



 Policy Forum on
**Fairer Labour
Migration**

Event Report **Narail 02**

February 2018

Review migration process and policies through **gender lens**



The Event

Migrant workers are vulnerable to frauds both in their home and abroad in different phases of the migration process. Such situation is largely fueled by lack of information about the processes and their rights. This situation is even worse for women migrants in destination countries. Hence, the need to hold a gender focused Policy Forum on labour migration was critical.

To understand the migration related problems specific to women and to come up with some plausible solutions to them, IID organised a Policy Forum for the second time at Kalia Upazila of Narail District on February 15, 2018. The Policy Forum was organised in partnership with Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA), as part of IID's policy advocacy initiative to promote Fairer Labour Migration through PROKAS project of British Council.



The issues

Gender blindness worsens the already underdeveloped migration policies and programmes for female migrants. In general, people who aspire to migrate abroad are from the poor socio-economic cluster of the society having lesser access to basic needs of life. The scenario is even worse when it comes to women as they are identified in the Bangladesh context as one of the most vulnerable groups. Therefore, with the rise of Bangladeshi women looking for overseas employment opportunities, the need to amend policies and processes of migration keeping gender inclusivity as a priority is crucial. In the coming days, IID envisions to advocate gender sensitive migration policies.



The Discussion

The session was focused on finding the issues experienced by women in migration process due to their gender identity. Following issues were discussed during the session:

Troublesome migration process

Women participants of the forum shared their experiences of how they face trouble in different stages of the migration process. Lack of information was identified as a major drawback to most migrant workers in the first Policy Forum at Narail. Labour migration information is readily available in different forms but there is reluctance from the aspiring migrants to seek information or to make informed decision while processing migration. This fact is equally applicable for the women who aspire to migrate for work.

Dependence on male family members for decision-making

The first hindrance that women face is from their own family. Family do not cooperate until there is financial crisis. Women are dependent on male

family members or relatives or sometimes even the middlemen in every step (such as applying for passport, visa, medical test and so on) of the migration process. In most cases migration processing for aspiring women migrants is subject to the approval of male counterparts.

One track skill training

The skill training arrangements for women is still limited to domestic worker training. Semi-skilled ambitious women aspire to explore other employment opportunities. To avail any other employment opportunities, diversification of skill training arrangement is crucial. It is also helpful to get an initial language training specific for the destination country. One woman participant from the forum mentioned about the importance of skill development training. Training on skills other than domestic help, for example tailoring, commercial cleaning and nursing could widen the domain of new job opportunity for the migrant women.

Harassment in destination countries



Some participants from the forum shared their concerns about different forms of harassment faced by women in destination countries. It was evident from the ideas of some returnee migrants that when a woman is harassed in the destination country, she initially leaves the employer and seeks help through informal channels to manage employment in another place. Dependencies on informal channels make them more prone to frauds.

Misinformed grassroots women

The mobility of rural women is mostly confined within their neighbourhood. They seek information from the male family members or their neighbourhood. It is very easy to misguide them and the probability of fraudulence is higher among ill-informed rural people. Government and other agencies should actively reach rural women with migration information to reduce women's dependency on male members of the society.



Gender sensitive migration process

Gender sensitisation of every step in the migration process is a must to ensure fairer labour migration. Gender sensitive migration process backed by prudent migration policies will make international migration for women more accessible and safe.

Empowerment to minimise dependence on family members

Women empowerment is crucial for minimising dependence on family members especially on male members. Only empowered women can take informed decision and process their migration on their own.

Diversification of skill training

Diversification of women's skill is essential to explore employment opportunities for Bangladeshi women migrants other than domestic help.



The Suggestions

After the discussion, participants were asked about the plausible solutions. Following recommendations came from them:

Review all policies through gender lens

Since female migrants face different challenges and problems than male migrants throughout the migration process, all development initiatives and public policies should be audited through a gender lens. Policy analysis and evaluation using a gender lens and its effective implementation will ensure fairer labour migration for aspiring women migrants.

Seek help from formal channel when in trouble

Participants suggested that the women migrants should seek help from Bangladesh High Commission rather than taking support from any other sources in case of any harassment or trouble faced in the destination countries.

Increased access to information in rural areas

Considering multiple constraints for rural women to access information, government should make information more available to the rural women to ensure that women are making informed decisions. Channels of information dissemination should be rethought for reaching a larger audience.



The Policy Forum

IID Policy Forum, also known as “AncholikAlapon” in Bangla, is a discussion series that brings grassroots voice to the national policy process. Typically organised at the local level, the series follows an innovative and adaptive format to conduct policy discussions involving multi-stakeholders from local communities. There is no designated Chairperson or special guest in the forums where participants get engaged as equals. A specific set of groundwork and pre-event activities ensure non-hierarchical active involvement by different stakeholders.



The Participants

The forum exclusively consisted of women participants of the community including returnee migrants, aspirant migrants and female members of the migrant families. Besides, the forum included representatives from IID, BOMSA and PROKAS. Considering the sensitivity of information shared by women, IID’s female moderators conducted the session for a comfortable discussion environment.

100% Female



Migrant's family member 67%

Returnee migrants 15%



Aspirant migrants 3%

Departing migrants 15%

Report by:



a public policy institute