



Bridging the information gap for fairer labour migration



The Event

Ill-informed migrants going abroad are more vulnerable to abuse and fraudulence. Lack of knowledge make them vulnerable to fraudulence and abuse. Bridging the gap between migrants and the information would reduce likelihood of such occurrences. IID Policy Forum on Fairer Labour Migration focused on accessibility of information among aspirant migrants to bridge the information gap. The Forum was organised by Institute of Informatics and Development (IID) in Kalia, Narail on 13 August 2017 in partnership with Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA).



The Discussion

Discussion with Narail locals centred around how **lack of information has been a major disadvantage to most aspiring migrants** for a fairer labour migration.

It has caused migrants to get scammed by local middlemen, getting recruited into wrong job and sent to wrong places. Information is readily available for migrants in many forms: books, pamphlets, brochures and posters. However aspirant migrants living in rural areas usually do not have any access to such information. Due to this gap in access to knowledge, migrants get scammed by a strong local network of recruiting agencies and middlemen.

Scamming migrants has been quite rampant in Bangladesh:

Offering fake jobs, misinformation about salary, placements in different companies, etc. In some instances, migrants had received lesser salary than what was written in the agreement paper. As most migrants going abroad are mostly low-skilled and cannot read what is written in their agreement form, they easily fall for any sort of scam. Although government has created several types of helping centres to support the migrants, the lack of awareness as well as interest from migrant's end has made the process difficult. The **gap in knowledge** has also

compelled migrants to turn to middlemen as they carry out the process thoroughly of sending them abroad.

Thus **most migrants tend to rely on middlemen** more and hesitate to seek support from official formal process seems lengthy and difficult to them. Therefore, to ensure that aspirant migrants are aware of their legal rights, every agent and government body should be required to display necessary information and migrant's rights on their premise.

Another source of problem is **corruption among different official bodies**. Although government has provided every type of support to migrants, corruption has made the process of officially going abroad quite difficult. It has compelled the migrants to turn to middlemen as they do all the paperwork and know the process of going abroad thoroughly. They rely on middlemen more and hesitate to seek support from the officials as formal process seems lengthy and troublesome to them.

Medical offices are another source of corruption where medical reports are allegedly changed.

The discussion ended with another round of questions regarding “prevention measure to not to fall victim of scams” and “what steps can be taken if someone falls victim of scamming”.

The Suggestions

The following suggestions were laid out:

1. **Mandatory display of the legal rights** of a migrant by agents and government offices so that migrants have easier access to the rules and regulations.
2. **Create awareness** about existing rules against illicit transaction.
3. Make **government services more accessible** through monitoring.
4. Awareness building campaigns of the government services must **reach the grass root level**.

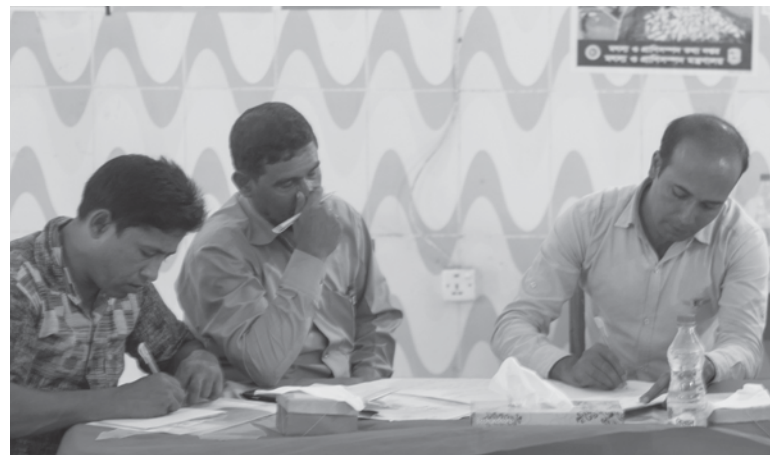


5. Foreign Missions of Bangladesh can work with foreign recruiting agencies to **make the process more formal**.

6. Government must assure **visa processing through formal channels**, not through middlemen.

 **The Policy Forum**

IID Policy Forum, also known as 'AncholikAlapon' in Bangla, is a discussion series that brings grassroots voice to 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 guests in the forums where participants get engaged as equals. A specific set of groundwork and pre-event activities ensure a non-hierarchical active involvement by different stakeholders.





IID's policy advocacy for Fairer Labour Migration (FLM) is part of the PROKAS (Promoting Knowledge for Accountable Systems) project. PROKAS is funded by the UK's Department for International Development and implemented by a consortium led by the British Council, supported by Palladium and WISE Development.

The issues

Although the migrant workers contribute to the huge remittance base, they have to deal with various problems before and after reaching destination countries. These problems ensue because the migration process is devoid of transparency, accountability and access to information, giving rise to informal mechanisms. Consequently, cost of migration goes up, imposing the burden on aspirant migrants. Once they have migrated overseas, they face harassment and discrimination, both financially and socially. While supporting evidence of these exploitations exist, little attention is being given to make the process fairer and efficient, through access and right to information.

The Participants

The forum included representatives from IID and BOMSA, aspirant migrants, returnee migrants, local political leaders, middlemen, NGO Activists, local CSO representatives, youth group representatives, UNO and others. The forum consisted of 20 males and 17 females who actively engaged and contributed to the discussion.

