



Bangladesh Country Programme

Briefing Note

December 2014

Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium
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What is the Issue?

The UNDP's 2009 Human Development Report estimates that 740 million people migrate internally and another 90 million migrate within developing country regions, often to improve development prospects for themselves and their families and due to lack of alternatives. Migration can contribute to improving the economic and social well-being of migrants and their families. However, it can also expose migrants to new vulnerabilities, such as debt and limited access to services. Political authorities and origin and destination communities often do not have effective policies in place to adequately manage migration.

While many governments in the Global South and international donors have become aware of the importance of migration for poverty reduction, they lack substantive evidence and data that can help them to maximise the benefits of migration and minimise its potential harms.

What is the Programme?

The [Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme](#) Consortium is a seven year (2010-2017) multi-partner research programme with funds of £6.425m provided by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), which aims to generate policy relevant evidence on the nature and extent of internal and regional (South-South) migration.

The Consortium is led by the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex, with partners based in five regions: in South Asia, the Bangladesh-based Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at the University of Dhaka; in Southeast Asia, the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore; in West Africa, the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana; in East Africa, the African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) in Nairobi; and in Southern Africa, the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa.

Each partner, under the guidance and support of the Consortium lead, is responsible for designing and conducting research projects that address the overall programme research questions. The projects consist of academic research, complemented by activities to ensure the communication of findings and influencing of migration policy and practice. For more information, please contact: <migrationrpc@sussex.ac.uk> or visit <<http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/>>.

What the programme aims to achieve:

The research conducted by each partner is designed to address the following programme objectives:

- To understand why migration plays a significant role in poverty reduction in some places and contexts, but not in others
- To explore the transformational potential of migration on poverty
- To contribute to the generation of quality data on migration
- To have a strong policy focus
- To influence policy and practice through engagement with key stakeholders among policy makers, the media and civil society

Past and On-Going Activities in Bangladesh:

Currently the Consortium partner in Bangladesh, the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), is concluding four research projects.

1. Household survey in six districts of Bangladesh

This survey of 1,200 households in six districts aimed to provide quantitative data that will contribute to our understanding of the role that migration plays in poverty reduction. The survey collected data on demographics, migration, remittances and wellbeing, and was administered to household heads as well as returned migrants. The survey yielded data on the relationship between migration and poverty, which was analysed to identify the factors that mediate and shape the impact of migration on poverty.

A final report on the project findings has been submitted. The database generated by the project provides quality data on internal and regional migration (although all types are covered) that will form part of the open access dataset being constructed by the Consortium.

2. Cross-Border Movement of the Rohingyas from Burma: Exclusion, vulnerability and coping mechanisms

This study aimed to develop a better understanding of the experiences of the Rohingyas as they migrate from Burma to Bangladesh. It investigated the socio-economic profile of unregistered Rohingya households in four Upazillas in Cox's Bazar district of Southern Bangladesh, their migration experiences and coping strategies, and their experiences of accessing services and social protection. This qualitative research included a short questionnaire with 300 households (200 Rohingyas, 80 internal migrants & 20 non-migrants), key informant interviews with officials and local leaders from host communities, and semi-structured interviews with migrants. A final report on the project has been submitted.

A workshop held on 16 March 2014 discussed the research findings and included representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and DFID Bangladesh among the 50 participants.

3. Institutional Strengthening of the Office of Labour Attachés

This qualitative research project was designed to identify a number of measures for strengthening the offices of labour attachés of three countries of origin – Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India – located in three destination countries – Malaysia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar. The research comprised secondary literature reviews and semi-structured interviews with key informants including migrant workers, labour attachés, government functionaries and civil society representatives.

This project identified measures for strengthening the offices of labour attachés to protect migrant workers from poor working conditions, and to ensure adequate provision of job- and welfare-related information.

A workshop to share the project's findings with a policy audience took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 9 September 2014 and was attended by 65 participants including representatives from the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Employment, Ministry of Labour and Employment, the International Organization of Migration and two representatives from the Qatar embassy.

A policy dialogue focused on project findings relevant to female migrants, 'Labour Attachés: The Protectors of Female Migrants in the Middle East', was held in Dhaka on 17 November 2014. The 40 participants included representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Public Administration, and the International Organisation of Migration (IOM).

A working paper based on this research is available online:

'Institutional Strengthening of the Office of Labour Attaché: Research Findings from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka': <<http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/documents/wp23-abrar-et-al-2014-institutional-strengthening-of-the-office-of-labour-attachés-final.pdf>>

4. Impact of Migration on Poverty: the case of construction workers of India, Nepal and Bangladesh

This was a mixed methods research project aimed at studying the conditions facing migrant construction workers in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The two objectives of the research were to identify: (1) the mechanisms by which migration in this sector can lead to poverty reduction for households of sending families at source; and (2) how living and working conditions of migrant workers can be improved. The research specifically explored the role of social networks, skills development and social protection programmes as mechanisms for reducing poverty and vulnerability. The research comprised a questionnaire survey of 150 construction workers in each study area, focus group discussions, and in-depth case histories of migrants, including direct observation of their living conditions. The research findings show that migration into construction work has helped the families of migrants improve consumption, accumulate assets and educate their children.

A stakeholder consultation meeting to highlight the project findings took place in October 2013 in Dhaka.

Country-specific policy briefs from this project were published in September 2014, and are available online:

'Impact of Labour Migration to the Construction Sector on Poverty: Evidence from India' - <http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/documents/rmmru-rp002-india-policy-brief-13-sep14.pdf>

'Internal migrant construction workers in Nepal: tackling exploitative labour practices to enhance migration's impact on poverty reduction' - [Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit \(Sep 2014\) 'Internal migrant construction workers in Nepal: tackling exploitative labour practices to enhance migration's impact on poverty reduction' \[PDF 1.69MB\]](#)

'Internal migrant workers and the construction sector in Bangladesh: Tackling informality and exploitative labour practices' -

<<http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/files/file.php?name=rmmru-rp002-bangladesh-policy-brief-11-sep14.pdf&site=354>>

Future Activities in Bangladesh:

RMMRU is also in the process of finalising three research projects to be conducted from the beginning of 2015 to June 2016:

1. Intra household dynamics with a specific focus on age and gender

This research strand will contribute to the programme objective of understanding the transformational effect of migration on poverty through investigating the changes in social and gender relations that take place as a result of household members migrating. Three inter-related areas will be investigated. Firstly, how remittances are used and managed within the household. Secondly, the changing gender relations within the household as different household members migrate, and the patterns of re-integration of return migrants into the economic and social life of their families and communities. Thirdly, what the impact of long-standing migration is on the perceptions and aspirations of young people, with regard to the place of migration in their own future trajectories.

This research will be primarily qualitative, with households drawn from the 1,200 households surveyed in the completed quantitative household survey (see above Project 1 in 'the Past and On-going Activities Section') for in-depth interviews with different household members.

2. Policy Processes

This research theme will analyse the dynamics of policy formulation and implementation with a focus on power relations, different interest groups, the role of civil society and the interaction between national and local government. The proposed research project in Bangladesh will complement similar research in Singapore and South Africa. The three country comparative study will explore the national trafficking law in South Africa, and the regulation requiring a weekly rest day for domestic workers has been introduced in Singapore, whereas in Bangladesh, despite much lobbying and advocacy by civil society, protection legislation for domestic workers has not been introduced.

This qualitative research project will involve semi-structured interviews with stakeholders involved in the different aspects of policy formulation and will contribute directly to the programme objective of research with a policy focus.

3. Migration Industry

This strand of research will investigate the formal and informal private sector operators facilitating the recruitment and placement of Bangladeshi construction workers in Gulf States and Southeast Asian countries. The research will focus specifically on the costs of these services borne by the migrants themselves, and the degree and nature of regulations that govern the operation of these private sector providers.

This qualitative research will involve semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in this sector, including private sector providers and migrants. The findings will contribute to the programme objective of providing a policy focus through a greater understanding of whether better regulation of the industry would reduce the costs of migration and enable migrants to benefit more fully from their migration.

Related Activities:

CDKN Research Project on Migration and Climate Change in Bangladesh

The Sussex Centre for Migration Research (also based in the School of Global Studies at University of Sussex) and RMMRU implemented a Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) funded project on climate change-related migration in Bangladesh in 2012-13. The project aimed to understand, plan for and respond to climate-induced migration. It sought ways to reduce vulnerability and build resilience of the Bangladeshi people to withstand the impact of climate change.

A series of policy briefs from the project are available on the Migrating out of Poverty website: <<http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/research/migrationandclimatechange/bangladesh/publications>>

A related film, Climate change and migration in Bangladesh – Living on the go, commissioned by the CDKN team, can be viewed at: <http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/research/migrationandclimatechange/bangladesh>

KNOMAD Conference on Internal Migration

RMMRU co-hosted a conference on internal migration with the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), which is coordinated by the World Bank, on 30 April – 1 May 2014, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This conference brought together researchers, policymakers, development planners and practitioners from around the world to look at internal movement of people and urbanization processes, what that means for development, and how appropriate policies could be framed to ensure the rights of the migrants are protected. Several researchers from Consortium partners presented papers at the conference that documented the findings from Migrating out of Poverty research programme projects. See: <http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/research/migrationandurbanisation/knomad>

See also the Asia Research Institute's (ARI) project in Singapore: ***Migration and Precarious Work: Negotiating Debt, Employment and Livelihood Strategies Amongst Bangladeshi Migrant Men Working in Singapore's Construction Industry***