTH RMMRU Seminar Room, Dhaka 23 February, 2006

The second dialogue on *Connecting the Youth* was organised by the RMMRU under the project Transnationalism and Development in collaboration with the British Council and the British High Commission at RMMRU office on Thursday, 23 February, 2006. At the outset of the session Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui, Chair, RMMRU, welcomed the participants, highlighted the difference between Transnationalism and Diaspora and the contribution of the Bangladeshi emigrants overseas. The discussants of the programme were Nabil Ahmed, Delwar Hussain, Aiyaz Ahmed, Shabbir Ahmed and Mohammad Masud Chowdhury.

The objective of the dialogue was to bridge the gap

between the British Bangladeshis and their Bangladeshi counterparts.

Delwar Hossain (British-Bangladeshi, Ph.D fellow, London University) expressed concern that the third generation British born Bangladeshis are becoming more Islamists. He stated that religious groups gain access to community by doing social work. They include providing education and supporting drug rehabilitation schemes. He informed that most of the British-Bangladeshis live in poor areas and get ill paid jobs. They are also subjected to racism. He said that alienation from the mainstream lead them to be more fatalist. Hossain thought opportunities to get to know the roots in Bangladesh would be a good step for the British Bangladeshi youth. In this regard he supported the idea of setting up a website mooted under the project.



Participants of the dialogue Connecting the Youth, second in the series Transnationalism and Development

Nabil Ahmed, who worked with BRAC focused that the third generation British-Bangladeshis should be informed on secular national festivals such as Pahela Baisakh (Bengali new year's day) and Ekushey February (language movement day). In this regard the website can be of great help, he noted.

Aiyaz Ahmed (British-Pakistani, volunteer with Daneford Trust) focused on changing patterns of problems faced by three generations of British-Bangladeshis. He said that while the first generation experienced racism that had overt violence associated with it (such murder, getting beaten up), particularly in the north UK, the second generation developed resistance and formed their own organisations to counter such forces. Now the third generation faces economic and class discrimination. He emphasised on translating Bengali books into English that can help the emigrant British Bangladeshi community getting acquainted with the richness of Bangla literature. He also focused on providing information on Bangladeshi

history, culture, art, music and festivals in the website.

Dr. Shabbir Ahmed (Returnee Academic from the UK) highlighted that contribution of the younger generation of the British Bangladeshis in the knowledge economy of the UK. This indicates gradual upward mobility of the British Bangladeshis. He said there exists an information gap among younger generation of British Bangladeshis. Efforts must be made to bridge that gap, Ahmed pleaded.

Mohammad Masud Chowdhury (Lecturer, Independent University) also highlighted the need for a website to provide information to the British Bangladeshis. He noted that chat facilities would be beneficial for them. He stressed that website should be made informative as well as interesting. Apart from general information, music and cultural issues should be highlighted to draw the attention of the youth. Information on music icons such as Lalon would be of great interest, he reckoned. Exchange programmes, fellowships and internships available at Bangladeshi academic and non-government institutions may also be posted at the website. He thought that mainland Bangladeshis are more liberal than the diasporic community and hence efforts must be made to portray the secular roots of the country.

In her concluding statement Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui said that generational gap continues to be a problem for all diasporic communities. The younger generations want more freedom and take decisions about their own life such as choosing partners or career paths. These are often resisted by older generation. She also highlighted the need for providing opportunities so that younger generation get to know their roots. Summer schools, exchange programmes and cultural visits could be some methods for providing such exposure. She noted that initiatives need to be taken to present the secular roots of Bangladeshis that are often ignored by the diaspora groups.

Among others, Helen de Gier of the British High Commission, Ms. Roberta Kacowicz and Shabnaaz Zahereen of the British Council, Dr. C R Abrar and RMMRU research and programme associates attended the dialogue.

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Report on the 3rd Dialogue on *Labour and Student Migration to the UK* will be published in next issue of Udbastu - Editor

4th Dialogue of the Series  
*Transnationalism and Development*  
**Opportunities and Challenges of  
Non-Resident Bangladeshi Investment:  
Experience of the Nandan Group**

The British Council Auditorium 3 pm 11 July 2006

## RMMRU-DRC SEMINAR ON NEW IMMIGRATION POLICIES OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Speakers at a seminar called for creation of conditions for increased mobility of labour across national borders. They also underscored the need for an understanding between the labour surplus developing countries and labour deficit developed countries to work out arrangement for such mobility.

The seminar on 'Acceptance or Rejection: New Immigration Policies of Developed Countries' was organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at the Centre for Advanced Research in Humanities under the auspices of the DRC on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty on Saturday, 25 February 2006. Dr. Daniel Chirot, Professor of the Washington University of Seattle in his keynote address stated that while poverty and relative poverty in many developing societies are working as push factors, lower fertility rate, increase in the proportion of aged population and other factors have created demands for labour in many sectors in European and North American economies. Instead of facilitating the flow of labour, from south to north, in responding to economic needs, more and more restrictions are being placed by the developed countries. These are done on extra-economic considerations, often shaped by right wing political forces, he stated.



Prof. Daniel Chirot speaking at the Seminar

Prof. Chirot stated that migrants make major contributions in the economies of destination countries, One-half of Ph.Ds in hard sciences of the US universities is foreign students, without which it would be impossible for the US to keep its competitive edge in industry, science and technology, he noted. A major challenge of western democracies, particularly in post 9/11 situation, will be framing policies that assuage concerns of migrant population, he observed.

Dr. C R Abrar, the chair of the session, stated that failure to allow labour through regular channels to a

large extent encourages flows through irregular routes. Recent efforts to understand irregular migration should necessarily focus on the demand aspect of the problem, he stated.

Among others, Prof. Ramjul Huq, Prof. Ruksana Kibria and Sayed Imtiaz Ahmed of Department of International Relations participated in the discussion. Students and faculty members of the university and representatives of the foreign missions attended the seminar.

### CARAM CONSULTATION ON HIV AIDS AND MOBILITY HELD

Nadeem Siddiqui\*

South Asia Migration Resource Network (SAMReN) was invited to participate in a consultation organised by Coordination of Action Research on AIDS & Mobility-Asia (CARAM) based in Kuala Lumpur on 2-3 October 2005.

The organisers stressed that the meeting was to focus on CARAM's programme that were carried out over the past few years, followed by an evaluation for future initiatives. Another objective was how other organisations participating in the consultation could link their programmes to CARAM's Mobility and HIV/AIDS programme.

On the first day of the meeting, Ms. Irene Fernandez of Tenaganitak, Malaysia presented her paper on the theme *From Action to Reflection: Milestones to CARAM, VMG*. It was followed by a discussion session conducted by Mara Quaseda. Suggestions were made for lobbying different inter-governmental organisations such as SAARC and ASEAN to promote the issue of HIV AIDS and mobility. The participants then engaged in group meeting focussing on three issues, (i) current initiatives, (ii) point of convergence with CARAM and (iii) the challenges that lie ahead. On the second day a preparatory meeting for the meetings on Domestic Workers in Bahrain in February 2006 and in Jordan in August 2006 was held to move forward with the 'Colombo Declaration 2002' on Domestic Workers of CARAM ASIA.

Dr. Ganesh Gurung of the Nepal Institute of Development Studies then addressed the Board of Directors and the General Assembly of CARAM-ASIA. The structure, membership, goals and future plans of the organisation were discussed. Ms. Irene Fernandez presented the overall summary and conclusions of the meeting.

\*Nadeem Siddiqui is the Project Director of SAMReN.



# SOUTH ASIA MIGRATION RESOURCE NETWORK BULLETIN

## ILO Stakeholders' Workshop Underscores Pre-departure Orientation Training for Safe Migration

International Labour Office (ILO), Dhaka organised a seminar on '*Stakeholders' Workshop on International Migration*' which was held at the auditorium of BCS Administrative Academy, Dhaka on 22 December, 2005 and chaired by Mr. Ashfaque Hamid, Secretary of Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. The workshop was arranged to discuss the findings of the research titled, *Information Campaign on Safe Migration and Pre-departure Training* conducted by Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui, Professor, Political Science, University of Dhaka along with Syeda Rozana Rashid and Benjamin Zeitlyn.

The workshop was divided into two sessions: inaugural session and working session. The inaugural session commenced with the welcome speech by Mr. Gopal Bhattacharya, Director of ILO, Dhaka. Mr. Shafikur Rahman Mazumdar, Chairman, NCCWE, Mr. Farooq Ahmed, Secretary, Bangladesh Employers' Federation and Mr. Ashfaque Hamid, the Chair of the programme. The working session was started with the presentation by Dr. Siddiqui, the lead researcher. Following her presentation, Rozana Rashid, co-researcher of the project, presented case studies of Sri Lanka and the Philippines. An open-floor discussion took place after the presentations. Besides, Salauddin Akbar, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and Mohammad Moniruzzaman, Senior Assistant Secretary of the same ministry shared the experience of their recent visits to Sri Lanka and the Philippines, the countries which have been highly successful in managing out-migration. ILO, Dhaka commissioned and sponsored both the research and the visits.

In his welcome speech, Mr. Gopal Bhattacharya,

Director of ILO, Dhaka, stated that international migration is an important issue because of its close link with remittance, employment and image of a country. However, despite of their enormous contribution to the well-being of their countries, migrant workers and their families face numerous problems both in home country and host country. He said that though a fair amount of work has been carried out on migration both in academic and practical fields with agencies such as International Labour Office (ILO) playing a significant role, migration process is yet to turn into a smooth and safe process.

In his speech, Mr. Shafikur Rahman Mazumdar, Chairman, NCCWE, pointed out a host of problems facing migrant workers at the different stages of migration namely pre-departure, post-arrival and 'upon return'. He questioned the commitment of the Government in respect to the welfare of migrant workers. He stressed that the Government should address these issues immediately since this sector earns huge amount of foreign exchange for the country.

In his remarks, Mr. Farooq Ahmed, Secretary, Bangladesh Employers' Federation, stated that international migration is an issue of great significance for Bangladesh. In explaining the significance, he observed that there are more than 3 million Bangladeshi migrant workers. Their remittances account for more than 4% of Bangladesh's total GDP. He noted that the remittances of migrant workers play a very important role in maintaining balance of payment of Bangladesh when the foreign reserve of the country declines.

In his speech, the Chief Guest, Mr. Ashfaque Hamid, Secretary of Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, stated that the need for skilled

labour is mounting in the West in the context of their declining birth rate. Developing countries, endowed with labour, like Bangladesh can avail them of this opportunity by developing the skill of their population. He assured that his ministry is always ready to look into any complaints, provided those are submitted properly.

### **Presentations by the Researchers**

In her presentation on 'Content, Objective, Methodology and Definition' Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui, mentioned that the Bangladesh government has prepared policy document on safe migration. Following the lead from the policy, the aim of the current research was to learn from the experiences of Sri Lanka and the Philippines. More specifically the study was focused how those two countries organised their information campaigns among the migrants and to suggest ways for their replication in Bangladesh. She further stated that the research attempted to chart out a 'Plan of Action' to protect migrants' rights to be followed by the civil society and the government.

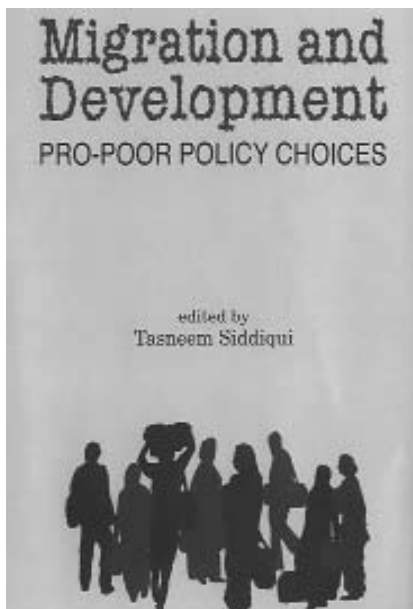
Dr. Siddiqui observed that remittance has always been highlighted as the only contribution of migrant workers. The main cause of focusing on remittance, she pointed out, is that it is visible and can easily be calculated to figure out the contribution in monetary terms. She emphasised that Bangladesh did not realise this contribution before 1990 and therefore did not give any particular attention to protect migrant workers' rights. She stated that it was the ILO who for the first time identified migrant workers as the most 'vulnerable' section of the global labour force since they are treated badly at different stages of migration namely pre-departure, post arrival and upon return.

Moreover, due to a limited access to the policy-making process, they cannot enjoy the benefits of migration that they deserve. She went on to say that despite positive developments there remain many challenges ahead and much room for improvement. Dr. Siddiqui discussed the objective and methodology of the study. Before handing over the floor to Ms. Rashid she gave a clear definition of Information Campaign and Pre-Departure Orientation Training.

Syeda Rozana Rashid, PhD Research Fellow, Sussex University, UK, divided her presentation into three parts: first part was titled "General Overview and Key Actors", the second was titled "Information Campaign on Safe Migration" while the last part was titled "Pre-departure Orientation Training". After her presentation on state of information campaign, Dr. Siddiqui narrated state of pre-departure training in Bangladesh followed by recommendations.

The presentations of Dr. Siddiqui and Ms. Rashid were followed by a question-answer session. Representatives from different stakeholders raised questions on different points presented.

It was a well-attended programme. Many experts and activists working for the rights of migrant workers took active part in the workshop. More importantly, it was attended by the representatives of the relevant ministry, which formulates policy and regulates the sector. The idea of safe migration was stressed by all participants of the workshop. The researchers presented a good number of policy recommendations for safe migration. In this regard, they pointed out that there are lessons to be learnt from countries like Sri Lanka and the Philippines.



### **New Publications**

**MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT- PRO-POOR POLICY CHOICES** Edited by Tasneem Siddiqui: University Press Limited, Bangladesh, 2005, ISBN-1984 05 1752X, pp.487, Price: BDT 540.

Based on internal and international migration experiences of five countries of Asia - China, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Vietnam - this book dispels the notion that migration indicates failure of development. On the contrary, it views migration as an integral part of the global development.

The book makes a comprehensive analysis of labour recruitment process for internal and international markets, work conditions, entitlements and available protection mechanisms, extent of involvement of civil society institutions and policy environments in the countries concerned. It demonstrates that migration generally has a significant positive impact on the livelihoods and well-being of those who migrate and also on sending and receiving areas. However, reasons operational at both the sending and receiving ends have made migration an extremely complex phenomenon and risks of migration are borne disproportionately more by the migrants, particularly the poor. The volume emphasises that, through effective governance, appropriate policies and actions at national, regional and international levels, the negative consequences of migration can be reduced and its developmental impact enhanced.



International Labour Migration from Bangladesh: A Decent Work Perspective by Tasneem Siddiqui, In ternational Labour Organisation, Geneva, Switzerland 2006, ISBN 92-2-118056-5 (Printed Version), ISBN 92-2-118057-3 (Web Version) ,pp. 44

Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui prepared this paper to serve as a basis for policy dialogue and for formulation of actions under the Bangladesh Decent Work Pilot Programme. Bangladesh was one of eight countries that participated in the Decent Work Pilot Programme (2002-2005). Overseas employment is one of the major ways Bangladesh is integrated into the global economy. Remittances from Bangladeshis working in foreign labour markets amount to US\$ 4 billion/year, the biggest net inflow of foreign exchange.

While there has been substantial literature on international labour migration from Bangladesh, Dr. Siddiqui assessed the patterns and issues from a fresh perspective by using the Decent Work framework. In this paper, she proposes a number of policy and institutional measures to improve Bangladeshi workers' employment opportunities and redress problems they face.

Dr. Siddiqui presented the highlights of her paper at the National Policy Dialogue on Globalisation and Decent Work, held in Dhaka, April 2004, which

aimed to initiate a broad based dialogue on key issues among social partners and other major national stakeholders, elicit ideas on ways to address the issues, and consolidates support for the decent work pilot programme for action.

Her paper is being made available for wider circulation because it is relevant to the broader debate on international labour migration, particularly to current questions about labour standards and rights of overseas workers and governance over cross-border labour flows.

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A seminar on *Acceptance or Rejection: Recent Immigration Policies of Developed Countries* was organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit on 25 February 2006 at the Dhaka University. Dr. Daniel Chirot, Professor of the Washington University at Seattle, was the keynote speaker. Among others, Prof. Ramul Huq, Prof. Ruksana Kibria and Sayed Imtiaz Ahmed of the Department of International Relations of University of Dhaka participated in the discussion. For details see the report on page 16

### **Project Activities**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the management committee of NTS project was held on 30 January 2006. Financial Report of Oct-Dec 05 quarter was approved by the committee.

RMMRU participated in the Ekushy Boy Mela (National Book Fair) held on 1-28 February 2006 held at the Bangla Academy premises. Apart from displaying its own publications (books, occasional papers, training manuals and research reports) books on migration and displacement by other publishers were also put on display.

### **Visits**

As a part of Ford Project on NTS in Asia, the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore convened the Ford-IDSS 3<sup>rd</sup> regional plenary meeting of the Ford grantees on 2-3 March 2006 in Singapore. Dr. C R Abrar and Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui; Lead Researchers of two components of RMMRU Ford NTS study participated in the plenary.

Mr. Mohd. Abdur Rashid, Senior Programme Officer of South Asia Migration Resource Network attended at training on *Project Cycle Management and Logical Framework Approach* which was held on 6-8 February at the BRAC Inn, Dhaka. The training was conducted by the European Commission Asia-Link Programme.

Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder, Research Associate of RMMRU, participated in the conference on *Peace and Justice*, organised by the Focus on the Global South held in Mumbai from 24-26 February 2006. He presented a paper on *Migration and Displacement in South Asia*. Sikder's participation was facilitated by the Migrant Forum in Asia, a Manila based network on migration.

**Workshop / Seminar / Dialogue**

The first dialogue under the project *Transnationalism and Development* was held at the British Council auditorium, Dhaka on Saturday, 4 February 2006. The theme of the dialogue was *Learning from the Experience of Tommy Miah*. It was organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit in collaboration with the British Council and the British High Commission. Celebrity chef Tommy Miah was the keynote speaker. For details see the report on page 14

The second dialogue under the *Transnationalism and Development* project was titled *Connecting the Youth*. It was organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit in collaboration with the British Council at RMMRU office on Thursday, 23 February, 2006. Several young British Bangladeshis and returnee Bangladeshi migrants from the UK participated in the dialogue. For details see the report on page 14

The national workshop titled *Mobility of Skilled Labour from Bangladesh: The Case of Nurses* was jointly organised by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of Dhaka University and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, based at the University of Sussex was held at CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka on Thursday, 16 February 2006. Prof. Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman was the keynote speaker and Dr. Mohammed Farashuddin, President, East West University chaired the session. For details see the report on page 7

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