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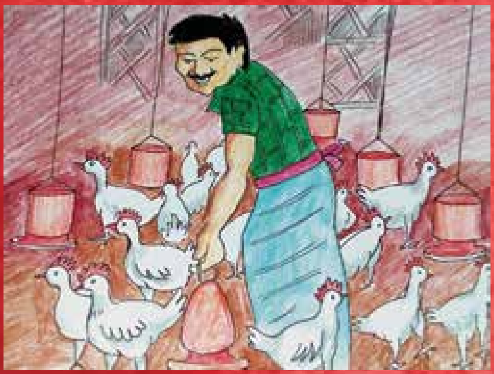
International Labour Organization

The homecoming

Profiling the returning migrant workers of Bangladesh



International Labour Organization
Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
Bangladesh Employers' Federation

The homecoming:

profiling the returning migrant workers of Bangladesh

ILO Country Office for Bangladesh
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Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
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Preface

Aimed at providing support in planning social and professional reintegration of migrant workers, the International Labour Organization in partnership with the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training had organized a survey of returning Bangladeshi migrant workers. The survey design and methodology has been enriched by the participation of social partners, namely, the members of the National Coordination Council for Workers' Education and the Bangladesh Employers' Federation.

The survey was conducted under the ILO's "Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh" project that is being implemented with financial assistance from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The aim of the survey was, and therefore, of this report is to create a profile of returning migrant workers. The issue of migrant worker reintegration has been identified and addressed in provisions of the proposed draft of the Overseas Employment Policy, which is currently undergoing the adoption process. Migrant worker reintegration has emerged as an issue requiring attention in several meetings and consultations, as well as in recently completed reviews of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training and the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund. In order to plan future activities to support the returning workers, particularly those who are returning under difficult circumstances, it was felt necessary to define the profile of the returning migrant workers and to identify labour demand and entrepreneurship opportunities, returning workers' perspectives, and necessary measures to support professional reintegration.

The survey team from the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies conducted interviews of 1,200 returning migrant workers at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka and Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong. In addition, 85 in depth interviews with returned migrant workers who agreed to share their experiences were held in their homes in different parts of Bangladesh.

The survey findings were shared at a national workshop with ILO constituents, and participants from Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, research institutions, international organizations, bilateral cooperation agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media. The findings were immediately accepted and well received. This has been partly because this survey presented the first ever reliable and comprehensive data on returning workers, including women workers. The other reason for the high interest in the results has been that stakeholders specifically wanted to know about re-employment prospects, gender differences, encouragement and discouragement concerning entrepreneurship, issues concerning financial inclusion, and requirements with regards to business support services suited to the interests and abilities of women and men coming home.

This survey is the first step towards building an understanding of the issues facing returning migrant workers. The report presents a comprehensive overview of the workers' profiles and issues concerning social and professional reintegration. The report includes information both in terms of workers' expectations and indications of prospects that they may expect. This report also brings to light the high level of unpreparedness among returning workers. This is an issue that should bring together decision-makers, policy-makers and planners, professional organizations, researchers, and the media to consider ways they can enhance social and economic returns from migration for employment. Lack of information and poor career advisory services should be a concern not only for the Government, but also for the private sector in Bangladesh since returning workers bring with them a wealth of information and skills which are crucial for the development of Bangladesh. We hope that this report will inspire relevant actors to come forward to fill in the gaps and provide Bangladeshi overseas workers and their families left behind the information and access to resources needed to make informed decisions and choices about their social and professional life at the end of their short-term employment overseas.

Khandaker Md Iftekhar Haider
Secretary
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment

Srinivas B Reddy
Country Director
International Labour Organization

Begum Shamsun Nahar
Director-general
Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training

Nazrul Islam Khan
Secretary General
Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies

Siroco Messerli
Director of Cooperation
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Tapan Chowdhury
President
Bangladesh Employer's Federation

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We would like to extend a huge thank you to the core survey team members, namely, Mr Jakir Hossain, Mr Mostafiz Ahmed, and Md Aurongajeb Akond, and the data enumerators, namely, Md Shafiur Rahman, Md Farid Ahmed, Md Al Mamun Siddik, Ms Nelufer Yesmin, Md Abdullah Al Mamun, Mr Al Mamun Suvro, Ms Kakoli Shaha, Ms Sadika Islam Sony, Md Manjurul Hasan, Ms Rufaka Tajnin, Md Monoar Hossain, and Ms Zobida Islam. They have done excellent work implementing and administering the survey. It could not have been an easy task to convince people coming back home after long journeys—often separated from loved ones for several years—to spare time for the interviews.

Our heartfelt thanks are also due to Mr Nazrul Islam Khan, Secretary General and Mr. Zafrul Hasan, Joint Secretary General of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, for their initiatives and support for the survey.

We wish to thank a number of people who worked as a team to make this survey possible: Begum Shamsun Nahar, Director General of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, for providing leadership during implementation; Mr Farooq Ahmed, Secretary General of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation, for providing guidance on the survey plan; Mr Grégoire Crettaz, Migration Specialist on loan from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to the International Labour Organization, for starting the survey planning before he left Bangladesh for another assignment; Mr Hazarat Ali, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, for stepping in to solve problems when they arose; Mr Jabed Ahmed, Additional Director General of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, for being actively involved in the technical preparation and implementation of the survey. Ms Disha Sonata Faruque, National Project Office of the International Labour Organization, for motivating everybody with her energy and excellent coordination; Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed, Assistant Executive Director of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, for managing the survey; Ms Jessica Vechbanyongratana, an external editor for helping shape the report; Mr Nilim Baruah, Senior Migration Specialist, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific for his review of the first draft; and Ms Nisha, Chief Technical Advisor of the International Labour Organization, for technical support of the survey and organizing the orientation for the survey team.

This survey could not have been possible without the support of: staff of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism and the Civil Aviation Authority for providing the necessary approvals and support to the research team to work in the Dhaka and Chittagong Airports; staff of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Bangladesh Police for their verification of the research team members and necessary approvals enabling the researchers to have access to the airports; staff of the Planning Wing of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment for helping to put the implementation plan in the right shape; and staff of the Wage Earners' Welfare Board and the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training based at the Welfare Desks in Dhaka and Chittagong Airports for providing much needed guidance and logistical support during the data collection.

Finally, our deepest thanks to the women and men who volunteered to participate in the survey. Their feedback is invaluable. The information they provided will assist us all to identify areas for improvement, build on workers' personal achievements, and set new directions for supporting short-term overseas workers when they come back home.

List of acronyms

BACI	Bangladesh Association of Construction Industries
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladesh taka
BEF	Bangladesh Employers Federation
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BILS	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
BMET	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BoPinc	BoP Innovation Centre
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BTEB	Bangladesh Technical Education Board
DIP	Department of Immigration and Passport
DYD	Department of Youth Development
EC	Election Commission
GO	Government organization
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization of Migration
ISC	Industry Skills Council
KII	key informant interview
LDCs	Least developed countries
MISC	Migration Information Support Centre
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
NGO	Non-government organization
NSDP	National Skills Development Policy
PKB	Probashi Kallyan Bank
PROOFS	Profitable Opportunities for Food Security
RMG	Ready-made garment
SaFaL	Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Linkages
SCITI	Small and Cottage Industries Training Institute
SME	Small and medium enterprises
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
WARBE	Welfare Association for the Rights of Bangladeshi Emigrants
WEWF	Wage Earners' Welfare Fund

Part I: Profile of the returning workers

Introduction

Migration for work is an increasingly permanent feature of today's labour markets. Globally, Bangladesh is one of the major labour sending countries, sending migrant workers to work in 157 countries around. The countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa are major destinations for Bangladeshi migrant workers along with large flows to Southeast Asia—particularly to Malaysia and Singapore. It is estimated that Bangladesh has sent over 8.8 million migrant workers across the world between 1976 and April 2014. A total of 409,253 and 132,679 migrants in 2013 and January to April 2014, respectively, went abroad for employment. The remittances make significant contributions towards accelerating economic development of the country, such as addressing unemployment problems, poverty reduction, and increasing foreign exchange reserves. Remittances sent by migrants through official channels reached a record level of US$13 billion in 2013.

Given the number of outbound migrants to various destinations, it is not surprising that a large number of migrant workers return to Bangladesh every year after the completion of their contracts and for various other reasons. Migration-related literature and empirical studies have so far paid little attention to returning migrants. To date, the knowledge base on returning workers is small with little known about returning migrants' social and economic reintegration into their home countries. Returning migrants often face problems getting jobs after coming back to the country and are often left on their own to face miserable conditions socially, economically, and psychologically while reintegrating themselves into society. It is well recognized that while migrant workers go through a process of social and cultural adaptation in destination countries, returning migrants also face similar challenges during their reintegration, including financial risks, after returning to their home countries.

Returning migrants are the resources for their home countries. They bring back a wealth of knowledge in the forms of new skills and trades which, if nurtured, can result in successful business ventures. Their social and economic reintegration has high value for society. Since very little information exists about returning migrants' reintegration and rehabilitation, more attention needs to be paid to issues concerning reintegration. Without a good profile of returning migrant workers, including their basic socio-demographic information, migration processes, skills, future plans, and aspirations, the Government and other entities cannot plan and facilitate the reintegration process of returning migrants into the socio-economic life of society.

ILO: *International labour standards on migrant workers' rights: Guide for policymakers and practitioners in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 2007).

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment: Annual Report: 2012-13 (Dhaka, 2013).

The major destinations for the migrant workers from Bangladesh are the Bahrain, Botswana, Brunei, Fiji, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Malawi, Maldives, Mauritius, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, United Arab Emirates (UAE), United States of America (USA), Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), Bangladesh.

Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Finance: Bangladesh Economic Review 2013 (Dhaka, 2013).

IOM: *Contribution of Returnees: An Analytical Survey of Post Return Experience* (Dhaka, 2002).

ILO: *Return migrant entrepreneurs in India: Case studies and policy recommendations* (New Delhi, 2010).

This study primarily develops a comprehensive profile of migrant workers who have returned to Bangladesh. Specifically, the focus of this study is to profile:

- the demographic and personal characteristic of returning migrant workers;
- migration-related information of these returning workers;
- work and skills of returning migrant workers; and
- future plans and expectations of returning migrant workers.

The study's objectives, however, are not merely limited to developing and increasing the information base on returning migrant workers. This study is expected to serve as a background paper and be helpful for developing appropriate policies and strategies on how to reintegrate returning workers into the domestic labour market. Findings on the work and skills of returning migrant workers, and their expectations and future plans in particular, are highly valuable for advocating for the reintegration process of these workers in the country.

This study is based on primary information collected through a sample survey. All returning migrant workers were considered as the population and each of them as a unit of analysis. Information was collected from the returning workers directly through both short and in-depth interviews. The data collection points were mainly at the two international airports in the country—Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and Shah Amanat International Airport—in Dhaka and Chittagong, respectively. The interviews were carried out at the data collection desks set up in association with the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) at the two airports. However, for ensuring privacy and confidentiality of the respondents, the data collectors did not examine returning migrant workers' travel documents (e.g. passports and visas) during the interview period.

A pretested interview schedule comprised of both open-ended and close-ended questions was used for the short interviews. For the in-depth interviews, a separate checklist was followed. A total of 1,200 short interviews were conducted (see table A.1). Samples were chosen purposively based on availability of the respondents and their willingness to respond. Two issues were taken into consideration when selecting the returning workers for sample: first, they had to have worked for a minimum of two years in the destination country and second, they were coming back permanently or after the completion of a contract with an interest in re-migration to start on a new short-term contract abroad. Both male and female returning workers were chosen as respondents. In order to gain sufficient information to understand female returning workers' issues more clearly, a significant proportion of the respondents (more than twenty per cent of the total) were chosen from female returning workers.

An additional 85 in-depth interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understating of issues related to returning migrant workers. This sample was selected from the 1,200 returning workers who provided information during the short interviews. Taking geographical and gender balance and the willingness of respondents to answer further questions into consideration, in-depth interviews were also selected purposively (see annex table A.2). Pseudonyms similar to the real names of the interviewees have been used throughout this report.

The survey was conducted from November 2013 to February 2014 and the findings of this report represent conditions of returning workers who returned during this period. Since the focus of this survey was on developing a profile of returning migrant workers, some issues, such as use of remittances and sustainability of self-employment efforts, have not been analysed. Besides, the report is based on information collected from just-returned migrant workers who had yet to face the challenges and problems during their adjustment and reintegration processes.

This report is organized into five core sections. The following section provides the demographic and personal information of returning workers. Section two highlights migration-related information from the returning workers. Section three explores the nature of work and the skills of returning workers. Section four focuses on the future plans and expectations of returning workers. The final section highlights the key findings and policy recommendations for the reintegration of returning migrants.

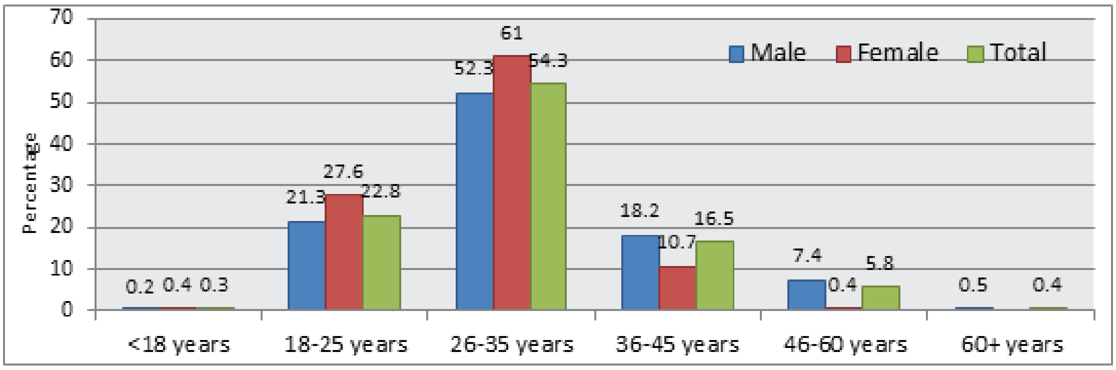
I. Demographic and socio-economic background of returning migrant workers

Age of returning workers

In general, returning migrants are relatively young. More than three-quarters (77.1 per cent) of all respondents belong to the 18-35 years age group, where proportions of respondents of 18-25 years and 26-35 years are 22.8 per cent and 54.3 per cent, respectively. Women as a group are younger than the men. Of all female respondents, 27.6 per cent and 61 per cent belong to 18-25 years and 26-35 years groups, respectively, whereas 21.3 per cent and 52.3 per cent of all the male respondents belong to these age groups, respectively.

As a group, men have a higher proportion of older workers than women. Among all the respondents, 16.5 per cent and 5.8 per cent belong to the 36-45 years and 46-60 years age groups, respectively. Of male respondents, 18.2 per cent and 7.4 per cent belong to these age groups, while 10.7 per cent and 0.4 per cent of all female respondents belong to these two age groups, respectively. The proportion of respondents over sixty years of age is very small, comprising only 0.4 per cent. Similarly very few respondents (0.3 per cent) are less than 18 years of age. These young workers returned from Oman, Malaysia, and Jordan where they migrated at 15 years old on an average. All of the returnees below 18 years of age went abroad through a *dalal*—an illegal intermediary. The age breakdown is illustrated in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1. Age distribution of returning migrant workers

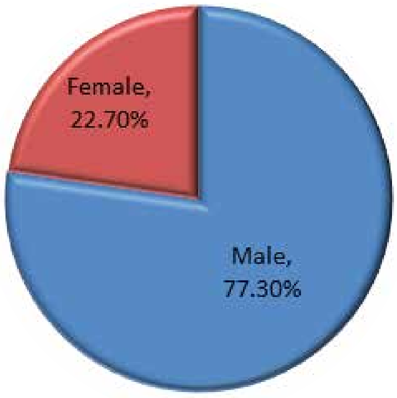


Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Gender distribution of returning workers

Among the respondents, 77.3 per cent were male and the remaining 22.7 per cent were female, as illustrated by figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2. Gender distribution of the returning migrant workers



Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Source areas in home country

More than three-quarters (77.4 per cent) of all the returning workers are from the Dhaka and Chittagong divisions, comprising 35.2 per cent and 42.2 per cent of the respondents, respectively. The smallest proportion among the sample of returning workers is from Rangpur Division (1.3 per cent). Returning workers from Barisal Division, Khulna Division, Rajshahi Division, and Sylhet Divisions are 5.2 per cent, 6.3 per cent, 4.6 per cent, and 5.3 per cent, respectively, as noted in table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Distribution of returning workers by division

Division	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barisal	38	4.10	24	8.80	62	5.17
Chittagong	471	50.80	35	12.90	506	42.17
Dhaka	257	27.70	165	60.70	422	35.17
Khulna	66	7.10	26	9.60	92	7.67
Rajshahi	27	2.90	12	4.40	39	3.25
Rangpur	12	1.30	4	1.50	16	1.33
Sylhet	57	6.10	6	2.20	63	5.25
Total	928	100.00	272	100.00	1 200	100.00

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Half (50.8 per cent) of all returning male workers are from Chittagong Division and more than one quarter (27.7 per cent) are from Dhaka Division. With regards to female returning workers, the majority (60.7 per cent) are from Dhaka Division, followed by Chittagong (12.9 per cent), Khulna (9.6 per cent), and Barisal (8.8 per cent). Table 1.2 provides detailed source areas and shows that district-wise representation is high in three districts, namely Chittagong, Comilla, and Dhaka.

Table 1.2. Home divisions of returning workers

Barisal Division			Chittagong Division			Dhaka Division		
District	**N**	**%**	**District**	**N**	**%**	**District**	**N**	**%**
Barguna	2	0.2	Brahmanbaria	66	5.5	Dhaka	65	5.4
Barisal	28	2.3	Chandpur	49	4.1	Faridpur	26	2.2
Bhola	8	0.7	Chittagong	139	11.6	Gazipur	32	2.7
Jhalakati	13	1.1	Comilla	127	10.6	Gopalganj	7	0.6
Patuakhali	9	0.8	Cox's Bazar	21	1.8	Jamalpur	3	0.3
Pirojpur	2	0.2	Feni	36	3	Kishoreganj	31	2.6
			Lakshmipur	32	2.7	Madaripur	14	1.2
			Noakhali	34	2.8	Manikganj	49	4.1
			Rangamati	2	0.2	Munshiganj	39	3.3
						Mymensingh	21	1.8
						Narayanganj	30	2.5
						Narsingdi	34	2.8
						Netrokona	6	0.5
						Rajbari	2	0.2
						Shariatpur	14	1.2
						Sherpur	2	0.2
						Tangail	47	3.9
Total	62	5.2		506	42.2		422	35.2

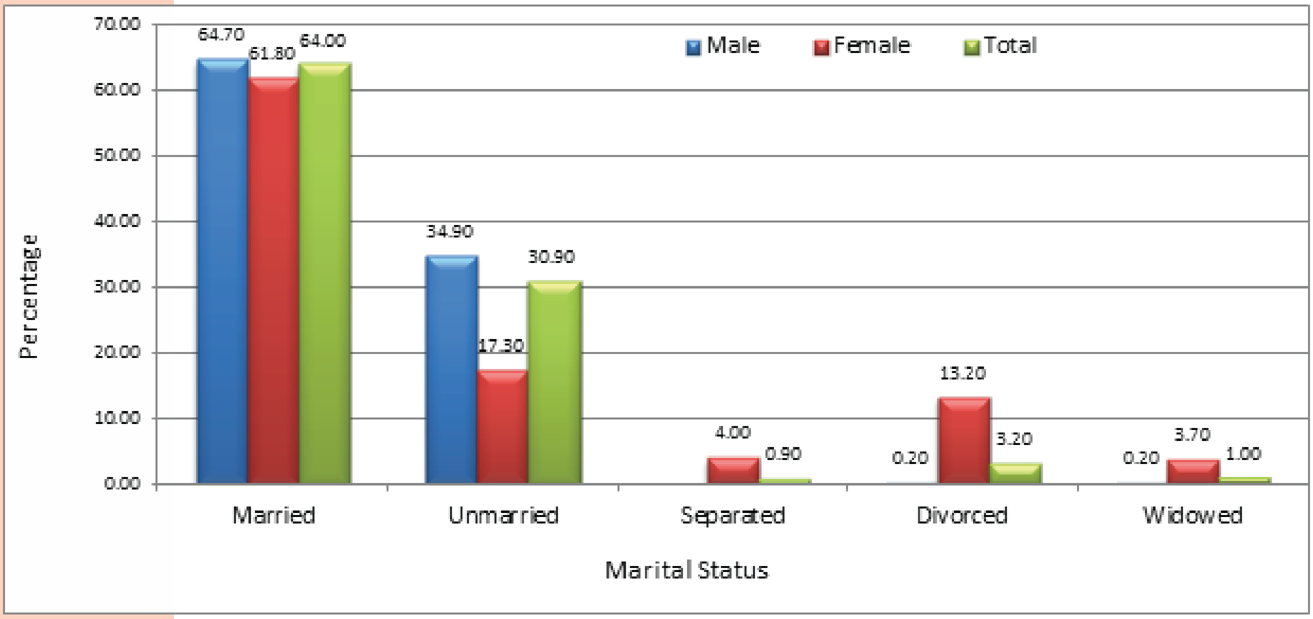
Khulna Division			Rajshahi Division			Rangpur Division			Sylhet Division		
District	**N**	**%**	**District**	**N**	**%**	**District**	**N**	**%**	**District**	**N**	**%**
Bagerhat	4	0.3	Bogra	16	1.3	Dinajpur	4	0.3	Habiganj	14	1.2
Chuadanga	6	0.5	Joypurhat	2	0.2	Gaibandha	5	0.4	Moulvibazar	16	1.3
Jessore	17	1.4	Naogaon	5	0.4	Kurigram	1	0.1	Sunamganj	5	0.4
Jhenaidah	6	0.5	Natore	5	0.4	Nilphamari	1	0.1	Sylhet	28	2.3
Khulna	8	0.7	Nawabganj	8	0.7	Panchagarh	2	0.2			
Kushtia	11	0.9	Pabna	12	1	Rangpur	3	0.3			
Magura	9	0.8	Sirajganj	7	0.6						
Meherpur	6	0.5									
Narail	3	0.3									
Satkhira	6	0.5									
Total	76	6.3		55	4.6		16	1.3		63	5.3

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Marital status

In terms of marital status, the majority (around two-thirds) of the returning migrant workers are married. Another 30.9 per cent of workers are unmarried and 3.2 per cent are divorced. A small proportion of the sample is separated (0.9 per cent) or widowed (1.0 per cent). The sex disaggregated figures show that the proportions of married males (64.7 per cent) and females (61.8 per cent) are similar. The proportion of unmarried returning workers is more heavily male (34.9 per cent) than female (17.3 per cent). There are comparatively more female returning workers who are separated (4.0 per cent), divorced (13.20 per cent), or widowed (3.70 per cent) than males (see figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Marital status of returning migrant workers



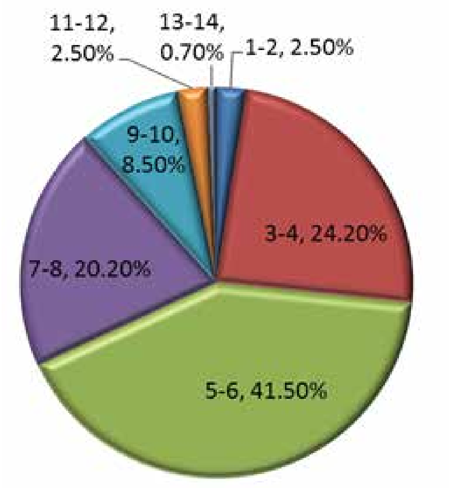
Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Size of household and dependent members

The average size of returning migrant worker households is 5.87, which is larger than the national average household size of 4.38 people. The minimum and maximum numbers of household members are one and 14, respectively. The largest proportion of respondents (41.5 per cent) comes from households of five to six members, followed by 24.2 per cent of respondents coming from households of three to four members. About one fifth (20.2 per cent) of all the returning migrant workers have seven to eight household members and 8.5 per cent workers have nine to ten household members. Only 2.5 per cent returning workers come from households of one to two or 11 to 12 household members, while a very small proportion (0.7 per cent) has 13 to 14 household members (see figure 1.4).

[8] BBS, 2011, Population and Housing Census 2011: Preliminary Results, p 11.

Figure 1.4. Total number of household members



Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

On average, 3.5 household members are dependent on the incomes of the returning migrant workers. The range of household members dependent on respondents' incomes is between zero and 11 people. The largest proportion of returning workers (44.3 per cent) has three to four dependent members. Another 22.2 per cent of returning workers have one to two dependent members and about the same proportion (23.7 per cent) has five to six dependent members. Smaller proportions of returning workers—5.8 per cent, 1 per cent, and 0.2 per cent—have seven to eight, nine to ten, and 11 to 12 dependent members, respectively. It is noteworthy that a few returning workers (3.0 per cent) have no household members dependent on their income (see table 1.3).

Table 1.3. Number of dependent household members

Number of dependents	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No dependents	16	1.7	20	7.4	36	3.0
1 to 2	187	20.1	79	29.1	266	22.2
3 to 4	403	43.5	127	46.7	530	44.2
5 to 6	249	26.8	34	12.5	283	23.6
7 to 8	59	6.4	10	3.7	69	5.8
9 to 10	11	1.1	2	0.7	13	1.1
11 or more	3	0.3	-	-	3	0.3
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Educational status

A significant proportion (21.1 per cent) of the returning workers has never attended school. A larger proportion of female returning workers (31.3 per cent) than male returning workers (18.1 per cent) has no education. The largest proportion of the returning workers (25 per cent) has completed five years of schooling, meaning that they have completed primary education up to grade/class five. Another 10.3 per cent and 14.3 per cent of all returning workers have completed eight years (junior secondary level up to class eight) and ten years (secondary level up to grade/class ten) of schooling, respectively. Higher secondary level schooling (up to class 12) has been completed by 3.5 per cent returning workers. A very small proportion of returning workers has completed 14 years (0.8 per cent), 15 years (0.5 per cent), or 16 years (0.1 per cent) of education (see table 1.4).

Table 1.4. Total years of schooling/educational status

Years of Schooling	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	168	18.1	85	31.3	253	21.1
2	24	2.6	4	1.5	28	2.3
3	30	3.2	15	5.5	45	3.8
4	27	2.9	8	2.9	35	2.9
5	221	23.8	78	28.7	299	25.0
6	47	5.1	18	6.6	65	5.4
7	48	5.2	17	6.3	65	5.4
8	98	10.6	26	9.6	124	10.3
9	46	5.0	5	1.8	51	4.3
10	157	16.9	14	5.1	171	14.3
11	5	0.5	-	-	5	0.4
12	40	4.3	2	0.7	42	3.5
14	10	1.1	-	-	10	0.8
15	6	0.6	-	-	6	0.5
16	1	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Occupation/work before migration

Returning migrant workers were involved in several types of occupations/work before their migration. Among the returning workers, 23 per cent indicated that they were involved in agriculture prior to migration. Another 16.3 per cent of the returning workers were self-employed and 12.2 per cent were service workers. Returning workers who were self-employed before migration were mainly involved in various small businesses. Some of the small businesses engaged in before migration were tailoring and embroidery shop (2.7 per cent), fish farm (0.3 per cent), poultry farm (0.3 per cent), grocery shop (3.8 per cent), peddling (0.3 per cent), fish seller (0.3 per cent), food shop (0.4 per cent), mobile phone shop (0.1 per cent), and vegetable seller (0.4 per cent).

The common areas/sectors of employment for returning workers who worked in an employer-employee relationship before migration are petty job (3.1 per cent), hotel (0.4 per cent), electricity (1.3 per cent), garments (5.7 per cent), hospital cleaning (0.1 per cent), sales (0.3 per cent), printing press (0.2 per cent), fieldworkers of insurance company (0.2 per cent), petrol pump (0.1 per cent), safety office (0.1 per cent), health worker (0.1 per cent), guest house (0.1 per cent), shipping line (0.1 per cent), library (0.1 per cent), and NGO (0.2 per cent). About 2.6 per cent of the returning workers were drivers and carpenters and about same proportion (2.3 per cent) was day labourers. Proportions of returning workers who were construction workers, fishers, and handloom workers were 4.3 per cent, 0.6 per cent, and 0.5 per cent, respectively. Another 3.3 per cent of all the returning workers were involved in other types of work, such as domestic work/maidservant (0.7 per cent), mechanic (0.5 per cent), salon/hairdressing (0.5 per cent), baking/bakery (0.3 per cent), rickshaw pulling (0.5 per cent), mobile servicing (0.2 per cent), among others. Finally, 7.5 per cent of all the returning workers were students and 16.0 per cent were unemployed before migration.

Occupations prior to migration disaggregated by gender show that the largest proportion of the female returning workers were housewives (39.7 per cent), followed by job holders (25.4 per cent) and unemployed (14.3 per cent). Among the male returning workers, the largest proportion (28.9 per cent) was involved in agriculture, followed by self-employment (19.3 per cent). A notable proportion (16.5 per cent) of the male respondents was unemployed before migration (see table 1.5).

Table 1.5. Professions/occupations before migration

Profession before migration	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Student	74	8.0	16	5.9	90	7.5
Service job	77	8.3	69	25.4	146	12.2
Self-employment	179	19.3	17	6.3	196	16.3
Unemployed	153	16.5	39	14.3	192	16.0
Day labour	23	2.5	4	1.5	27	2.3
Agriculture	268	28.9	8	2.9	276	23.0
Housewife	-	-	108	39.7	108	9.1
Driver	31	3.3	-	-	31	2.6
Fisher	7	0.8	-	-	7	0.6
Handloom worker	4	0.4	2	0.7	6	0.5
Carpenter	30	3.2	1	0.4	31	2.6
Construction worker	51	5.5	-	-	51	4.3
Others	31	3.3	8	2.9	39	3.3
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

The aim of this section is to identify migration-related information for the returning workers, including reasons for migration, medium of migration, destination countries, time spent in destination, training before and after migration, financial aspects of migration, reasons of returning, problems faced at destination, contact with embassy in case of problems, among other issues.

II. Migration dynamics

Reasons for migration

People migrate for several reasons. The returning migrants engaged in short-term labour migration mainly with the goal to overcome their economically adverse situations. The respondents mentioned several specific reasons for leaving their home country. The majority (64.75 per cent) indicated that they left the country because they wanted to have more/better income for themselves and their families. Since this group of returning workers was unable to sufficiently meet their families' needs, they decided to leave the country with a hope to earn more abroad. For example, returning worker Sohel Rana stated: "I was unable to earn sufficient amount of money to support my family when I was in Bangladesh, so I decided to go abroad with a dream of secured and sufficient income."

One third (33.67 per cent) of the returning workers mentioned poverty as their main cause of going abroad. A full 15.17 per cent of the respondents left the country due to unemployment. In addition, 6.58 per cent and 0.58 per cent of returning workers originally left the country due to loans and business losses, respectively. Halima Begum describes one such situation: "I took taka 2.5 lakh loan with high interest from a personal source to build my house but couldn't repay any way working in this country. That's why I went abroad to recover the loan by earning money." Business loss as a reason for migration is portrayed in this statement by Siraj, a returning worker: "We had a family business; but suddenly the income from the business fell down extremely. So, I had to go abroad to support my family economically." Some of the returning workers (9.50 per cent) had the plan to become self-dependent through leaving the country for short-term employment. Reasons for migration are listed in table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Reasons for migration

Reasons for migration*	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Due to poverty	288	31.03	116	42.65	404	33.67
Due to unemployment	149	16.06	33	12.13	182	15.17
For more/better income	618	66.59	159	58.46	777	64.75
To become self-dependent	91	9.81	23	8.46	114	9.50
Loan recovery	60	6.47	19	6.99	79	6.58
Loss in business	6	0.65	1	0.37	7	0.58

*Multiple responses allowed

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Destination countries

Migrant workers in the sample returned permanently from several destination countries with the main flow of returning workers coming from three countries: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman. Workers returning from these three countries constitute more than half (56.2 per cent) of the respondents, where 17.1 per cent returned from Saudi Arabia, 17.5 per cent from UAE, and 21.6 per cent from Oman (see table 2.2).

Table 2.2. Destination countries

Country	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Saudi Arabia	190	20.5	15	5.5	205	17.1
United Arab Emirates	182	19.6	28	10.3	210	17.5
Kuwait	25	2.7	1	0.4	26	2.2
Qatar	14	1.5	3	1.1	17	1.4
Oman	211	22.7	48	17.6	259	21.6
Jordan	2	0.2	46	16.9	48	4.0
Lebanon	3	0.3	114	41.9	117	9.8
Bahrain	60	6.5	4	1.5	64	5.3
Malaysia	61	6.6	-	-	61	5.1
Mauritius	12	1.3	6	2.2	18	1.5
Singapore	24	2.6	-	-	24	2.0
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	5	0.5	-	-	5	0.4
Maldives	108	11.6	4	1.5	112	9.3
Iraq	1	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
Sudan	1	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
Egypt	2	0.2	3	1.1	5	0.4
Republic of Korea	2	0.2	-	-	2	0.2
Islamic Republic of Iran	1	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
South Africa	6	0.6	-	-	6	0.5
Algeria	7	0.8	-	-	7	0.6
Pakistan	1	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
United Kingdom	1	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
Greece	2	0.2	-	-	2	0.2
Congo	2	0.2	-	-	2	0.2
Brunei	4	0.4	-	-	4	0.3
United States	1	0.1	-	-	1	0.1
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Among the sample of returning workers, shares of workers returning from Lebanon and Maldives are similar at 9.8 per cent and 9.3 per cent, respectively. The shares of workers returning from Bahrain and Malaysia are of similar magnitude at 5.3 per cent and 5.1 per cent, respectively. Returning workers coming back from Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Mauritius, and Singapore make up 2.2 per cent, 1.4 per cent, 4 per cent, 1.5 per cent, and 2 per cent of the total, respectively. The remaining 3.4 per cent of workers returned from 14 other countries.

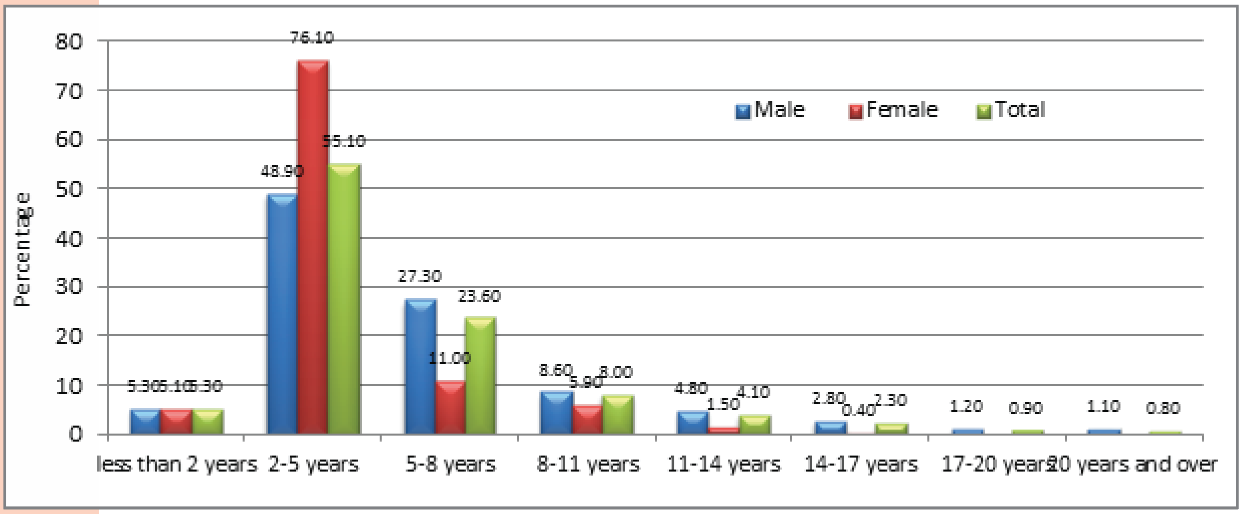
The breakdown by gender shows that female workers mainly returned from Lebanon, Oman, and Jordan, representing more than three-quarters (76.4 per cent) of the female sample. On the other hand, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and UAE are the three main countries from which male workers returned. A full 62.8 per cent of the male sample returned from these countries.

Total time spent in destination countries

A large proportion of returning workers (55.1 per cent) came back within 2-5 years after leaving Bangladesh. The survey found that 23.6 per cent, 8.0 per cent, 4.1 per cent, and 2.3 per cent of returning workers spent 5-8 years, 8-11 years, 11-14 years, and 14-17 years living and working abroad, respectively. Workers permanently returning after 17 or more years working abroad make up only 1.7 per cent of all returning workers. In contrast, a small proportion (5.3 per cent) has very short experiences—less than two years—working abroad (see figure 2.1).

There are similarities between male and female workers in terms of length of time working abroad. The largest proportions of both male (48.9) and female (76.1 per cent) returning workers returned to Bangladesh after 2-5 years. This is followed by 27.3 per cent of male and 11.0 per cent of female workers returning after 5-8 years. Approximately equal proportions of male (5.3) and female (5.1 per cent) workers returned within two years. One noteworthy finding is that none of the female returning workers has worked more than 17 years abroad.

Figure 2.1. Total time spent in destination countries



Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Medium or channels of migration

Migrant workers use several mediums or channels for going abroad. Siddiqui (2005) showed that about 55-60 per cent of recruitment takes place through individual initiatives and social networks—usually, persons already deployed in the host countries arrange visas for their friends and relatives through their own contacts. In the present survey, it was observed that most of the returning workers (80.6 per cent) migrated either through *dalal* (51.3 per cent) or personal communications (29.9 per cent). Government and private recruiting agencies were chosen as mediums of migration by only 4.3 per cent and 14.4 per cent of returning workers, respectively. It is noteworthy that migration through *dalals* was more frequent among the female returning workers (71.0 per cent) than among male returning workers (45.6 per cent). In contrast, other migration channels were utilized more by male returning workers than female returning workers (table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Medium of migration

Medium of migration	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	46	5.0	6	2.2	52	4.3
Private recruiting agencies	149	16.1	24	8.8	173	14.4
Personal communication	310	33.5	49	18.0	359	29.9
Dalal	423	45.6	193	71.0	616	51.3
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

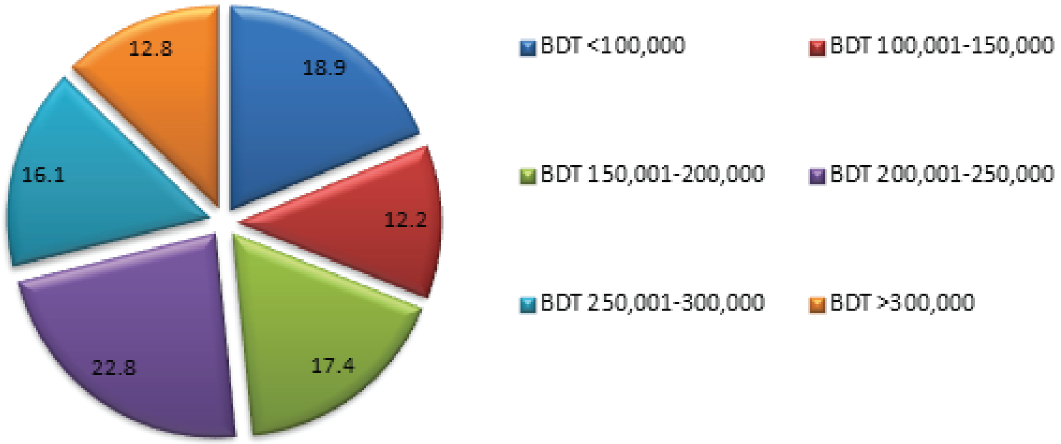
Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Total cost of migration and recruitment

The average total cost of migration and recruitment for the returning migrant workers was 187,174.31 Bangladesh takas (BDT). The average cost for male returnees is about three times that of the female returnees, averaging BDT220,319.31 for men and BDT74,213.24 for women. The cost of migration was less than BDT100,000 for 18.9 per cent of the returning workers. For 12.2 per cent of all returning workers the cost of migration was BDT100,000-150,000, while 17.4 per cent paid BDT150,001-200,000. The survey indicates that 22.8 per cent, 16.1 per cent, and 12.8 per cent of returning workers paid BDT200,001-250,000, BDT250,001-300,000, and over BDT300,000, respectively (see figure 2.2).

[9] T. Siddiqui: *International labour migration from Bangladesh: A decent work perspective,* Working paper No. 66, Policy Integration Department, National Policy Group (Geneva, ILO, 2005).

Figure 2.2. Cost of migration and recruitment



Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

The cost of migration and recruitment varied greatly based on destination country. Among all the returning workers, the lowest cost was BDT20,000 to migrate to Jordan and the highest was BDT700,000 to migrate to the United Kingdom. Apart from the United Kingdom, the highest average cost was for Greece (BDT360,000), followed by South Africa (BDT331,666.67) and Brunei (BDT292,500). It is important to note that returning workers from these four countries together constitute only 1.1 per cent of all the returning workers in the sample. On the other hand, the lowest average costs were for Jordan (BDT70,166.67), Lebanon (BDT70,170.94), and Pakistan (BDT70,000). Generally, migrant workers who obtained a visa through individual contacts and social networks paid less than those who passed through formal recruiting agents. Since a significant proportion of the returning workers (29.3 per cent) migrated through personal communications, they were able to migrate at a lower cost.

Average migration costs for the most common destination countries of Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman—where more than half of the workers returned from—are of similar amounts: BDT205,809.76, BDT201,633.33, and BDT205,447.88, respectively. Costs of migration and recruitment incurred by the returning workers are presented in table 2.4. (See annex table A.3 for the gender disaggregated data on migration and recruitment costs.)

[10] Ibid.

Table 2.4. Cost of migration and recruitment for returning workers by country

Destination Country	Average cost	Minimum	Maximum
Saudi Arabia	205 809.8	65 000	500 000
UAE	201 633.3	30 000	500 000
Kuwait	173 384.6	60 000	350 000
Qatar	220 882.4	30 000	600 000
Oman	205 447.9	30 000	400 000
Jordan	701 66.67	20 000	150 000
Lebanon	701 70.94	30 000	420 000
Bahrain	262 656.3	40 000	400 000
Malaysia	210 885.3	100 000	300 000
Mauritius	149 166.7	60 000	260 000
Singapore	293 750.0	120 000	550 000
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	213 000.0	120 000	300 000
Maldives	163 410.7	70 000	262 000
Iraq	245 000.0	245 000	245 000
Sudan	180 000.0	180 000	180 000
Egypt	138 000.0	80 000	250 000
Republic of Korea	120 000.0	120 000	120 000
Islamic Republic of Iran	200 000.0	200 000	200 000
South Africa	331 666.7	200 000	450 000
Algeria	197 142.9	160 000	250 000
Pakistan	70 000.0	70 000	70 000
United Kingdom	700 000.0	700 000	700 000
Greece	360 000.0	320 000	400 000
Congo	197 500.0	175 000	220 000
Brunei	292 500.0	250 000	320 000
United States	200 000.0	200 000	200 000
Total	187 174.3	20 000	700 000

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Cost of migration and recruitment of the returning workers not only varied based on destinations, but also by year. The data indicate that in general the cost of migration increased over time in nominal terms. These figures are not deflated. While the data in in table 2.5 and table A.4 can be deflated to see the cost in terms, data in table 2.4 and A.3 cannot be deflated because these are averages taken across the years. Deflation would help see whether the costs have risen, remained constant or gone down.

Maximum and minimum costs of migration and recruitment for the top ten destinations and the respective years of occurrence are reported in table 2.5. Year and gender disaggregated costs for these countries are reported in annex table A.4.

Table 2.5. Maximum and minimum migration and recruitment costs for the top ten destinations

Destinations	Maximum migration cost				Minimum migration cost			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Amount	Year	Amount	Year	Amount	Year	Amount	Year
Saudi Arabia	283 182	2011	122 500	2004	135 700	2000	52 500	2009
UAE	263 333	2012	107 000	2010	120 000	2002	40 000	2006
Kuwait	300 000	2007	60 000	2004	100 000	2000	60 000	2004
Oman	256 333	2009	200 000	2008	166 667	1999	79 882	2011
Jordan	150 000	2004	80 000	2009	100 000	2004	46 500	2005
Lebanon	420 000	2010	90 000	2007	225 000	2009	59 167	2009
Bahrain	302 500	2009	120 000	2004	168 333	2006	40 000	1998
Malaysia	260 000	2012	-	-	180 000	2005	-	-
Singapore	370 000	2008	-	-	175 000	1998	-	-
Maldives	175 074	2011	90 000	2010	140 000	2004	80 000	2008

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Sources of money to finance migration

Returning workers mainly collected the required amount of money to finance migration by taking out loans from relatives, friends, and neighbours. A total of 62.25 per cent of the returning workers (60.56 per cent of the men and 68.01 per cent of the women) borrowed money to cover their migration-related expenses. The second main source of financing was family savings, utilized by 46.50 per cent of all the returning workers. In this regard, 48.81 per cent of the men surveyed exploited this source compared to a lesser 38.60 per cent of the women. A substantial proportion of the returning workers (27.75 per cent) financed their migration by selling land or other family property. The tendency to acquire money through selling of land and property is more prominent among male than female returnees, with 32.44 per cent of all men in the sample turning to this source of funds compared to 12.13 per cent of women.

A very small proportion of the returning workers (2.50 per cent) took loans from NGOs to meet the financial needs of migration, with similar proportions of male and female returning workers utilizing this option (2.59 per cent of men and 2.21 per cent of women). A small proportion of returning workers reported using other sources to finance their migration, including loans from Probashi Kalyan Bank (0.17 per cent), loans from *mahajan* (1.42 per cent), land mortgages (0.50 per cent), and loans from commercial banks (0.08 per cent). Table 2.6 reports the sources of funds used by respondents to finance their migration.

[11] A *mahajan* is a person who lends money with interest. The interest rate is often above the prevailing market rate.

Table 2.6. Source of money for migration

Sources *	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Loan from NGO	24	2.59	6	2.21	30	2.50
Loan from	562	60.56	185	68.01	747	62.25
Selling land or property	301	32.44	33	12.13	333	27.75
Probasi Kalyan Bank	2	0.22	-	-	2	0.17
Family savings	453	48.81	105	38.60	558	46.50
Loan from mahajan	7	0.75	10	3.68	17	1.42
Land mortgage	5	0.54	1	0.37	6	0.50
Loan from commercial bank	1	0.11	-	-	1	0.08

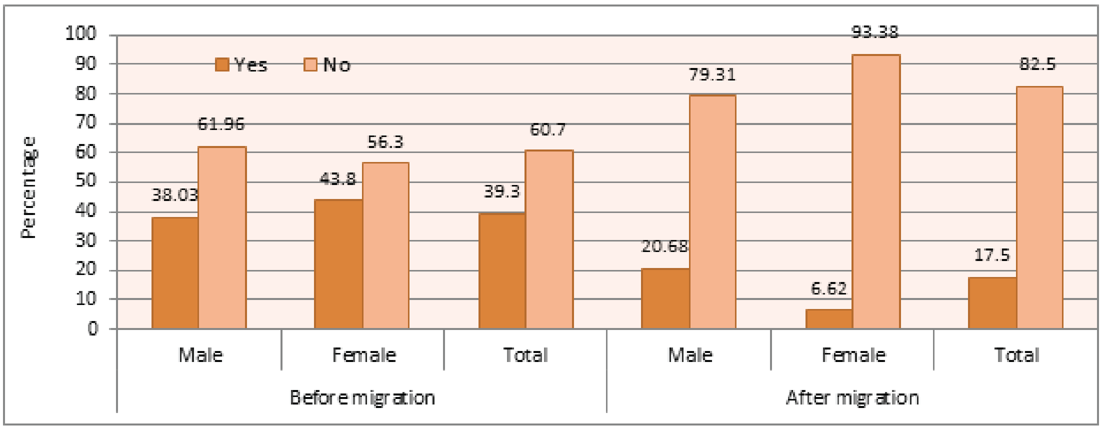
*Multiple responses possible.
Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Training received before and after migration

Among returning workers, the majority (60.70 per cent) reported that they had not received any training before migration, while 39.30 per cent participated in training before leaving the country. A larger proportion of returning female workers received training prior to migration than male returning workers. In fact, 43.80 per cent of all female returning workers received training before migration compared to only 38.03 per cent of the male respondents (see figure 2.3).

The proportion of the returning workers who received training after migration at the destination countries is only 17.50 per cent. Unlike training before migration, the proportion of workers received training after migration is higher among male workers than female workers. 20.68 per cent of male returning workers received training at their countries of destination compared to only 6.62 per cent of female returning workers.

Figure 2.3. Whether returning migrant workers received training before and after migration



Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Workers participated in training in several fields prior to migration. Among those who received training prior to departure, the largest proportion (21.60 per cent) of the returning workers indicated that they had training on construction work, followed by garments/tailoring (19.10 per cent), salon/hairdressing/beauty parlour (18 per cent), agricultural work (15.50 per cent), and computer/mobile servicing (10.60 per cent). Small proportions of these workers received training in cooking (2.80 per cent), cleaning (3 per cent), driving (0.8 per cent), and vocational training (2.80 per cent). Another 5.90 per cent of these returning workers participated in other types of training prior to migration. It is noteworthy that the largest proportion (28.30 per cent) of male returning workers had construction work-related training, followed by agriculture (20.70 per cent), garments/tailoring (17 per cent), and mobile/computer servicing (12.70 per cent). Among the female workers, the majority (63.90 per cent) received training in hairdressing/beauty parlour and garments/tailoring (25.20 per cent) before migration, as specified in table 2.7.

Table 2.7. Types/areas of training before migration

Training types/areas	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Construction	100	28.30	2	1.70	102	21.60
Garments & tailoring	60	17.00	30	25.20	90	19.10
Agriculture	73	20.70	-	-	73	15.50
Cooking	10	2.80	3	2.50	13	2.80
Cleaning	14	4.00	-	-	14	3.00
Driving	4	1.10	-	-	4	0.80
Mobile & computer servicing	45	12.70	5	4.20	50	10.60
Vocational training	13	3.70	-	-	13	2.80
Salon/beauty parlour	9	2.50	76	63.90	85	18.00
Others	25	7.10	3	2.50	28	5.90
Total	353	100.00	119	100.00	472	100.00

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Among the workers who received training after migration, the majority (57.6 per cent) indicated that they were trained in salon/hairdressing/beauty parlour, followed by construction work (13.8 per cent) (see table 2.8). A few workers participated in training in garments/tailoring (7.6 per cent), agriculture (1.9), cooking (5.2 per cent), cleaning (1.4 per cent), driving (1.9 per cent), mobile/computer servicing (6.7 per cent), vocational training (1 per cent), motor mechanic (1.4 per cent), hotel (0.5 per cent), and others (1 per cent). Of those female returning workers who received training after arrival, most reported being trained in salon/hairdressing/beauty parlour (88.9 per cent), followed by cooking (11.1 per cent). Among male returning workers who received training in the destination country, the majority (54.7 per cent) were trained in salon/hairdressing/beauty parlour, followed by construction (15.1 per cent) (see table 2.8).

Table 2.8. Types/areas of training after migration

Training after migration	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Construction	29	15.1	-	-	29	13.8
Garments & tailoring	16	8.3	-	-	16	7.6
Agriculture	4	2.1	-	-	4	1.9
Cooking	9	4.7	2	11.1	11	5.2
Cleaning	3	1.6	-	-	3	1.4
Driving	4	2.1	-	-	4	1.9
Mobile and computer servicing	14	7.3	-	-	14	6.7
Vocational training	2	1.0	-	-	2	1.0
Salon/beauty parlour	105	54.7	16	88.9	121	57.6
Motor mechanic	3	1.6	-	-	3	1.4
Hotel	1	0.5	-	-	1	0.5
Others	2	1.0	-	-	2	1.0
Total	192	100.0	18	100.0	210	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

The most common training provider prior to departure was non-government agencies (41.7 per cent), followed by private agencies (28.6 per cent). The proportion of female workers (71.4 per cent) who received training from non-government agencies is larger than for male workers (31.7 per cent). In contrast, male workers (31.5 per cent) were more likely to seek training from private agencies than female workers (9.2 per cent). A significant proportion of these workers (23.3 per cent) also indicated that they acquired training through self-initiative (male 27.5 per cent, female 10.9 per cent). Government agencies provided training to only 6.4 per cent of migrant workers in the sample (male 5.7 per cent, female 8.4 per cent) prior to migration (see table 2.9).

Table 2.9. Training provider before migration

Training provider	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government agency	20	5.7	10	8.4	30	6.4
Non-government agency	112	31.7	85	71.4	197	41.7
Private	124	35.1	11	9.2	135	28.6
Self-initiative	97	27.5	13	10.9	110	23.3
Total	353	100.0	119	100.0	472	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

After arrival in the destination countries, workers mostly received training from the business owner or their employer. Of the returning workers who received training in the destination countries, 70.5 per cent indicated that they participated in employer-provided training. Another 11.9 per cent and 14.8 per cent of these workers received training from non-government agencies and self-initiative, respectively (see table 2.10).

Table 2.10. Training provider after migration

Training provider	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government agency	6	3.1	-	-	6	2.9
Non-government agency	23	12.0	2	11.1	25	11.9
Employer	136	70.8	12	66.7	148	70.5
Self-initiative	27	14.1	4	22.2	31	14.8
Total	192	100.0	18	100.0	210	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Reasons for coming back

Returning migrants mentioned several reasons for their return. Over one third of the returning workers (40.35 per cent) cited visa and passport related factors as reasons behind their return to Bangladesh. These issues include end of visa period, visa cancellation, inability to extend visa, passport disputes, and end of passport validity (see table 2.11). While many of the returning workers came back willingly due to the above factors, many others have been forced to leave the destination country. For example, Iqbal—a returning worker—states the following as the reason for his return home: “as visa date already expired police arrested us while we were working, and after keeping in jail for seven days they have pushed us back home.”

About equal proportions of the workers returned to Bangladesh due to ‘wage related causes’ (14.77 per cent) and ‘personal and family reasons’ (14.68 per cent). Though ‘better-income’ is the predominant reason for migration, many return with bitter experiences in this regard. The workers returned because they found the reality of their wage situation to be different than their wage expectations. Finally, many returned home because they were bored with living abroad, wanted to get married and settle, or are required to take on family responsibilities. Halima Begum states, “I am coming back home for my family. I have three children, and my elder daughter is sick. My husband looks after them and it is now very difficult for him to manage everything.”

End of work contract is another important reason why workers returned. Out of the 1,200 respondents of this study, 152 (12.67 per cent) came back for this particular reason, among which 101 were male (10.89 per cent of male returning workers) and 51 were female (18.8 per cent of female returning workers). Another 9.82 per cent of the workers were terminated from their jobs and 7.8 per cent of returning workers returned due to physical and mental illness. A small proportion (5.20 per cent) of the returning workers indicated that they came back because they had problems with their employers. Too much work/pressure and bad conditions at work were cited as reasons for returning by 4.19 per cent and 4.03 per cent of the respondents, respectively. Another 3.36 per cent, 1.34 per cent, 0.59 per cent, and 2.35 per cent of returning workers, respectively, indicated that they returned due to unavailability of work, bad conditions in the country, poor work environment, and police harassment and law related problems. One worker, Siraj, explained the reason for his return:

"I was permitted to work as a mason. Police arrested me when I was working in a super market. At that time the validity of my visa was also about to expire. After arrest, the police has sent me home." The remaining 3.69 per cent of the returning workers mentioned other reasons behind their return to Bangladesh.

It is worth mentioning that 'visa and passport' issues were the dominant reason behind the return of both male (43.09 per cent) and female (32.47 per cent) returning workers. However, women returned more often than men due to personal and family related causes (11.5 per cent male versus 25.83 per cent female), physical and mental illness (6.03 per cent male versus 12.18 per cent female), excessive work pressure/workload (3.18 per cent male versus 7.75 per cent female), end of work contract (12.50 per cent male versus 13.65 per cent female), and problems with employers (4.39 per cent male versus 8.12 per cent female). In contrast, men returned more often than women due to unavailability of work (4.17 per cent male versus 0.74 per cent female), wage-related causes (16.45 per cent male versus 9.59 per cent female), job termination (10.86 per cent male versus 6.64 per cent female), poor conditions of the company and work (5.04 per cent male versus 0.74 per cent female), and police harassment (2.74 per cent male versus 1.11 per cent female).

Table 2.11. Reasons for returning to Bangladesh

Reasons/causes	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unavailability of work (no work)	38	4.17	2	0.74	40	3.36
End of Akama /work contract	114	12.50	37	13.65	151	12.67
Wage-related causes	150	16.45	26	9.59	176	14.77
Visa & passport related causes	393	43.09	88	32.47	481	40.35
Physical and mental illnesses	55	6.03	33	12.18	88	7.38
Terminated from job	99	10.86	18	6.64	117	9.82
Too much work pressure and reduced leave	29	3.18	21	7.75	50	4.19
Personal and family issues	105	11.51	70	25.83	175	14.68
Problem with employer/owner	40	4.39	22	8.12	62	5.20
Country's situation is not good	15	1.64	1	0.37	16	1.34
Company's situation is not good	46	5.04	2	0.74	48	4.03
Police harassment and law-related problem	25	2.74	3	1.11	28	2.35
Bad/poor work environment	6	0.66	1	0.37	7	0.59
Other	31	3.40	13	4.80	44	3.69

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Whether returning workers faced problems while staying abroad

The majority of the returning workers (56.8 per cent) claimed that they faced various difficulties in their destination countries. In contrast, 43.2 per cent returning workers claimed that they did not face any difficulties. Among female returning workers, 52.6 per cent indicated that they faced difficulties while abroad and 47.4 per cent indicated that they faced no difficulties. Among men, 58.1 per cent faced difficulties while abroad and 41.9 per cent faced no difficulties (see table 2.12).

Table 2.12. Whether respondents faced problems while abroad

Whether any problem faced	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	389	41.9	129	47.4	518	43.2
Yes	539	58.1	143	52.6	682	56.8
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Types of difficulties faced at destination

Many of the returning workers faced various types of problems and difficulties in their destination countries. The problems faced most frequently were related to wages (45.45 per cent). Among the respondents, 46.01 per cent of men and 43.36 per cent of women cited various wage related problems. Low wages along with irregular payments were mentioned often. Among all the respondents, 71 workers (53 male and 18 female) complained about low wages at the destination. A total of 111 returning workers, of whom 94 were male and 17 were female, complained of irregular payments. Returning migrant workers who complained about these two wage-related problems returned mainly from Saudi Arabia, Maldives, UAE, Oman, and Lebanon. Some employers kept wages due to workers for a long time. A total of 57 returning workers (44 male and 13 female) returning mainly from Maldives, Oman, and UAE, mentioned that their employers engaged in this practice. There are also returning workers who did not receive wages according to their contracts. A total of 18 returning workers (15 male and 31 female), all of whom returned from Oman, complained in this regard. Finally, 48 returning workers (38 male and ten female) returning from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon, Malaysia, and Maldives, did not receive wages for their overtime work.

The second most commonly cited problem faced while abroad was police harassment. A total of 21.41 per cent of the returning workers faced this issue, with police harassment being a more common problem among male returning workers (25.79 per cent) than female (4.90 per cent). Excessive workload was also cited as a problem by 14.08 per cent of returning workers. In this regard, this problem was cited more by female returning workers (30.77 per cent) than male (9.65 per cent).

Language-related problems were faced by 11.44 per cent returning workers (11.87 per cent of men and 9.79 per cent of women). Employment scarcity was also an issue for 8.36 per cent of returning workers and about an equal proportion (8.65 per cent) of the returning workers experienced physical and mental torture. More male (9.65 per cent)

than female (3.50 per cent) returning workers reported job scarcity as one of the difficulties they faced. In contrast, female workers were eight times more likely than male workers (3.53 per cent of men and 27.97 per cent of women) to experience physical and mental torture, ranging from simple scolding to indecent behaviour by employers, including even rape. For example, Asma, a returning female worker stated: “My employer was ill tempered. Frequent misbehaviour and physical and mental torture from him was very common for me.”

A small proportion of all the returning workers (9.82 per cent) also faced some difficulties related to (safe) residence. This problem was more commonly reported by women (15.38 per cent) than men (8.35 per cent). Other reported problems faced while abroad include scolding (1.32 per cent), robbery (1.17 per cent), physical problems (1.91 per cent), employer indecent behaviour (1.32 per cent), and bribery by *dalal* (1.32 per cent) (see table 2.13).

Table 2.13. Types of difficulties faced while abroad

Difficulties/trouble	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Language	64	11.87	14	9.79	78	11.44
Scolding	4	0.74	5	3.50	9	1.32
Victim of robbery	8	1.48	-		8	1.17
Owner did not provide food	4	0.74	8	5.59	12	1.76
Physical problem	8	1.48	5	3.50	13	1.91
Owner 's behaviour is not good	5	0.93	4	2.80	9	1.32
Police harassment and law complexity	139	25.79	7	4.90	146	21.41
Work permit cancellation	11	2.04	-	-	11	1.61
Scarcity of employment	52	9.65	5	3.50	57	8.36
Wage-related problem	248	46.01	62	43.36	310	45.45
Too much work	52	9.65	44	30.77	96	14.08
Problems relating to company	3	0.56	-	-	3	0.44
Dislike of Bangalis	5	0.93	-	-	5	0.73
Bribe to dalal	9	1.67	-	-	9	1.32
Uncertainty of work	3	0.56	2	1.40	5	0.73
Physical and mental torture	19	3.53	40	27.97	59	8.65
Fraud	26	4.82	2	1.40	28	4.11
Visa and passport related problem	22	4.08	-	-	22	3.23
Employers' reluctance to provide work permit	8	1.48	1	0.70	9	1.32
Problems related to residence	45	8.35	22	15.38	67	9.82
Other	23	4.32	4	2.80	27	3.98

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Contact with local embassy in case of difficulties

Generally, returning workers did not contact the embassy when they faced difficulties. Only one quarter (25.5 per cent) of all the returning migrants claimed to have contacted their local embassy (see table 2.14). Male workers were twice as likely as female workers to seek help/support from a local embassy when faced with difficulties (28.7 per cent of men compared to 14.7 per cent of women). Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Oman, Bahrain, UAE, and Malaysia are the countries where expatriate Bangladeshi workers commonly approached the local embassies.

Table 2.14. Contact with local embassy in case of difficulties faced

Contact with local embassy	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	662	71.3	232	85.3	894	74.5
Yes	266	28.7	40	14.7	306	25.5
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Reasons for contacting the embassy

Among those who contacted the embassy for support/help, the majority sought assistance on two issues: out-pass issuance and passport renewal. A total of 79 per cent of those returning workers who contacted a local embassy did so for these two reasons. It is noteworthy that male returning workers (42.5 per cent) contacted the embassy for issuing out-passes more frequently than the female returning workers (20 per cent) (see table 2.15).

Table 2.15. Reasons for contacting the embassy

Reason	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Out -pass issue	113	42.5	8	20.0	121	39.5
Passport renewal	103	38.7	18	45.0	121	39.5
Dalal related issues	2	0.8	-	-	2	0.7
Visa extension	19	7.1	3	7.5	22	7.2
Issues related to returning to Bangladesh	12	4.5	5	12.5	17	5.6
Salary issues	7	2.6	-	-	7	2.3
Driving license	1	0.4	-	-	1	0.3
For work permit	1	0.4	2	5.0	3	1.0
Getting job	3	1.1	1	2.5	4	1.3
To change work or employer	1	0.4	2	5.0	3	1.0
To seek an increase in the wages	1	0.4	-	-	1	0.3
For language	1	0.4	-	-	1	0.3
For medical treatment	1	0.4	1	2.5	2	0.7
For becoming legal/visa	1	0.4	-	-	1	0.3
Total	266	100.0	40	100.0	306	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Other reasons for contacting the embassy include seeking help for visa-extensions (7.5 per cent) and issues related to returning to Bangladesh (5.2 per cent). Female returning workers sought assistance returning to Bangladesh (12.5 per cent) more often than male workers (4.5 per cent). Very few returning workers sought help or support for wage and salary issues (2.6 per cent), driving licenses (0.3 per cent), work permits (1.0 per cent), getting jobs (1.3 per cent), work/employer changes (1.0 per cent), language assistance (0.3 per cent), and treatment (0.7 per cent).

Monthly income of the returning workers

Three-quarters (75.09 per cent) of the surveyed returning workers reported monthly incomes ranging from BDT10,000 to BDT30,000. The largest proportion (47.77 per cent) reported earning BDT10,000-20,000 per month, followed by 27.10 per cent of workers reporting earnings of BDT20,000-30,000 per month. Smaller proportions of surveyed workers reported earning BDT30,000-40,000 (10.57 per cent) and BDT40,000-50,000 (4.45 per cent) per month. The remaining 4.62 per cent of returning workers earned more than BDT50,000 every month. It is noteworthy that a small proportion or workers (5.29 per cent) reported monthly incomes of less than BDT10,000.

In general, female returning workers' incomes were less than male workers' incomes. Slightly less than three-quarters (72.59 per cent) of all female returning workers' incomes were BDT10,000-20,000, whereas 40.78 of male returning workers earned in a similar range. The proportion of returning workers who earned less than BDT10,000 every month was higher among female workers (15.19 per cent) than male workers (2.93 per cent). More men earned incomes in the upper income ranges than women.

Returning migrant worker remittances

The majority of the returning workers (60 per cent) indicated that they did not send money to family members every month. In contrast, 40 per cent of returning workers sent money every month to their family members. Among male returning workers, 41.81 per cent sent money home regularly in contrast to 33.82 per cent of female returning workers.

Among the surveyed returning workers, 31.80 per cent claimed that they sent money to their family members every two months (male 31.70 per cent, female 32 per cent). Another 18.50 per cent (male 17.70 per cent, female 21.10 per cent) and 5.0 per cent (male 4.60 per cent, female 6.40 per cent) of returning workers sent money every three months and four months, respectively. A small number of returning workers sent remittances in longer intervals as follows: every five months (1.80 per cent), six months (2.10 per cent), eight months (0.20 per cent), and nine months (0.10 per cent).

Amount sent to home country every month

Approximately half of the respondents (49.68 per cent overall, 45.05 per cent of men, and 71.08 per cent of women) indicated that they remitted BDT10,000-20,000 each month. Another 23.34 per cent and 9.85 per cent of these returning workers, respectively, sent BDT20,000-30,000 (male 27.34 per cent, female 4.82 per cent) and BDT30,000-40,000 (male 11.46 per cent, female 2.41 per cent) every month. More than BDT40,000 was remitted every month by 6.0 per cent of the returning workers. Finally, 13.06 per cent of the returning workers (male 9.90 per cent, female 27.71 per cent) indicated that they sent less than BDT10,000 to their family members each month.

III. Work and skills of the returning migrant workers

Number of trades worked in destination country

Most of the returning workers (about 84 per cent) only worked in one trade while abroad. Some workers (16.3 per cent), however, worked in more than one trade during their stay in the destination country. Of those who worked in more than one trade, 14.1 per cent worked in two trades and 2.2 per cent in three trades. Male returning workers were more likely to work in multiple trades than female returning workers. A total of 16.9 per cent of male returning workers worked in two trades compared to 4.4 per cent of female returning workers. None of the female returning workers worked in three trades (see table 3.1). In cases of working in more than one trade, male returning workers were engaged in construction, electrical and electronics, as an office worker in a company, agriculture, shop/showroom, and hotel. Female workers who worked in more than one trade were predominantly employed in domestic work, tailoring, and cleaning.

Table 3.1. Number of trades worked during stay abroad

Number of trades	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
One	745	80.3	260	95.6	1 005	83.8
Two	157	16.9	12	4.4	169	14.1
Three	26	2.8	-	-	26	2.2
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014

Areas/sectors of work in destination

Returning workers reported working in several different trades. Among the various trades, construction was the most common, followed by domestic work. Proportions of returning workers who worked in these two trades are 35.81 per cent and 17.03 per cent, respectively. A total of 6.84 per cent, 4.42 per cent, and 7.35 per cent of the returning migrants worked in cleaning, transport, and garments/tailoring, respectively. Another 8.26 per cent and 7.85 per cent of returning workers engaged in agriculture and hotel, respectively. Proportions of returning workers who were engaged in electrical/electronic work and worked in shop/showroom were in a similar range—5.34 per cent and 5.43 per cent, respectively. Returning workers who indicated that they worked in factories and companies made up 2.42 per cent and 9.02 per cent of returning workers, respectively. The remaining 4.92 per cent of all the returning workers were employed in other types of trades. These trades include motor workshop, mining, cooking, salon/beauty parlour, decoration, call centre, laundry, hospital, packaging, and fishing.

It is noteworthy that female returning workers were mainly engaged in domestic work. More than two-thirds (69.49 per cent) of the entire female returning worker sample were involved in this work/trade. Two other common trades for female returning workers are garments/tailoring (16.18 per cent) and cleaning (10.29 per cent). On the other hand, the largest proportion of male returning workers (46.11 per cent) was engaged in construction work, followed by company (11.23 per cent), agriculture (10.48 per cent), and hotel (9.40 per cent) (see table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Areas/sectors of work

Trade	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cleaning	54	5.83	28	10.29	82	6.84
Construction	427	46.11	2	0.74	429	35.81
Domestic work	15	1.62	189	69.49	204	17.03
Transport	53	5.72	-	-	53	4.42
Tailoring	44	4.75	44	16.18	88	7.35
Agriculture	97	10.48	2	0.74	99	8.26
Shop/showroom	63	6.80	2	0.74	65	5.43
Hotel	87	9.40	7	2.57	94	7.85
Salesman and product delivery	9	0.97	-	-	9	0.75
Decoration and decorator	1	0.11	-	-	1	0.08
Electrical and electronics	64	6.91	-	-	64	5.34
Motor workshop	8	0.86	-	-	8	0.67
Furniture	6	0.65	-	-	6	0.50
Mining	3	0.32	-	-	3	0.25
Cooking	5	0.54	-	-	5	0.42
Salon/beauty parlour	3	0.32	2	0.74	5	0.42
Fishing	7	0.76	-	-	7	0.58
Factory	27	2.92	2	0.74	29	2.42
Company	104	11.23	4	1.47	108	9.02
Other	54	5.83	5	1.84	59	4.92

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Position/post of the returning workers

Returning workers worked in various post and positions, but the most common position was that of labourer followed by mason *(mistri)*. A full 26.98 per cent and 23.64 per cent of all the returning workers held the positions of labourer and mason, respectively, while abroad. Maidservant was another commonly held position (16.72 per cent of the total), especially among the female returning workers (67.65 per cent). The positions of painter and tailor *(karigor)* were held, in each case, by approximately equal proportions of respondents, 6.10 per cent and 6.18 per cent, respectively. Similarly, about equal proportions of returning workers held the positions of salesman (3.26 per cent), cook (3.84 per cent), and electrician/technician (3.76 per cent). Other positions held by returning workers include driver (4.59 per cent), helper (5.35 per cent), crane operator (1.42 per cent), engine mechanic (0.58 per cent), waiter (2.48 per cent), supervisor (0.84 per cent), and gardener (1.50 per cent). Another 5.93 per cent worked in various other types of positions (see table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Positions/posts held while working abroad

Positions/post	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Painter	72	7.78	1	0.37	73	6.10
Tailor (karigor)	40	4.32	34	12.50	74	6.18
Shop/showroom	38	4.11	1	0.37	39	3.26
Cook	42	4.54	4	1.47	46	3.84
Storekeeper	2	0.22	-	-	2	0.17
Office peon	7	0.76	-	-	7	0.58
Crane operator	17	1.84	-	-	17	1.42
Engine mechanic	7	0.76	-		7	0.58
Mason (mistri)	162	17.51	-	-	162	13.37
Cleaner	88	9.51	35	12.86	123	10.28
Labourer	308	33.30	15	5.51	323	26.98
Staff	6	0.65	5	1.84	11	0.92
Maidservant	9	0.97	184	67.65	193	16.12
Driver	55	5.95	-	-	55	4.59
Helper	57	6.16	7	2.57	64	5.35
Waiter	32	3.46	2	0.74	34	2.84
Supervisor	10	1.08	-	-	10	0.84
Gardener	18	1.95	-	-	18	1.50
Electrician/technician	45	4.86	-	-	45	3.76
Other	70	7.57	1	0.37	71	5.93

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Skills acquired from destination

A large proportion (32 per cent) of the returning workers indicated that they acquired skills in construction work. Another 10.94 per cent of returning workers gained skills in domestic work, followed by cleaning (9.86 per cent) and garment work (9.86 per cent). Skills in carpentry, cooking, electrical work, and driving were acquired by 4.93 per cent, 6.10 per cent, 4.85 per cent, and 4.34 per cent of the returning workers, respectively. Skills acquired while abroad differed by sex. Skills related to construction work, carpentry, driving, and electrical work were acquired more often among the male returning workers. On the other hand, skills related to domestic work, garment work, cleaning, and cooking were more commonly acquired by female returning workers (see table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Acquired skills

Skills	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cleaning	79	8.54	39	14.34	118	9.86
Carpentry	58	6.27	1	0.37	59	4.93
Hotel boy	26	2.81	-	-	26	2.17
AC fittings	13	1.41	-	-	13	1.09
Supervising	13	1.41	-	-	13	1.09
Gardening	13	1.41	-	-	13	1.09
Construction work	381	41.19	-	-	383	32.00
Driving	52	5.62	-	-	52	4.34
Garments	42	4.54	44	16.18	86	7.18
Domestic worker	8	0.86	123	45.22	131	10.94
Salesman	45	4.86	1	0.37	46	3.84
Cook	47	5.08	26	9.56	73	6.10
Laundry	7	0.76	3	1.10	10	0.84
Poultry & dairy	6	0.65	1	0.37	7	0.58
Machine operating	12	1.30	1	0.37	13	1.09
Cultivation	45	4.86	1	0.37	46	3.84
Electrical	58	6.27	-	-	58	4.85
Packaging	8	0.86	2	0.74	10	0.84
Business	8	0.86	-	-	8	0.67
Salon & beauty parlour	5	0.54	3	1.10	8	0.67
Fastfood making	2	0.22	1	0.37	3	0.25
Motor workshop	6	0.65	-	-	6	0.50
Garage	4	0.43	-	-	4	0.33
Others	60	6.49	1	0.37	61	5.10

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

During the survey, respondents did not mention the acquisition of language skills. Only a few workers (six male workers) talked about this skill during the in-depth interviews. They claimed that because they stayed abroad for a long time, they became proficient in the language of their destination country and they could be engaged to teach this language to others despite the fact that their language skills have not been certified by any agency at home or abroad.

Number of countries worked

Most of the returning workers (88.42 per cent) have the experience of working in only one country. The proportion of returning workers having worked in two countries is 10.67 per cent and a minority (0.97 per cent) have worked in three countries. The experience of working in more than one country is more common among female than male returning workers. Among female returning workers, 15.81 per cent and 2.21 per cent have worked in two and three countries, respectively, whereas 9.16 per cent and 0.54 per cent of male returning workers have worked in two and three countries, respectively (see table 3.5).

Table 3.5. Number of countries worked

Number of countries	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
One country	838	90.30	223	81.99	1 061	88.42
Two countries	85	9.16	43	15.81	128	10.67
Three countries	5	0.54	6	2.21	11	0.92
Total	928	100.00	272	100.00	1 200	100.00

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Trades/areas of work in other countries prior to last destination country

Prior to their most recent stint, cleaning, construction, and domestic work were the three most common trades worked by the respondents in previous destination countries. Of those having worked in multiple countries, the largest proportion (32.58 per cent) previously worked in domestic work, followed by construction (24.24 per cent) and cleaning (15.15 per cent). Of workers in this category, 5.30 per cent, 6.06 per cent, and 7.58 per cent previously worked in agriculture, shop/showroom, and hotel, respectively. A very small proportion of those workers were also involved in laundry work (3.03 per cent), salesmanship/product delivery (3.79 per cent), security guard (1.52 per cent), transport (3.79 per cent), tailoring (3.03 per cent), decoration (0.76 per cent), and electrical/electronics (1.52 per cent) in their previous job location. It is noteworthy that female returning workers were predominantly involved in domestic work (72.22 per cent) and cleaning (16.67 per cent) in their previous destinations. Male workers, on the other hand, were primarily employed in construction (38.10 per cent), cleaning (13.10 per cent), hotel (11.90 per cent), and shop/showroom (9.52 per cent) prior to their most recent stint (see table 3.6).

Table 3.6. Trades/areas of work engaged in prior destinations

Trades	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Laundry	2	2.38	2	3.70	4	3.03
Salesman/ product delivery	2	2.38	2	3.70	4	3.03
Security guard	2	2.38	-	-	2	1.52
Cleaning	11	13.10	9	16.67	20	15.15
Construction	32	38.10	-	-	32	24.24
Domestic work	4	4.76	39	72.22	43	32.58
Transport	5	5.95	-	-	5	3.79
Tailoring	4	4.76	-	-	4	3.03
Agriculture	7	8.33	-	-	7	5.30
Shop/showroom	8	9.52	-	-	8	6.06
Hotel	10	11.90	-	-	10	7.58
Decoration and decorator	1	1.19	-	-	1	0.76
Electrical and electronics	2	2.38	-	-	2	1.52

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

IV. Future plans and expectations

Returning workers' future plans are important for their social and economic reintegration in the home country. However, the decisions and plans of these workers are influenced not only by various factors, but also by different people. Returning migrants expect support from the Government, as well as from employers, in order to help their plans materialize. This section explores three aspects of repatriation: future plans, persons and factors/situations affecting these plans, and expectations of the returning workers.

Future plans of returning migrant workers

Whether future plan is decided: Most of the surveyed returning workers (88.3 per cent) indicated that they had some sort of plans, many of which were decided before travelling to their destination countries. Female workers, however, lag behind male workers in terms of having future plans. A full 22.8 per cent of female returning workers did not have future plans when they returned to the home country, whereas this proportion was 8.5 per cent among male returning workers (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Whether future plan is decided

Whether future plan is decided	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	849	91.5	210	77.2	1 059	88.3
No	79	8.5	62	22.8	141	11.8
Total	928	100	272	100	1 200	100

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Future plan options: Among returning workers' future plans, three options are most prominent: job, self-employment/business, and migration to another country. Over two-thirds (67.23 per cent) of returning workers prefer to be engaged in self-employment/business. More male returnees prefer this option than female returnees. More than three-quarters (76.68 per cent) of male returning workers chose this option, whereas this option was preferred by only 29.05 per cent of the female returning workers. Female returnees prefer finding a job or migration to another country over self-employment/business. Although one quarter (25.50 per cent) of all the returning workers indicated finding a job as their future plan, 44.76 per cent of the female workers preferred this option. A total of 63.81 per cent of the female returning workers have a desire to migrate again. In contrast, only 47.23 per cent of the male respondents have the same desire (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Future plan options*

Future plan options	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Job	176	20.73	94	44.76	270	25.50
Self-employment/business	651	76.68	61	29.05	712	67.23
Migration to another country	401	47.23	134	63.81	535	50.52

*Multiple responses allowed

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Rank future plan options: When asked to rank options for the future, the majority of respondents (58.9 per cent) who planned to find a job chose having a job as their first choice. Having a job was chosen as a second and third choice by 32.6 per cent and 8.5 per cent of this group of returning workers, respectively. In the case of self-employment/business, more than three-quarters (76.8 per cent) of those who plan to pursue this option chose it as a first choice. Of those who plan to engage in self-employment/business, 21.6 per cent and 1.5 per cent indicated this option as a second or third choice, respectively. Among those who have a plan to migrate again, two-thirds (66.9 per cent) preferred this as a first choice. Another 27.5 per cent and 5.6 per cent of this group of returning workers have opted for this option as a second or third choice, respectively (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Ranks of future plan options*

Plan		Male		Female		Total	
	Choice	N	%	N	%	N	%
Job	1st choice	90	51.1	69	73.4	159	58.9
	2nd choice	67	38.1	21	22.3	88	32.6
	3rd choice	19	10.8	4	4.3	23	8.5
	Total	176	100.0	94	100.0	270	100.0
Self-employment/ business	1st choice	506	77.7	41	67.2	547	76.8
	2nd choice	135	20.7	19	31.1	154	21.6
	3rd choice	10	1.5	1	1.6	11	1.5
	Total	651	100.0	61	100.0	712	100.0
Migration to another country	1st choice	256	63.8	102	76.1	358	66.9
	2nd choice	121	30.2	26	19.4	147	27.5
	3rd choice	24	6	6	4.5	30	5.6
	Total	401	100.0	134	100.0	535	100.0

*Multiple responses allowed

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Preferred job/trade in the country: Returning workers expressed many preferences in regards to jobs/areas of work they wish to pursue in Bangladesh. The largest proportion (25.6 per cent) prefers to be employed in the garments and tailoring sector, followed by construction (17.4 per cent). Those interested in garments and tailoring are mainly female returning workers since many worked in this sector when they stayed abroad. In contrast, construction sector employment was chosen by primarily by male returning workers and is preferred by 25.6 per cent of male returning workers who desire to have a job in the country. Another 9.6 per cent and 7.8 per cent of workers who plan to find a job prefer to have a job in domestic work and the electronics sector, respectively. It is noteworthy that the preference for jobs in domestic work is more frequent among female returning workers (21.3 per cent). Electronics-related jobs are preferred by male returning workers (11.9 per cent), but no female workers. Similarly, finding employment as a driver was preferred by 6.7 per cent of male workers in this group. Of the returning workers who desire to get jobs, 3.3 per cent expressed an interest in being employed as a cook (3.4 per cent male and 3.2 per cent female) and 3.7 per cent as a mechanic (4.5 per cent male and 1.1 per cent female). Another 9.6 per cent of these returning workers did not specify any specific job/sector. Rather, they desire a good/suitable job in any sector (see table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Types of jobs/trades preferred

Preferred trade/job	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not specified (any job)	19	10.7	7	7.5	26	9.6
Power plant	4	2.3	-	-	4	1.5
Bank	3	1.7	-	-	3	1.1
Private company	5	2.8	-	-	5	1.9
Call Centre	1	0.6	-	-	1	0.4
Cleaning	4	2.3	2	2.1	6	2.2
General supervisor	1	0.6	1	1.1	2	0.7
Government job	2	1.1	1	1.1	3	1.1
Printing	1	0.6	-	-	1	0.4
Organization/association	-	-	1	1.1	1	0.4
Official	2	1.1	1	1.1	3	1.1
Cook	6	3.4	3	3.2	9	3.3
NGO	2	1.1	-	-	2	0.7
Nursery/garden	2	1.1	-	-	2	0.7
Imam	1	0.6	-	-	1	0.4
Salesman	1	0.6	-	-	1	0.4
Health sector	1	0.6	-	-	1	0.4
Shoe-making	1	0.6	-	-	1	0.4
Driving	18	10.2	-	-	18	6.7
Garments and tailoring shop	14	8.0	55	58.5	69	25.6
Construction	45	25.6	2	2.1	47	17.4
Domestic work	6	3.4	20	21.3	26	9.6
Electronics	21	11.9	-	-	21	7.8
Mechanics	9	5.1	1	1.1	10	3.7
Carpentry	5	2.8	-	-	5	1.9
Mobile/computer shop	2	1.1	-	-	2	0.7
Total	176	100.0	94	100.0	270	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Whether returning workers have required skills for preferred job in home country: In regards to the respondents' desired jobs, almost all (95.3 per cent) thought that they possessed the required skills for jobs/sectors they preferred. On the contrary, only 4.7 per cent perceive that they lack required skills for their desired jobs (see table 4.5). Of those who believed that they lacked required skills, they were of the opinion that training in particular areas, for example, tailoring/garments (83.3 per cent), driving (8.3 per cent), and electronics (8.3 per cent), would be beneficial for reintegration.

Table 4.5. Whether returning workers have the required skills for preferred jobs/trades

Having required skills	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	2	1.2	10	11.1	12	4.7
Yes	165	98.8	80	88.9	245	95.3
Total	167	100.0	90	100.0	257	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Preferred business/self-employment: The largest proportion of returning workers who plan to be self-employed (24.02 per cent) desire to do so by establishing some type of shop. This desire was reported among more female (34.34 per cent) than male (22.6 per cent) returnees (see table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Preferred businesses/areas of self-employment

Types of business	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not specified	15	2.3	4	6.56	19	2.67
Agriculture	115	17.7	5	8.20	120	16.85
Tailoring shop	14	2.2	10	16.39	24	3.37
Shop	147	22.6	24	39.34	171	24.02
Any type of business	93	14.3	2	3.28	95	13.34
Grocery shop	16	2.5	1	1.64	17	2.39
Fish farm	40	6.1	7	11.48	47	6.60
Transport/Rent-a-car	35	5.4	-	-	35	4.92
Hotel	8	1.2	-	-	8	1.12
Cloth business	21	3.2	2	3.28	23	3.23
Electrical shop	20	3.1	-	-	20	2.81
Tree business	2	0.3	-	-	2	0.28
Green vegetable	24	3.7	-	-	24	3.37
Furniture business	21	3.2	-	-	21	2.95
Fish and salt business	8	1.2	-	-	8	1.12
Business of husk/pulse/bran	14	2.2	1	1.64	15	2.11
Stationary shop	5	0.8	1	1.64	6	0.84
Salon/beauty parlour	4	0.6	1	1.64	5	0.70
Construction firm	16	2.5	-	-	16	2.25
Others	33	5.1	3	4.92	36	5.06
Total	651	100.0	61	100.00	712	100.00

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

The second largest proportion (16.85 per cent) would like to start an agriculture-related business. This is an option that is preferred more by male (17.7 per cent) than female (8.20 per cent) returnees. Grocery shop, fish farm, and transport (rent-a-car) are preferred self-employment areas/sectors by 2.9 per cent (2.5 per cent of males, 1.64 per cent females), 6.60 per cent (6.1 per cent males, 11.48 per cent females), and 4.92 per cent (5.4 per cent males) of these returning workers, respectively.

Starting a cloth business was preferred by 3.23 per cent of these returning workers. About equal proportions want to establish electrical shops (2.81 per cent), furniture businesses (2.95 per cent), or construction firms (2.25 per cent). A substantial proportion of this group of workers (16.1 per cent) has not decided the specific type of self-employment, but has indicated that they want to start a business of any type. A small proportion (5.06 per cent) mentioned other types of businesses that they want to establish.

Sources of investment funds for self-employment: With regards to the sources of investment funds for planned businesses, about half of these workers (49.5 per cent) indicated that they want to take a loan and combine it with their personal savings. This is true for both male (49.8 per cent) and female (45.6 per cent) returning workers who plan to start businesses. About one third of the returning workers (32.5 per cent) have a plan to use their personal savings as their only source of investment funds. In this regard, this plan is more common among male returning workers (33.0 per cent) than the female returning workers (26.3 per cent). A smaller proportion (15.3 per cent overall, 14.5 per cent of males, and 24.6 per cent of females) plans to finance their business investments entirely through loans. A few workers who plan to be self-employed (2.7 per cent overall, 2.7 per cent of males, and 3.5 per cent of females) have yet to determine a source of investment funds for self-employment/business (see table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Planned sources of investment for self-employment

Investment source	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Personal savings	210	33	15	26.3	225	32.5
Loans	92	14.5	14	24.6	106	15.3
Loans & personal savings	317	49.8	26	45.6	343	49.5
Not determined yet	17	2.7	2	3.5	19	2.7
Total	636	100	57	100	693	100

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Loan sources: The returning workers who plan to take out loans will explore various loan sources. In this regard, most (73.3 per cent) of these workers have plans to take loans from banks. Another 12.0 per cent and 10.7 per cent of these returning workers plan to take out loans from NGOs and family/relatives, respectively. A few others (4.0 per cent) indicated that they want to take low interest loans from any source. More men (74.3 per cent) plan to take loans from banks than women (62.5 per cent), whereas more women (25 per cent) want to take loans from NGOs than men (10.8 per cent) (see table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Planned loan sources for returning workers

Source of loan	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bank	304	74.3	25	62.5	329	73.3
NGO	44	10.8	10	25.0	54	12.0
Family & relatives	44	10.8	4	10.0	48	10.7
From any source with low interest	14	3.4	1	2.5	15	3.3
Other businessman	3	0.7	-	-	3	0.7
Total	409	100.0	40	100.0	449	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Preferred country for migration: Most returning workers who want to migrate again specifically mentioned names of countries where they want to go. Just over one fifth of the workers (21.3 per cent) did not name a specific country as a future destination. These returning workers just want to migrate to any suitable country. To consider a country as suitable, their concerns are related to income, employer, company, and conditions in the destination country. Women (29.1 per cent) were more likely than men (18.7 per cent) to not mention the name of a future destination country.

About equal proportions of returning workers prefer Saudi Arabia (13.8 per cent) and UAE (13.5 per cent) as future destinations. In each case, 4.5 per cent of returning workers desire to migrate to Qatar and Maldives. Returning workers who want to migrate to Lebanon and Singapore are almost of the same proportions at 6.4 per cent and 6.5 per cent, respectively. Malaysia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Italy are the desired future destinations of 4.9 per cent, 3.2 per cent, 2.1 per cent, and 1.3 per cent of those who plan to migrate again, respectively.

The main countries preferred by female returning migrant workers are Lebanon (24.6 per cent), Jordan (8.2 per cent), Oman (9.0 per cent), and UAE (14.9 per cent). On the other hand, male returning workers mainly prefer Saudi Arabia (16.2 per cent), UAE (13 per cent), Oman (12 per cent), Bahrain (3.7 per cent), Malaysia (6.5 per cent), Singapore (8.7 per cent), and Maldives (5.5 per cent) (see table 4.9).

Table 4.9. Expected/desired country/destination for future migration

Expected country	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Any suitable country	75	18.7	39	29.1	114	21.3
Saudi Arabia	65	16.2	9	6.7	74	13.8
UAE	52	13.0	20	14.9	72	13.5
Kuwait	11	2.7	-	-	11	2.1
Qatar	22	5.5	2	1.5	24	4.5
Oman	48	12.0	12	9.0	60	11.2
Jordan	-	-	11	8.2	11	2.1
Lebanon	1	0.2	33	24.6	34	6.4
Bahrain	15	3.7	2	1.5	17	3.2
Malaysia	26	6.5	-	-	26	4.9
Mauritius	5	1.2	2	1.5	7	1.3
Singapore	35	8.7	-	-	35	6.5
Maldives	22	5.5	2	1.5	24	4.5
Iraq	2	0.5	-	-	2	0.4
Republic of Korea	2	0.5	-	-	2	0.4
Italy	7	1.7	-	-	7	1.3
United Kingdom	1	0.2	1	0.7	2	0.4
Asian country	1	0.2	-	-	1	0.2
European country	5	1.2	-	-	5	0.9
Middle East	4	1.0	1	0.7	5	0.9
African country	1	0.2	-	-	1	0.2
Canada	1	0.2	-	-	1	0.2
Total	401	100.0	134	100.0	535	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Whether returning workers have sound health condition: Almost all (92.7 per cent) of the returning workers claimed to be healthy. The proportion of returning workers who claimed to be sound of health was higher among male workers (93.5 per cent) than female workers (89.7 per cent). Among female returning workers, 10.3 per cent claimed an absence of sound health, which is a higher proportion than male returning workers (6.5 per cent) (see table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Whether returning workers have a sound health condition

Having a sound health condition	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	60	6.5	28	10.3	88	7.3
Yes	868	93.5	244	89.7	1112	92.7
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Whether returning workers have medical insurance: Most of the returning workers (79.2 per cent) do not have medical insurance. One fifth (20.8 per cent) claimed to have some form of medical insurance. Female returning workers (90.4 per cent) lack medical insurance more often than the male returning workers (75.9 per cent). Bearing the cost of medical insurance is difficult for the workers. More than two-thirds (67.6 per cent) of the returning workers who reported having medical insurance indicated that they cannot bear the cost. In contrast, 32.4 per cent of those covered by medical insurance claimed that they are able to meet the required cost (see table 4.11)

Table 4.11. Whether returning workers have medical insurance

Health insurance	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
No	704	75.9	246	90.4	950	79.2
Yes	224	24.1	26	9.6	250	20.8
Total	928	100.0	272	100.0	1 200	100.0

Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Persons and factors/situations affecting future plan decisions

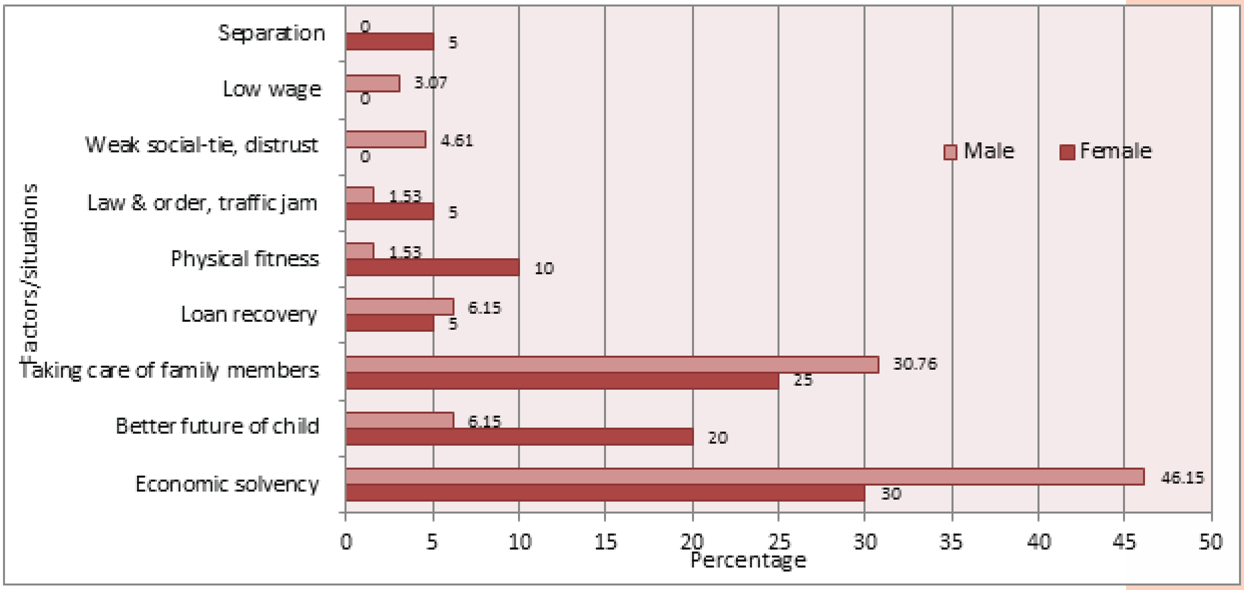
With regards to future plans, returning migrant workers' are often influenced by a number of people, most of whom are family members. However, the fact is that the majority (60 per cent) of the returning workers claim that they are self-dependent in this regard, meaning that they are not influenced by others when they make decisions concerning the future. Of those who are influenced by others, 25 per cent are influenced by their spouses. Apart from spouses, parents (15 per cent) and children (7.5 per cent) also influence the decision-making process of the returning workers. One returning worker from Malaysia expressed how his future plans are affected by his family members: "I want to start a business in Bangladesh, but my parents and wife's desire may influence me to go to abroad again."

It is noteworthy that future plans of female returning workers are influenced by others more often than for male returning workers. This is mainly due to the fact that Bangladesh is a patriarchal society. Most (85 per cent) of female returning workers are dependent on family members, especially on husbands (40 per cent), parents (25 per cent), and children (20 per cent). Only a small proportion of the female returning workers (15 per cent) claimed that they do not depend on anyone for deciding their future plans.

While deciding their future plans, returning workers take into consideration a number of factors. Among all these factors, economic solvency is most important for both female (30 per cent) and male (46.15 per cent) returning workers. Respondents want to pursue a plan that will bring adequate economic security to their families. The issue of care for family members is also considered to be a significant determinant of future plans. A large proportion of both male (30.76 per cent) and female (25 per cent) returning workers indicated that they will consider whether the care of family members is ensured when making plans for the future. Ensuring a better future for children is also a determining factor for returning workers' future plans. Interestingly, female returning workers (20 per cent) consider this the most important factor more often than the male returning workers (6.15 per cent). Among other considerations, issues such as recovery of a family loan; physical fitness, and law and order situation of the country are considered as important determinates of future plans by both male and female retuning workers (see figure 4.1).

Along with these factors, marital status is another determinate for future plans. A few of the female returning workers claimed that they would take into account the issue of separation from family life while deciding on a future plan.

Figure 4.1. Factors/situations taken into consideration for future decision



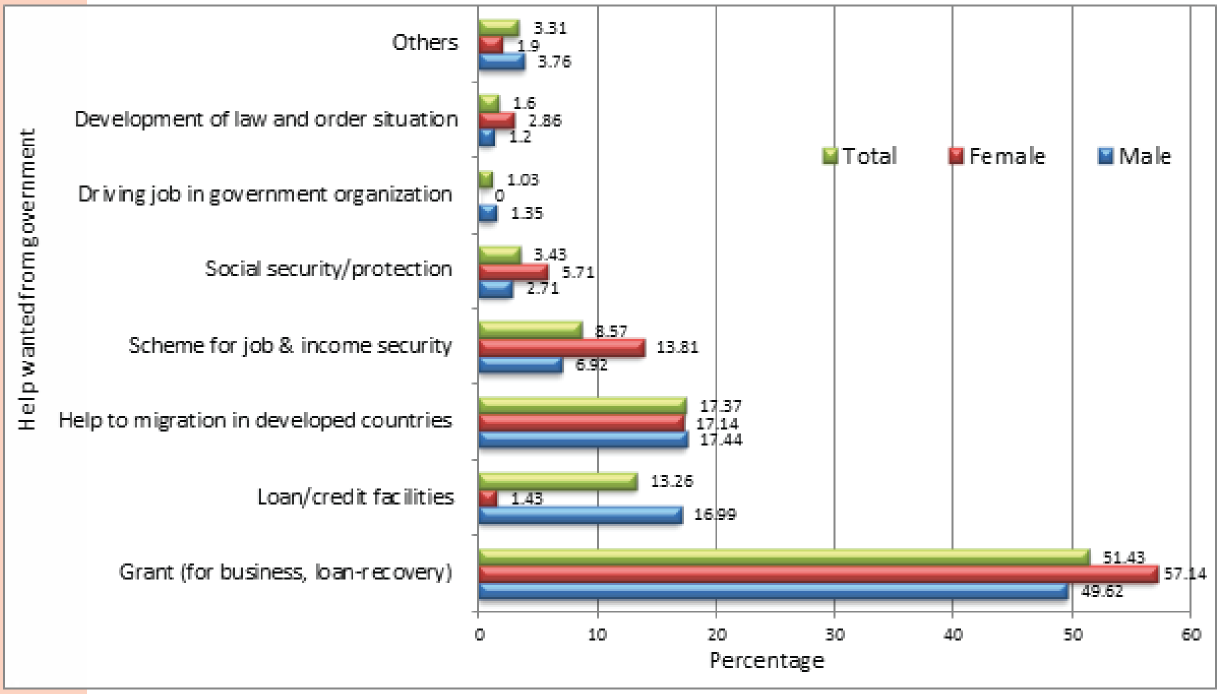
Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

Expectations of the returning workers

Desired assistance from the government: With regards to expectations of government assistance, the majority of the respondents talked about the Government providing them with grants. The returning workers desire grants to start businesses in the country and to recover family loans. Among the returning workers, 13.26 per cent expect the Government to provide loans and credit. These two expectations were seen mainly among those who want to be self-employed in the country. Few of the workers expected the Government to take initiatives to improve the conditions of law and order so that they can operate their planned business smoothly. Along with the hope of improved law and order, returning workers also desire to obtain social security protection from the Government.

Returning workers also want the Government to introduce special job schemes for them and ensure their income security in the country. A few others expressed other desired help from the Government, such as issuing trade licenses with simple conditions, issuing driving licenses without harassment, supporting the receipt of payments due from employers abroad, taking action against and punishing fraudulent middleman and mediators, and providing different training facilities (see figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. Expected help from the government



Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

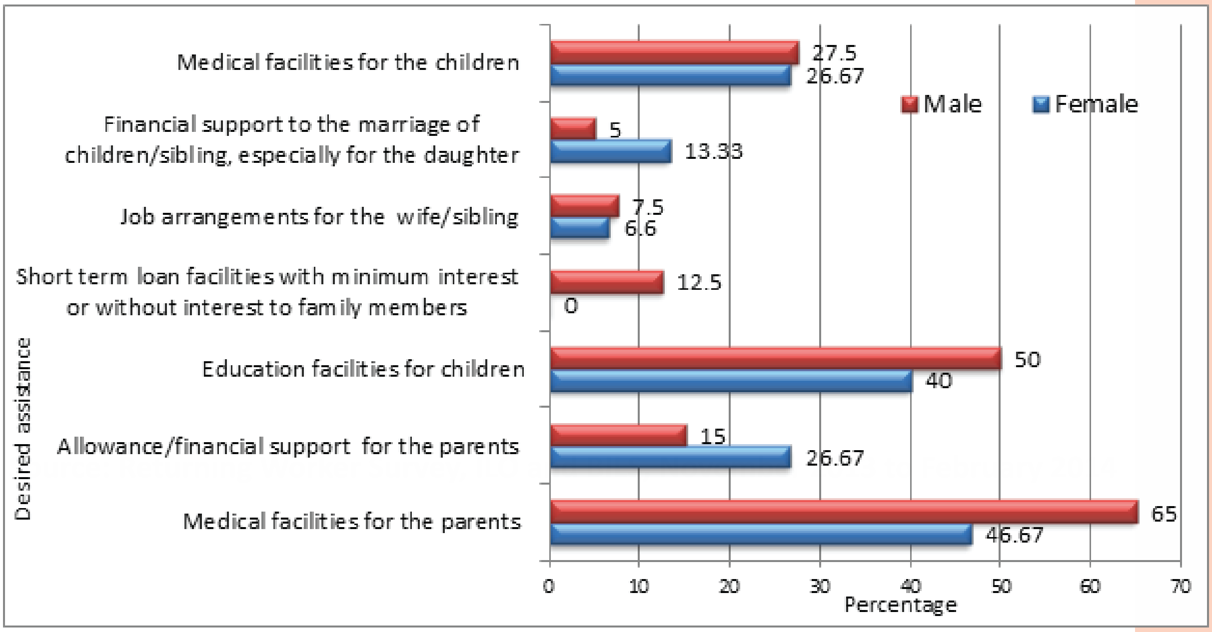
Desired assistance from local employers: Only a few returning workers have expressed their expectations regarding employers. There is a lack of confidence that employers will fulfil returning workers' expectations. The majority of returning workers who articulated their expectations would like local employers to give them preference when hiring for technical jobs, such as driving, electrical/electronic jobs, mechanical jobs, and construction jobs. Many of these workers would also like employers to improve working conditions and environment. In this regard, the returning workers noted their desire for employers to provide rational wages/salaries on time, fixed working hours, availability and use of modern/technical instruments, safe workplaces, and upgrading positions in accordance to skills and experience. It is noteworthy that the attitude of the employers is also a concern of the workers. Returning workers who want to seek jobs in the country also expect a positive attitude towards workers from the employers.

Expectations among those planning to migrate again: Training, financial assistance, and government-arranged visas are the main expectations of the returning workers who wish to migrate again. The returning workers emphasized the need and desire for training in a number of areas, such as construction, cooking, sanitary fittings, electrical and electronics, and modern cleaning equipment. Some of the workers also highlighted the importance of language training before further migration.

Workers who plan to migrate again expressed that medical support for family members left behind, especially for parents and children, is the most important desired assistance. Shamim Bhuyan, a returning worker, said, "it would be convenient and appreciated, if treatment facilities and caring opportunities are made available for my parents, when I will not stay with my family". In addition to medical treatment facilities, a large number of workers contemplating future migration desires education facilities for their children.

Parents' financial security is a desire of many workers. These workers want the Government to provide their aged parents with an allowance under a social protection scheme. In the words of Sajal, a returning worker, "the Government should consider to provide our parents with aged-allowance separately or a specific quota system can be introduced in the mainstream social safety net scheme and certainly the allowance amount should be given in a significant level." Since many of the returning workers cannot send money regularly every month, a section of these workers think that introducing a short-term loan with little or no interest would be highly beneficial for their families. Besides these desires, some think that ensuring job facilities for family members (wife and sibling) and financial support for the marriage of children, especially for daughters, would be highly valuable to them during their absence from the home country (see figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Desired assistance during absence from home country



Source: Returning Worker Survey, ILO and BILS, November 2013 to February 2014.

V. Conclusions

Key findings

Migration dynamics

'Better income' and 'overcoming poverty' – main reasons for migration: Almost all of the returning workers left the home country for these two reasons. The majority (64.75 per cent) desired to have more/better income followed by overcoming the condition of poverty (33.67 per cent).

More than half of the returning workers returned from three countries: The main flow of returning workers is from three countries: Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman. Returning workers from these three countries together constitute 56.2 per cent of the returning migrant workers (Saudi Arabia 17.1 per cent, UAE 17.5 per cent, and Oman 21.6 per cent).

Lebanon, Oman, and Jordan – three main countries from which female workers returned: Female returning workers from these three countries together constitute more than three-quarters (76.4 per cent) of all female returning workers.

Time spent in destination is not very long: The largest proportion of the returning workers (55.1 per cent) has returned within two to five years after leaving Bangladesh. Around 16 per cent of returning workers have spent around eight years living abroad. Lengths of stay working abroad for both male and female workers are similar.

'*Dalal*' and 'personal communication' – main mediums of migration: Most of the returning workers (80.6 per cent) migrated through these two mediums, including 51.3 per cent through Dalal and 29.3 per cent through personal contacts.

Cost of migration varied based on destination: The cost of migration for the returning workers varied greatly based on the country of destination. The lowest cost destination was Jordan and the highest was the United Kingdom. Migration costs for the most common destination countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman) were in a similar range.

Men spent more than women on migration and recruitment: The average cost of migration and recruitment for the returning workers was BDT187,174.31. The average cost of migration was about three times higher for male than for female returning workers. Men spent on average BDT220,319.31, while women spent on average BDT74,213.24 to migrate.

'Loans from relatives/friends/neighbours', 'family savings', and 'selling of land/property' – main sources of money for migration: Among the returning workers, 62.25 per cent used loans from relatives/friends/neighbours, 46.50 per cent used family savings, and 27.75 per cent used the proceeds from land/property sales to finance migration. It is noteworthy that men (32.44 per cent) used the proceeds from selling of land/property more often than women (12.13 per cent).

Receiving training is infrequent both before and after migration: Among all the returning workers, 39.30 per cent had training before leaving the country. Only 17.50 per cent of returning workers received training at the destination country.

Non-government agencies are the main training providers before migration, whereas employers are the main providers after migration: Of those workers who received training before migration, the largest proportion (41.7 per cent) did so through non-governmental agencies. On the other hand, 70.5 per cent of those returning workers who received training in the destination countries received employer-provided training.

'Visa and passport', 'wage', and 'personal and family' problems – three main reasons for returning: Among all the returning workers, the main reasons for repatriating include visa and passport issues (40.35 per cent), wage issues (14.77 per cent), and personal and family problems (14.68 per cent).

Majority of the returning workers faced problems in destination: A total of 56.8 per cent of the returning workers faced various problems in their destination countries.

'Wages', 'police harassment', and 'excessive workload' – most common problems in destination: A total of 45.45 per cent, 21.41 per cent, and 14.08 per cent of all the returning workers indicated that they faced wage issues, police harassment, and excessive workloads. It is noteworthy that police harassment was faced more often by the male (25.79 per cent) than female (4.90 per cent) returning workers. Excessive workload was indicated as a problem by more female (30.77 per cent) than male (9.65 per cent) returning workers.

Contacting the local embassy in case of difficulties is not frequent: Only one quarter (25.5 per cent) of all the returning migrants contacted their local embassy in case of difficulties.

'Out-pass' and 'passport renewal' – most common reasons for contacting embassy: A total of 79 per cent of returning workers contacted their local embassy, of which 39.5 per cent sought out-passes and 39.5 per cent required passport renewal services.

Monthly income level is not high; women earned less than men: The largest proportion of returning workers earned monthly incomes between BDT10,000-20,000. Another three-quarters (75.09 per cent) of all the returning workers earned monthly income in the range of BDT10,000-30,000. A little less than three-quarters (72.59 per cent) of all female returning workers' incomes was BDT 10,000-20,000, whereas 40.78 per cent of male returning workers earned a similar amount.

Majority could not send money regularly every month: A total of 60 per cent of returning workers claimed that they did not send money to family members every month. Male returning workers (41.81 per cent) were more likely to send money home on a monthly basis than female returning workers (33.82 per cent).

Work and skills of the returning migrant workers

A small proportion of returning workers has experience working in more than one trade: In the destination countries, most of the returning workers (about 84 per cent) worked in only one trade, whereas 16.3 per cent worked in more than one trade. The trend of working in more than one trade is higher among the male returning workers than female.

'Construction' and 'domestic work' – two common areas of work among the returning workers: Among the different areas of work, construction is the most common one followed by domestic work. A full 35.81 per cent of returning workers worked in construction and 17.03 per cent worked in domestic work.

'Construction labourer', 'mason', and 'maidservant' – three most common positions/posts of the returning workers: Of the returning workers, 26.98 per cent worked as construction labourers, 23.64 per cent as masons, and 16.72 per cent as maidservants. It is noteworthy that the position of maidservant was held by more than two-thirds (67.65 per cent) of all female returning workers.

Construction work, domestic work, cleaning, and food processing – commonly performed tasks of the returning workers: The tasks most often engaged in by returning workers include construction (33.50 per cent), domestic work (17.21 per cent), cleaning (13.03 per cent), and food processing (10.53 per cent). Male returning workers were more likely to be engaged in construction-related tasks (42.92 per cent), whereas female returning workers undertook domestic work (69.12 per cent) in larger numbers.

Skills acquired from destination: The main skills acquired abroad include construction work (32 per cent), domestic work (10.94 per cent), cleaning (9.86 per cent), and garment work (9.86).

Most returning workers worked in one country: The majority of returning workers (88.42 per cent) experienced working in only one country—the country from which they just returned.

Experience working in more than one country is more common among female than male returning workers: A total of 18.02 per cent of female and 9.7 per cent of male returning workers have experience working in more than one country.

Future plans and expectations

Most returning workers have plans for the future: The majority of returning workers (88.3 per cent) decided on their future plans before returning to the home country.

Female returning workers are less likely to have future plans than male returning workers: A total of 22.8 per cent of the female returning workers, in comparison to 8.5 per cent of the male workers, did not have future plans when they arrived in the home country.

In terms of future plans, self-employment in the country is the most preferred option: More than two-thirds (67.23 per cent) of all the returning workers prefer to engage in self-employment/business. Male returning workers (76.68 per cent) are more likely to prefer this option than female returning workers (29.05 per cent).

In terms of future plans, women preferred 'job in the country' and 'migration to other country' more than the men: A total of 63.81 per cent and 44.76 per cent of female returning workers preferred these options, respectively. In contrast, 47.23 per cent and 20.73 per cent of male returning workers preferred these options, respectively.

Jobs in garments/tailoring and construction sector are commonly preferred: The largest proportion (25.6 per cent) of those who want to find a job in the country prefers employment in the garments/tailoring sector, followed by construction (17.4 per cent).

Almost all perceive that they have the required skills for their desired jobs: The majority of returning workers who want to find a job (95.3 per cent) think that they have the required skills for their preferred jobs/sectors. Training in tailoring/garments, driving, and electronics are desired by those who want a job but think that they lack the required skills.

'Establishing shop/store', 'agriculture', and 'any type of businesses' are commonly preferred self-employment options by the returning workers: A total of 24.02 per cent, 16.85 per cent, and 13.34 per cent of returning workers have a plan to be to be self-employed in these ways, respectively.

'Loan' and 'personal savings' are the main planned sources of investment funds for self-employment: Among those who want to be self-employed, 49.5 per cent have a plan to take out a loan and combine it with their personal savings. Another 32.5 per cent want to invest only from their personal savings.

Bank would be the main source of loans: Of those planning to take out a loan for self-employment, 73.03 per cent intend to apply from banks. The plan to take out loans from banks is more common among male (74.3 per cent) than female (62.5 per cent) returning workers. Female returning workers (25 per cent) are more likely to take loans out from NGOs than the male returning workers (10.8 per cent).

'Any suitable country' – first preference for those who want to migrate again: With regards to migrating for employment as a future plan, the largest proportion (21.3 per cent) had no specific destination in mind, only that they migrate to any suitable country. Saudi Arabia (13.8 per cent) and UAE (13.5 per cent) are the top choices as future destinations.

Returning workers find themselves in sound health conditions: Almost all (92.7 per cent) of the returning workers think that their health condition is good.

Medical insurance is not common among returning workers: Only 20.8 per cent of the returning workers claimed to have medical insurance. Female returning workers (90.4 per cent) lack this type of insurance more than the male returning workers (75.9 per cent).

Bearing the cost of the insurance is difficult for the workers: A full 67.6 per cent of the returning workers who have medical insurance face problems bearing the costs.

Many returning workers are influenced by family members while making decisions concerning future plans: A full 40 per cent of the returning migrant workers are influenced by family members regarding their future plans. Spouses (25 per cent), parents (15 per cent), children (7.8 per cent), and siblings (5 per cent) are those who influence the future decisions of these workers. It is noteworthy that female returning workers' plans are influenced by others more than for male returning workers because of the country's patriarchal society.

'Economic solvency', 'better future for children', and 'care of family members' – main factors/situations taken in to consideration for future decisions: Economic solvency and care of family members are the two most important considerations for both male and female returning workers. On the other hand, educating children was an important issue of consideration for female workers more than male workers.

Returning workers expect support from both the Government and employers: Major expectations by returning workers from the Government are: providing grants (51.53 per cent), providing loans (13.26 per cent), helping them to migrate to developed countries (17.37 per cent), and initiating job schemes (8.57 per cent). The expectation of loans is found more among male returnees, whereas the expectation of job schemes is more common among the female returnees. On the other hand, jobs in technical and skilled positions, as well as sound working conditions, are the main expectations from employers.

Many returning workers feel the need for training before going abroad again: The need for training in a number of areas, such as construction, cooking, sanitary fittings, electrical and electronics, and modern cleaning equipment, has been emphasized by this group of the returning workers.

Medical facilities for parents and children, allowances for parents, and education facilities for children: Among respondents who wish to migrate again, they articulated their desires for various forms of support for family members left behind, including medical facilities for parents and children, allowances for parents, and education facilities for children.

Policy recommendations

Establishing and maintaining a comprehensive database: Information on returning migrant workers in the country is difficult to obtain. Neither the Government nor any other organizations keep records on returning workers. This is one of the most important limitations to formulating policy and strategy for short-term migrants. Thus, establishing and maintaining a database of these workers is long overdue.

Introducing a registration system for returning workers: A registration system at the central or local levels could be introduced. Returning migrant workers could be registered at the central level under a relevant ministry or at the local level under the local government. Available skills, needs, and interests of the returning workers should be recorded.

Establishing a special cell: The issues pertaining to returning workers are different from those facing migrant workers. A special cell could be established under the relevant ministry to look after the issues of returning workers in the country.

Skills certification: Despite having various work skills, returning migrant workers often lack formal recognition of these skills. If a system could be established to certify their skills, it would be helpful for them to manage finding a job in the local labour market.

Linking returning migrant workers with skill development and employment support services: Many of the returning migrant workers are interested in self-employment. On the other hand, they lack information regarding the availability and newly introduced skill development and employment support opportunities (e.g. training, credit) provided both by government and non-government organizations. A mechanism should be established to bridge the gap and link them to these available opportunities.

Enhancing social protection: Those workers who want to migrate again are very much concerned about the education of their children and medical treatment and care of their family members. In this regard, social protection measures with a special focus on these two areas (education and health, including medical insurance) need to be strengthened for both workers and their dependents.

Annex I. Statistical tables

Table A.1. Sample distribution of short interviews

Location	Male	Female	Total
Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka	735	265	1 000
Shah Amanat International Airport, Chittagong	193	7	200
Total	928	272	1 200

Table A.2. Sample distribution of in-depth interviews

Division	District	Male	Female	Total
Dhaka	Narsingdi	6	2	8
	Manikganj	1	9	10
	Dhaka	11	3	14
	Gazipur	6	6	12
	Tangail	9	-	9
Khulna	Meherpur	4	-	-
	Chuadanga	10	-	16
	Kushtia	2	-	-
Chittagong	Chittagong	4	-	4
	Brahmanbaria	12	-	12
Total		65	20	85

Table A.3. Country-wise maximum, minimum, and average cost of migration and recruitment

Destination Country	Cost								
	Male			Female			Total		
	Avg. cost	Minimum	Maximum	Avg. cost	Minimum	Maximum	Avg. cost	Minimum	Maximum
Saudi Arabia	213 968.42	100 000	500 000	102 466.67	65 000	170 000	205 809.76	65 000	500 000
UAE	219 824.18	100 000	500 000	83 392.86	30 000	200 000	201 633.33	201 633.3	500 000
Kuwait	177 920.00	100 000	350 000	60 000.00	60 000	60 000	173 384.62	60 000	350 000
Qatar	259 285.71	100 000	600 000	41 666.67	30 000	60 000	220 882.35	30 000	600 000
Oman	232 037.91	100 000	400 000	88 562.50	30 000	200 000	205 447.88	30 000	400 000
Jordan	125 000.00	100 000	150 000	67 782.61	20 000	120 000	70 166.67	20 000	150 000
Lebanon	290 000.00	150 000	420 000	64 385.96	30 000	120 000	70 170.94	30 000	420 000
Bahrain	275 333.33	100 000	400 000	72 500.00	40 000	120 000	262 656.25	40 000	400 000
Malaysia	210 885.25	100 000	300 000	-	-	-	210 885.25	100 000	300 000
Mauritius	179 583.33	100 000	260 000	88 333.33	60 000	150 000	149 166.67	60 000	260 000
Singapore	293 750.00	120 000	550 000	-	-	-	293 750.00	120 000	550 000
Libya	213 000.00	120 000	300 000	-	-	-	213 000.00	120 000	300 000
Maldives	166 314.81	70 000	262 000	85 000.00	80 000	100 000	163 410.71	70 000	262 000
Iraq	245 000.00	245 000	245 000	-	-	-	245 000.00	245 000	245 000
Sudan	180 000.00	180 000	180 000	-	-	-	180 000.00	180 000	180 000
Egypt	215 000.00	180 000	250 000	86 666.67	80 000	100 000	138 000.00	80 000	250 000
Republic of Korea	120 000.00	120 000	120 000	-	-	-	120 000.00	120 000	120 000
Iran	200 000.00	200 000	200 000	-	-	-	200 000.00	200 000	200 000
South Africa	331 666.67	200 000	450 000	-	-	-	331 666.67	200 000	450 000
Algeria	197 142.86	160 000	250 000	-	-	-	197 142.86	160 000	250 000
Pakistan	70 000.00	70 000	70 000	-	-	-	70 000.00	70 000	70 000
UK	700 000.00	700 000	700 000	-	-	-	700 000.00	700 000	700 000
Greece	360 000.00	320 000	400 000	-	-	-	360 000.00	320 000	400 000
Congo	197 500.00	175 000	220 000	-	-	-	197 500.00	175 000	220 000
Brunei	292 500.00	250 000	320 000	-	-	-	292 500.00	250 000	320 000
USA	200 000.00	200 000	200 000	-	-	-	200 000.00	200 000	200 000
Total	220 319.31	70 000	700 000	74 213.24	20 000	200 000	187 174.31	20 000	700 000

Table A.4. Year and gender-wise average cost of migration for the top ten destinations

Year	Saudi Arabia (1)			UAE (2)			Kuwait (3)			Oman (4)			Jordan (5)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1995	137 500	-	137 500	250 000	-	250 000	250 000	-	250 000	-	-	-	-	-	-
1996	250 000	-	250 000	200 000	-	200 000	-	-	-	180 000	-	180 000	-	-	-
1997	250 000	-	250 000	175 000	-	175 000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1998	151 375	-	151 375	230 000	-	230 000	180 000	-	180 000	-	-	-	-	-	-
1999	249 000	-	249 000	163 333	-	163 333	190 000	-	190 000	166 667	-	166 667	-	-	-
2000	135 700	-	135 700	-	-	-	100 000	-	100 000	-	-	-	-	-	-
2001	175 000	82 000	166 545	220 000	-	220 000	116 000	-	116 000	-	-	-	-	-	-
2002	180 909	86 667	160 714	120 000	-	120 000	153 333	-	153 333	180 000	-	180 000	-	-	-
2003	156 250	120 000	153 462	195 000	42 500	118 750	171 667	-	171 667	-	-	-	-	-	-
2004	181 250	122 500	172 857	150 000	-	150 000	153 333	60000	130 000	-	-	-	125000	-	125 000
2005	208 250	98 333	193 913	197 500	65 000	171 000	226 667	-	226 667	-	-	-	-	46 500	46 500
2006	221 080	-	221 080	223 333	40 000	177 500	-	-	-	250 000	-	250 000	-	-	-
2007	267 593	98 333	250 667	197 737	-	197 737	300 000	-	300 000	180 000	-	180 000	-	-	-
2008	250 769	-	250 769	228 750	70 000	219 412	-	-	-	226 250	200 000	224 706	-	-	-
2009	307 500	52 500	307 500	211 333	-	192 647	250 000	-	250 000	256 333	80 000	226 944	-	80 000	80 000
2010	252 571	-	252 571	239 048	107 000	213 654	-	-	-	226 667	109 167	203 167	-	72 679	72 679
2011	283 182	120 000	258 077	226 681	89 615	204 951	200 000	-	200 000	239 292	79 882	200 579	-	63 500	63 500
2012	187 500	-	187 500	263 333	100 000	198 000	-	-	-	221 923	110 000	207 000	-	55 000	55 000

Year	Lebanon (6)			Bahrain (7)			Malaysia (8)			Singapore (9)			Maldives (10)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1995	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		320000	-	320000	-		
1996	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-		
1997	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-		
1998	-	-	-	-	40000	40000	-	-		175000	-	175000	-		
1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-		
2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-		
2001	-	-	-	225000	-	225000	-	-		200000	-	200000	-		
2002	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		200000	-	200000	-		
2003	-	60000	60000	240000	-	240000	-	-		-	-	-	-		
2004	-	-	-	-	120000	120000	-	-		-	-	-	140000		140 000
2005	-	70000	70000	255000	70000	218000	180000	-	180000	302500	-	302500	150000		150 000
2006	-	63000	63000	168333	60000	141250	202857	-	202857	350000	-	350000	164000		164 000
2007	-	90000	90000	246667	-	246667	205905	-	205905	280000	-	280000	158333		158 333
2008	-	68750	68750	263571	-	263571	206364	-	206364	370000	-	370000	155588	80000	147 632
2009	225000	59167	75750	302500	-	302500	197500	-	197500	290000	-	290000	157083		157 083
2010	420000	64705	72600	303333	-	303333	226000	-	226000	300000	-	300000	174138	90000	168 710
2011	-	64067	64067	273846	-	273846	240000	-	240000	310000	-	310000	175074		175 074
2012	-	-	-	-	-	-	260000	-	260000	-	-	-	170000		170 000

Part II: Skills in demand in the Bangladesh labour market and entrepreneurship opportunities

Introduction

Bangladesh is an economy with a significant surplus of labour. Due to the growing gap between the number of entrants into the labour force and the number of jobs created, this surplus labour has turned into a major problem for the country. The issue of labour oversupply becomes an even greater challenge in the face of reintegrating workers returning from abroad into the local labour market.

According to the Bangladesh Labour Force Survey conducted in 2010, population in 15 years and above age-group, is 56.7 million. Of this ready workforce, 39.5 million are male, while 17.2 million are female. The survey indicated that 37.9 million male and 16.2 million female or 54.1 million of the 15 years and above age-group were employed. Among the employed, 47.3 million were active in agriculture or informal economy and only 6.8 million were in the formal economy (BBS, 2012). Among those in the formal economy, male and female comprised 80.9 per cent and 19.1 per cent, respectively (BBS, 2012). The rate of participation in the informal economy for male and female workers was 68.5 per cent and 31.5 per cent, respectively. This labour force has seen rapid growth at a rate of 3.39 per cent per annum—adding a substantial number of workers to the labour force each year (BBS, 2012). Thus, returning migrant workers must compete for employment opportunities within an already crowded national labour market and rapidly growing labour force.

Bangladesh is recognized as one of the top emigrant countries in the world with 5.7 million existing migrants and a net migration rate of one out of 250 inhabitants. By sending remittances, migrants contribute greatly to their families, communities, and the economy as a whole. In addition, the knowledge and skills gained by migrants and transmitted to those living in the home country contribute to the development efforts of the country. In spite of their contributions, returning migrant workers face a number of difficulties upon arrival in the home country and often struggle to reintegrate into the economy.

Upon arrival, most of the workers are unaware of their employment opportunities in the domestic labour market. In addition, potential employers are largely ignorant of the capabilities of these prospective job-seekers as information on returning migrant workers is not available. If employers were aware of returning workers' skill-levels, in many cases they would be interested in employing them in the most appropriate positions within their enterprises and could plan their future ventures accordingly. Policy-makers will also benefit if they have relevant information on returning migrant workers. Such information would help them to design financial incentives for public- and private-sector wage employment activities and also for the promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives. Information on both the supply and demand sides of reintegration is therefore important both from an empirical perspective and from a policy point of view.

Although the existing literature on migration is primarily focused on analyzing the impact of remittances on the socio-economic status of receiving households, a number of studies provide useful insights into the reintegration prospects of returning workers. Dahles (2009), after analyzing a number of studies on return migration, concluded that in order to channel diaspora and returnee capital investments, proper institutional structure is crucial. The author also emphasized the importance of government initiatives to encourage the migrants to return and invest in domestic economies and cited examples in India, China, and Taiwan.

McCormick and Wahba (2001) also analyzed entrepreneurial activities of returning workers with an emphasis on exploring the linkages between overseas employment, savings, and entrepreneurial activities of returning workers in Egypt. With the help of an econometric model of the probability of entrepreneurial activity, the authors inferred that, for the literate returning workers, overseas savings along with the duration of stay abroad tends to increase the probability of becoming an entrepreneur. The result for the illiterate returning workers, however, is different and the estimates found no evidence of the importance of duration of stay on the probability of being an entrepreneur. Based on their findings, the authors finally concluded that it is not only capital market imperfections, but also failures of acquiring human capital that constrain entrepreneurship in least developed countries (LDCs).

In one of its studies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2002) examined the reintegration process of returning migrant workers to the Bangladesh economy. The study utilized information from 200 returnee households as well as interviews of government officials, members of the private sector, bank personnel, and relevant associations working with migrants. This primary survey revealed relevant information concerning the socio-economic profile of the returning workers as well as their process of reintegration. The study found that the reintegration process was not easy for the returning workers. Key constraints to reintegration include a lack of information on business trends, few job opportunities, little access to formal credit, and the absence of advisory services.

In addition to professional constraints, the IOM study also reported a number of social problems faced by the returning workers, including greater expectations from relatives and friends, problem of friends and family seeking financial assistance, among others. Many of the returning workers expressed their frustration over the fact that due to the lack of contact with mainstream economic activities, they had to choose several self-employment activities to make a living. A significant percentage of the returning workers also expressed their dissatisfaction over the type of work in which they were engaged after returning. In order to be reintegrated into the economy, the returning migrant workers suggested a number of strategies, including improvement in the law and order situation, better access to credit and technical know-how, controlling extortion, better linkages between returning workers' skills and available employment opportunities, better reorientation strategies, assistance for future migration, among others.

Wadud (2012) particularly analyzed the reintegration programme of Bangladeshi returning workers in the context of Libya. The author discussed the strategies that have been applied for an effective reintegration of the returning workers, including that of an extensive campaign to disseminate necessary information to the returning workers, establishment of a comprehensive database of all returning workers, registration by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) at the airport, establishment of a call centre, and dissemination of such information through the involvement of media (Wadud, 2012). The effective utilization of this call centre, according to the author, was a key towards effective reintegration of the returning workers.

Islam (2010), in a strategy paper, cited the success stories of effective reintegration programmes. As an example, he referred to the case of the Philippines where the returning migrant workers' monetary contributions to the domestic economy are highly appreciated. The returning workers also have the opportunity to avail special investment packages. Philippine overseas contract workers can also avail certain financial privileges, which help them to reintegrate into the domestic economy. Another success story, as cited by Islam (2010), is that of India where returning migrant workers are responsible for operating a number of organizations, including those of the ICT villages in Bangalore, real estate businesses in Hyderabad, among others. Providing financial assistance to returning workers' ventures by different banks contributes significantly towards their reintegration.

Notwithstanding these insights and success stories, returning migrant workers in Bangladesh have to face a number of challenges. The lack of knowledge of the labour market and the lack of communication with potential employers are the key constraints to their reintegration. On the other hand, in comparison to their domestic counterparts, returning migrant workers have certain advantages too. Considering the returning workers' competencies gained through working abroad and relative financial solvency achieved through the accumulation of financial capital, these workers may have a competitive edge in comparison to non-migrants. In this context, effective reintegration of migrant workers requires information on both the demand in skills as well as the available opportunities in the labour market. In order to ease their reintegration into the local labour market, matching their interests, competencies, and skill levels with the willingness and capacity of the local labour market is important.

The broad objective of this study is to analyse the supply-side and demand-side dynamics of reintegration into the domestic labour market. In this context, the specific objectives are: (a) to analyse the preferences/interests and competencies/skill levels of returning migrant workers; (b) to assess the capacities of enterprises to absorb returning migrant workers in certain sectors; and (c) to develop a set of recommendations for the Government and non-government organizations to help the reintegration process. In this context, the report has analysed interests and skill levels of the returning workers (supply side), as well as the absorptive capacity of existing enterprises (demand side). Based on such information, the report has identified two potential sectors for wage employment and two for self-employment activities.

With a view to understand the capacity and interest to absorb the returnee migrant workers in the domestic labour market, this study is based on (a) existing literature, (b) preference and skill profiles of returning workers as revealed in the profile survey carried out as part of International Labour Organization- Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (ILO-BILS) study on "Labour Demand and Supply of Returning Migrant Workers with Profiling Survey of Returning Migrant Workers", and (c) key informant interviews. As for the literature, the report has gone through a number of research papers focusing on the reintegration process, as well as the subsequent recommendations. A total of 1,200 returning workers participated in the primary survey, which collected information on the socio-demographic profile of the returning workers, their job preferences, the skills that they have acquired, among other items. Finally, key informant interviews (KII) capture the demand side of the scenario through collecting information from relevant personnel regarding the interest of potential employers to hire returning workers and the absorptive capacity of the relevant domestic industries (see list of KIIs in annex I).

The following section of this report highlights the supply-side dynamics of the Bangladeshi labour market. This section reports key issues facing the domestic labour market, basic information on returning migrant workers, as well as analysis of their skill profiles and socio-demographic characteristics. In section 2 the demand-side dynamics of the labour market are explored, including wage employment potential, returning workers' interests and preferences for work, future plans, small and medium enterprises (SME) development potential for returning migrants, and demand for communication and enterprise support. Section 3 analyses scenarios matching the supply of returning workers with local demand. Combining the information from the demand and supply sides, some specific sectors have been identified for the reintegration of the returning workers. In the concluding section of the study, a number of recommendations are put forward to achieve better reintegration of returning migrants workers.

I. Bangladesh labour market: the supply-side dynamics

Basic structure of the labour market

According to Bangladesh Labour Force Survey 2010, the labour force participation rate reached 59.3 per cent in recent years, which represents a per annum growth rate of 3.39 per cent from 2005/06 to 2010 (BBS, 2012). The rate of growth in the labour force, however, is higher than the growth of population, which can be considered as a “demographic dividend” for the country. During the 2005/06 to 2010 period, the population of the country increased by 10.5 million (from 137.30 million to 147.80 million), taking the total working age population from 84.6 million to 95.6 million (an increase of 11 million). Among the total working age population, the number of employed persons increased by 6.7 million, leaving 2.6 million people unemployed in the corresponding period. In this context, it is noteworthy that a substantial percentage of the employed workforce is engaged as 'unpaid family labour', which is arguably outside the domain of formalized labour market activities. This increase in the labour force therefore necessitates the creation of more jobs on the one hand and matching people with appropriate activities to fully utilize the workforce in a productive manner on the other. Characteristics of Bangladesh’s population and workforce are detailed in table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Characteristics of population and labour force (in millions)

Year	Population		Working age population		Employed population		Unemployed population	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2005/06	70.0	67.3	43.0	41.6	36.1	11.3	1.2	0.9
2010	74.2	73.6	47.9	47.7	37.9	16.2	1.6	1.0

Source: BBS, 2012.

Of the total employed persons, 47.6 per cent are engaged in the agricultural sector, followed by 35.4 per cent in the service sector and 17.5 per cent in the industrial sector. Among male workers, the highest percentage of absorption (41.1 per cent) is in the service sector, followed by agricultural (40.18 per cent) and industrial (19.60 per cent) sectors. Women are most highly involved in the agricultural sector (68.8 per cent), followed by the service sector (21.9 per cent) and industrial sector (13.3 per cent) (see table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Employment by broad economic sectors (per cent), 2010

Broad Economic Sectors	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture	47.56	40.18	64.84
Non-agriculture	53.07	60.71	35.21
Manufacturing	12.44	12.73	11.77
Other industry	5.28	6.87	1.55
Services	35.35	41.11	21.89

Source: BBS, 2012.

Data regarding the growth of employment by major industry reveals that, except in education, public administration, and financial intermediation, the share of employment in other industries has increased over the years. Among the broad categories of industries, about a 24 per cent increase in employment has been registered in the real estate industry. Employment in agriculture, manufacturing, and construction has registered growth rates at 4 per cent, 6 per cent, and about 14 per cent, respectively. From a gendered perspective, participation of women in most industries has increased faster than that of men. In the manufacturing and construction industries, male engagement has increased by 5 per cent, and 13 per cent respectively, whereas female employment has increased by around 10 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively (see table 1.3).

Table 1.3. Growth rate of employment by major industry (2005-06 to 2010)

Industry	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture, hunting, and forestry	4.29	1.79	8.41
Mining and quarrying	18.98	18.44	22.18
Manufacturing	6.34	5.15	9.62
Electricity gas and water supply	12.04	11.14	27.46
Construction	13.52	13.01	19.51
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	1.53	-0.66	23.39
Hotel and restaurants	3.89	4.01	2.34
Transport, storage, and communications	3.81	-0.78	32.99
Financial intermediation	-8.28	-5.36	-20.32
Real estate, renting, and business activities	24.47	22.97	45.17
Public administration and defence	-12.31	-10.90	-26.52
Education	-0.37	-0.08	-1'27
Health and Social Work	7.92	7.48	8.58
Others community, social, and personal service activities	6.30	2.28	11.96

Source: BBS, 2012.

Key characteristics of returning migrant workers

Although there is heterogeneity among the migrants, in most cases, the migrant workers stay abroad for a limited and predictable period of time and then return back to the country of origin. Most return back after the completion of their work contracts, which are usually valid for a fixed period of time. Anecdotal evidence shows that many returning workers decide to move back due to their worsening living and working conditions abroad, i.e. low wages, long working hours, and mistreatment by the employers, among other reasons. In certain cases, due to changes in political and economic conditions in the countries of destination, they have to return before the end of their agreements.

Be it voluntary or compulsory, every year a substantial number of migrant workers return to the home country. However, concrete data regarding the number of returning workers is not available in Bangladesh. Though the statistical division of

BMET keeps records of yearly migration flows by country of destination, yearly overseas employment statistics, and country-wise and year-wise remittances earned through the wage earners' scheme, it does not keep records on the returning workers. There is also no reliable information available to private and non-government organizations. Siddiqui and Sultana (2012) claimed that until October 2012, 17,518 migrant workers have been deported from destination countries. Information that is available is lacking in facts concerning skills of the returning workers and analysis of possible locally available economic opportunities. The reliability and concreteness of such data is, however, arguable. Against this backdrop, this study, along with the survey carried out by the ILO Country Office for Bangladesh and BILS to create a broader profile of the returning workers, is expected to fill the information gap concerning returning migrant workers. The survey carried out through this study is expected to provide important information regarding the socio-economic characteristics of the returning workers. Further follow-up studies similar to this will help to construct a database of relevant information on returning migrant workers.

Skill profile of return migrants

In regards to returning migrant workers, both overseas and domestic work experiences in various trades can be considered as the key contributors to their skill profiles. In addition, their relatively young age profile, as well as pre-migration and post-migration training opportunities, can be considered to make positive contributions towards their employability. This section explores the findings of the 'Profiling Survey of Migrants Workers' to understand the skills and competencies of returning workers, including their socio-demographic features, experience, skills, and their training experiences.

Socio-demographic information

As much as 68 per cent of the returning workers are in the age group of young adults (18 to 40 years old). This demographic characteristic of the returning workers can certainly be considered as a positive factor in terms of their labour market potential (see table 1.4).

In terms of educational attainment, about 74 per cent of the returning workers have completed at least primary education or have studied further. This means that migrant workers have higher educational qualifications compared to the national average of labour force. In comparison to female migrants, their male counterparts are found to possess more education on average. Just over 31 per cent of females, compared to 18 per cent or males, have no education. Also, a greater proportion of males are found to have higher levels of schooling than females.

Table 1.4. Socio-demographic characteristics of returning workers

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age (years)						
Less than 18	5	0.5	3	1.1	8	0.7
18 to 24	112	12.1	46	16.9	158	13.2
25 to 34	499	53.8	160	58.8	659	54.9
35 to 44	203	21.9	59	21.7	262	21.8
45 to 54	84	9.1	4	1.5	88	7.3
55 years and above	25	2.7	0	0	25	2.1
Educational qualifications						
Illiterate or functional literacy*	168	18.1	85	31.3	253	21.1
Up to five	299	32.2	105	38.6	404	33.7
Six to ten	396	42.7	80	29.4	476	39.7
Completed secondary level	45	4.8	2	0.7	47	3.9
Completed higher secondary level	10	1.1	0	0	10	0.8
Postsecondary	10	1.1	0	0	10	0.8

*Functional literate people include those who have no formal education, but can sign name, read simple words, and can count numbers.

Source: ILO and BILS, Profiling Survey of Returning Migrants Workers, 2014.

Experience and skills acquired in domestic and overseas employment

In order to understand the labour market potential of returning migrant workers, it is important to analyze the types of jobs they used to do before migration. As revealed in table 1.5, the workers were mainly engaged in the agriculture and fishing sector (23.6 per cent) and then later decided to migrate. Common occupations prior to migration also include wage employment (12.2 per cent) and self-employment activities (16.3 per cent). There are, however, a number of migrants who went abroad without any prior job experience. This situation is particularly common for the female migrants. It is found that as much as 39.7 per cent of the female migrants were housewives before going abroad and 16 per cent of the total respondents (both male and female) were unemployed. Therefore, although a number of returning workers had already gained a certain degree of job experience before leaving the home country, we should not generalize that this is the case for all migrants. This fact should be carefully considered particularly for the case of female migrants.

Table 1.5. Occupation before migration

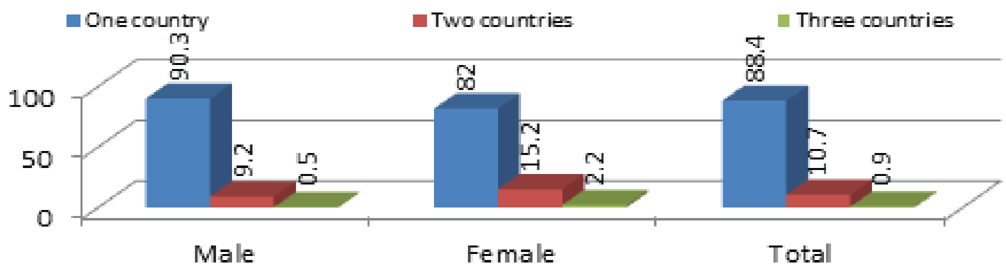
Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Student	74	8	16	5.9	90	7.5
Service/job	77	8.3	69	25.4	146	12.2
Self-employed	179	19.3	17	6.3	196	16.3
Unemployed	153	16.5	39	14.3	192	16
Day labourer	23	2.5	4	1.5	27	2.3
Agriculture and fishing	275	29.6	8	2.9	283	23.6
Housewife	-	-	108	39.7	108	9.1
Driving	31	3.3	0	0	31	2.6
Carpenter	30	3.2	1	0.4	31	2.6
Construction worker	51	5.5	0	0	51	4.3
Other	35	3.8	10	3.7	45	3.8
Total	928	100	272	100	1 200	100

Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

It is expected that the migration experience will make significant contributions towards developing workers' skill profiles. The profile survey highlights that a number of returning workers even have experience working in more than one country, which is expected to contribute towards diversified experiences. Around 12 per cent of the returning workers indicated that they have multi-country experience and about 16 per cent of the workers worked in more than one trade (see figures 1.1 and 1.2). These experiences are expected to contribute towards diversified skill sets. For certain types of jobs, such as construction and driving, years of work experience in the overseas labour market should make positive contributions towards skill formation.

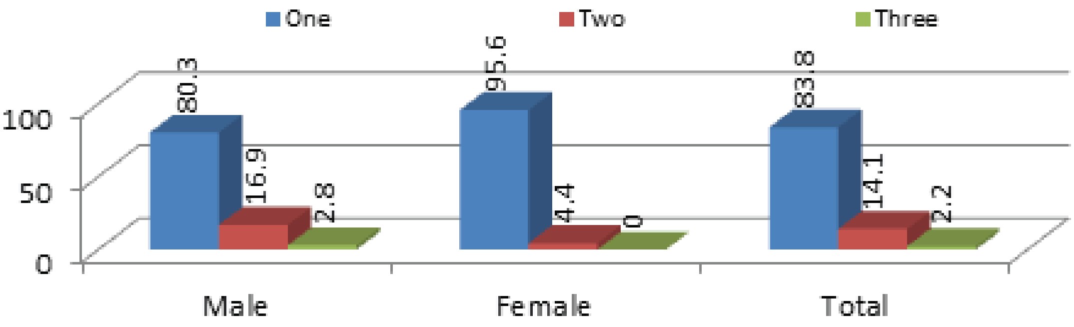
There are gendered differences in terms of experience working in multiple countries and jobs. It was found that a larger proportion of female than male migrant workers worked in more than one country. Yet, as a group, female migrant workers spent less total time abroad than male migrant workers (only 19 per cent of the female migrants worked abroad for more than four years compared to 46 per cent of male migrants). Male migrant workers, however, engaged in more types of jobs than female migrants.

Figure 1.1. Number of countries in which returning workers worked



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

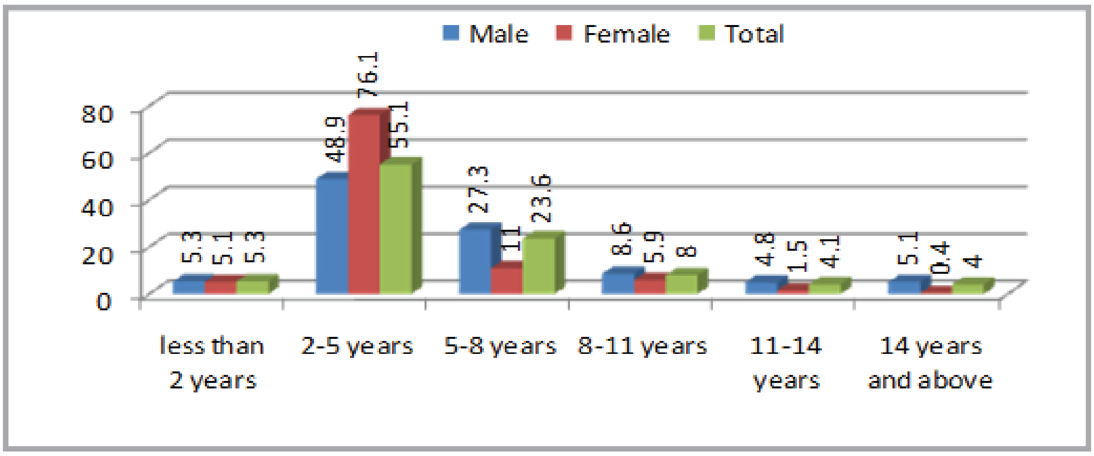
Figure 1.2. Number of trades worked while abroad



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

The survey also shows that more than half of the returning workers (55 per cent) have overseas employment experience of two to five years and about one fourth of the returning workers worked abroad for five to eight years. As much as 16 per cent of workers reported that they have overseas employment experience of at least eight years (see figure 1.3).

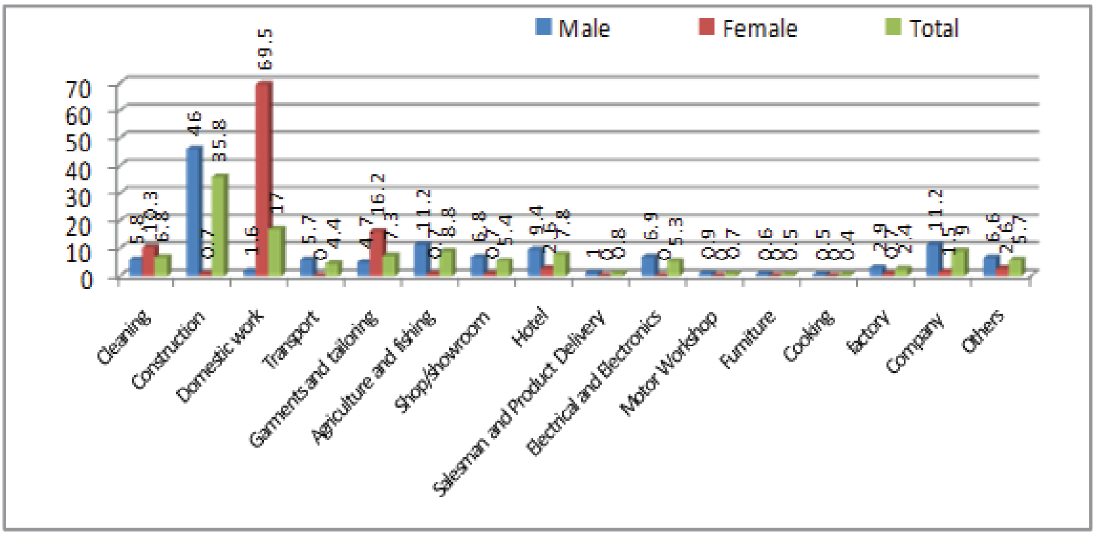
Figure 1.3. Duration of stay abroad



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

The survey results clearly show that the predominant occupational choice of the migrants while abroad was in the construction sector. As much as one third of all the respondents were absorbed into this sector. Returning workers were also engaged in cleaning (13 per cent), tailoring and garments (6.8 per cent) and food processing (10 per cent). Working as domestic workers was also a common choice for the migrants with about 13 per cent reported to be engaged in such jobs. The majority of female migrants worked as domestic workers (69 per cent), followed by 18 per cent and 13 per cent working as cleaners and garments/tailoring workers, respectively. Male migrant workers mainly worked in construction (46 per cent), agriculture and fishing (11 per cent), formal offices/companies (11 per cent), hotels (9 per cent), among others (see figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4. Types of work at destination



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

It is worth noting that skills related to construction work, carpentry, driving, electrical work, among others, are more common among the male returning workers. On the other hand, skills related to domestic work, garment work, cleaning, and cooking are more prevalent among the female returning workers.

In sum, a number of factors, including job experience in the home country prior to migration, experience while abroad, number of years spent abroad, amount of time spent abroad, the number of countries worked, and number of types of jobs worked, help to contribute towards the skill and experience level of the returning workers. A combination of these factors is expected in many cases to transform the returning migrant workers into more competent workers than their non-migrant counterparts.

Training experience

Besides on-the-job training, migrant workers often have the opportunity to avail formal training to upgrade skills. BMET in cooperation with the Wage Earners' Welfare Board is striving to provide pre-departure training to all migrating workers. The overall technical and vocation training and pre-departure rates, however, are not high. This is especially apparent from the case among the female returning workers. While all women migrating as domestic workers undergo a 21-days training programme, which gives an impression that higher percentage of women than men receive training before departure (see table 1.6), the effectiveness 21-days training from a long-term perspective is open for analysis. Post-migration training (training received in the destination country) is very limited. Less than one fifth of the returning workers reported receiving such training.

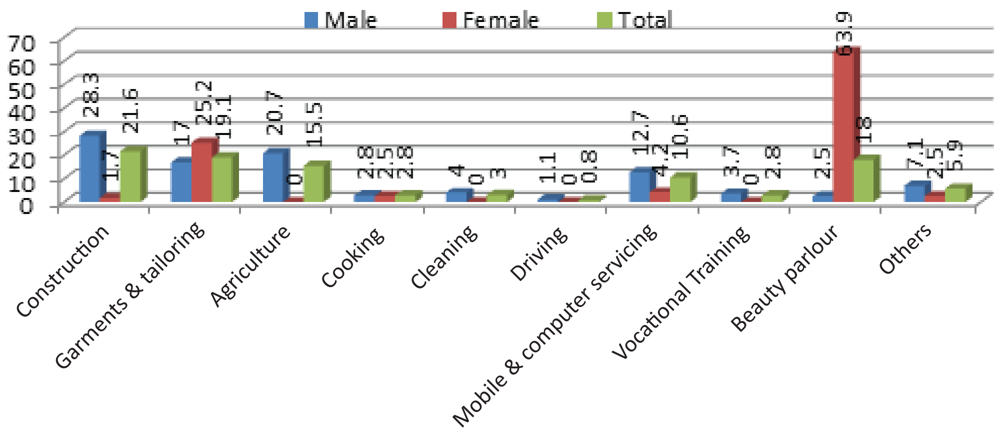
Table 1.6. Training before and after migration

Training	Before migration (sending country)						After migration (destination country)					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	353	38.0	119	43.8	472	39.3	192	20.7	18	6.62	210	17.5
No	575	62.0	153	56.3	728	60.7	736	79.3	254	93.4	990	82.5
Total	928	100	272	100	1 200	100	928	100	272	100	1 200	100

Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

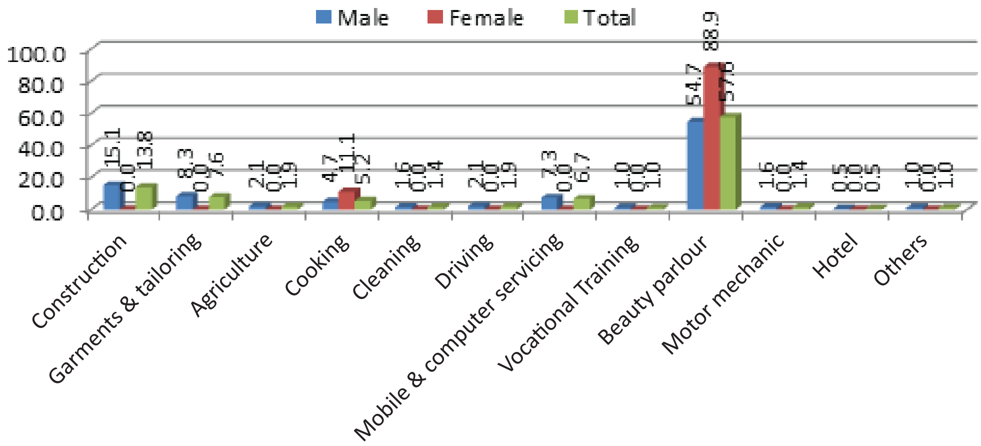
As for pre-migration training in the home country, the top five skill areas are construction, garments and tailoring, beauty salon, agriculture, and mobile and computer servicing (see figure 1.5). In the case of training received in the destination country, it is interesting to find that more than half of the returning workers reported receiving training in beauty salon skills with another 14 per cent receiving training in construction work. Other areas of training were cooking (5.2 per cent), garments and tailoring (7.6 per cent), and mobile and computer servicing (10.6 per cent) (see figure 1.6).

Figure 1.5. Areas of training before migration



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

Figure 1.6. Areas of training after migration



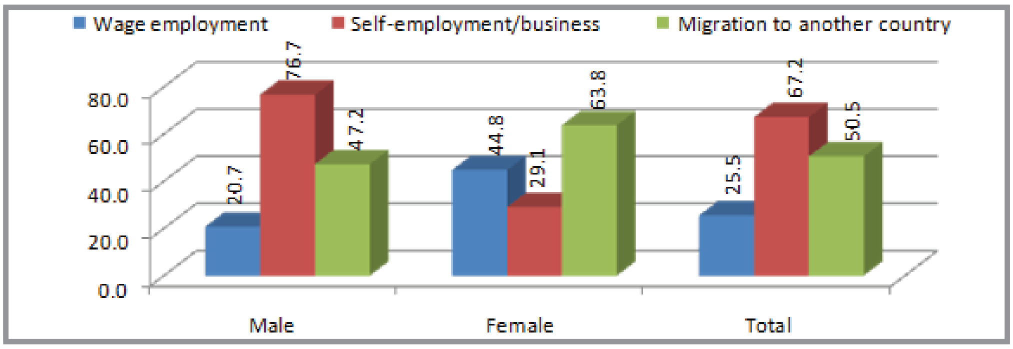
Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

The percentage of returning workers receiving training, especially post-migration training, is quite low. In addition, the training provided was not very diverse, as illustrated in figures 1.5 and 1.6. When combining both pre- and post-migration training experiences, it can be inferred that construction and garments are the two most common areas of training received by the returning workers.

Future work preferences among the returning workers

The returning migrant workers were asked about their preferences regarding work in Bangladesh. In most cases the returning workers gave multiple responses regarding their work preferences. Around one fourth of the respondents indicated their interest in finding wage employment in the home country, whereas 67 per cent expressed their intention to be self-employed. In comparison to males, female returning workers showed more interest in working in wage employment (45 per cent). In contrast, the male returning workers preferred to pursue self-employment or a business (77 per cent). A significant proportion of the returning workers have an interest in re-migration, especially among the female migrant workers (see figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7. Future work preferences among the returning workers*



*Multiple responses allowed.
Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

Returning migrant workers who prefer to work in the home country and/or who are unable to arrange new stints abroad are expected to search for jobs while taking into consideration numerous issues. These issues include: (i) preferences, (ii) experience and skills gained while working in different trades/countries, (iii) experience gained through training (pre-migration and/or post-migration), and (iv) opportunities available in the domestic labour market.

The returning workers’ occupational preferences are quite diverse, as illustrated in table 1.7.

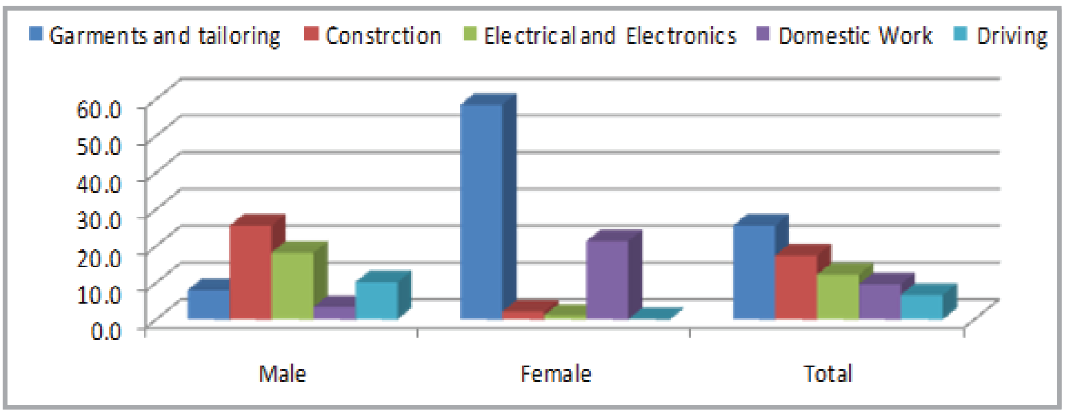
Table 1.7. Preferred occupations

Preferred Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not specified	19	10.8	7	7.4	26	9.6
Job at power plant	4	2.3	-	-	4	1.5
Job at bank	3	1.7	-	-	3	1.1
Job at private company	7	4.0	1	1.1	8	3.0
General supervision	1	0.6	1	1.1	2	0.7
Cleaning	4	2.3	2	2.1	6	2.2
Government job	2	1.1	1	1.1	3	1.1
Cooking	6	3.4	3	3.2	9	3.3
NGO activities	2	1.1	1	1.1	3	1.1
Nursery/gardening	2	1.1	-	-	2	0.7
Driving	18	10.2	-	-	18	6.7
Garments and tailoring	14	8.0	55	58.5	69	25.6
Construction	45	25.6	2	2.1	47	17.4
Domestic work	6	3.4	20	21.3	26	9.6
Electrical and electronics	32	18.2	1	1.1	33	12.2
Carpentry	5	2.8	-	-	5	1.9
Other (call centre, printing, religious work, sales, shoemaking, health sector)	6	3.4		-	6	2.2
Total	176	100	94	100	270	100

Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

Given the diversity of preferences, it is difficult to come to any definite conclusions regarding the preferences of the group as a whole. Around 9.6 per cent of the respondents did not have a specific choice. In spite of such diversity, the top five preferred sectors were identified, excluding those who did not explicitly express a preference. Among these five sectors, garments and construction were the most preferred choices, as illustrated in figure 1.8.

Figure 1.8. Preferred job sectors



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

Identifying potential sectors from supply side

In order to identify suitable sectors for the reintegration of returning workers, it is important to consider: (i) experience of the migrants, (ii) preferences, (iii) skills and competencies, (iv) availability of suitable jobs to match to their skills, and (v) willingness of those in the demand side to recruit the returned workers and to value the skills gained abroad. Returning workers' interests and capacity are primarily considered for understanding potential economic sectors for reintegration. After a careful analysis of the skills and preferences of the returning workers, a number of potential sectors where the returning migrant workers can be absorbed have been identified in this report. Agro-based business, garments and textile, real estate and housing, and electronics are some of the thriving investment sectors in Bangladesh that at the same time have high business potential and employment generation capacity.

Based on available information, two potential sectors have been identified as the most suitable sectors for wage employment for returning workers: construction and ready-made garments (RMG). This conclusion is based on factors such as the preferences of potential workers, training received before and after migration, and types of skills acquired. Garments and tailoring is a favoured area of work for around one quarter of the returning workers (25.6 per cent), most of whom are women. In fact, about 60 per cent of female potential job-seekers prefer to work in the RMG industry. About 19 per cent received training on garments before they went abroad, of which 17 per cent are male and 25.2 per cent are female. While abroad, 7.6 per cent also received training related to garments. In addition, around 7 per cent of the returning workers reported that they have worked in the garment sector. Therefore, considering preferences, experience, as well as skill level, RMG can be considered as a potential sector for the reintegration of the returning workers. It is not only appropriate from the supply side, but also from the demand side. Considering the current requirement for skilled labour in this sector, RMG can be thought of as one of the country's thriving sectors with immense employment opportunities.[12]

Based on the preferences of the returning migrant workers, another potential sector to absorb returning workers could be the construction sector. More than 17 per cent of the survey respondents prefer to work in this sector. As expected, this preference is predominant among male returning workers. As high as one quarter (25.6 per cent) of the potential male job-seekers are eager to work in the construction sector. A considerable number of returning workers also have received training in this sector (21.6 per cent before migration and 13.8 per cent after migration), which has expectedly improved their skill profile to work in this sector. In fact, around 32 per cent of the returning workers claimed that they have acquired skills in the construction sector. As for the demand side, there is considerable growth in the construction sector (see table 1.3). The current 'building boom' and mega projects like 'Padma Bridge' may help to absorb these workers.

On the basis of prior experience and preferences of the workers, agro-based activities and small and medium enterprises can be considered as the most appropriate sectors for self-employment.

[12] Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has continued voicing their concerns on the shortage of skilled human resources. "Currently, we have a 25 per cent shortage of the total labour requirement for the RMG sector," Abdus Salam Murshedy, former president of BGMEA, said. "If we get policy support from the government, the present growth rate in the RMG sector will continue at least for the next 10 years," (The Daily Sun, 9 February, 2011).

II. Bangladesh labour market: The demand-side dynamics

Wage employment potential for returning workers

Given the relevant information from the supply side, the research team interviewed a number of persons closely associated with the identified potential sectors for absorbing returning workers. These interviews serve as the basis of the demand-side analysis of the labour market.

Interest and concerns of enterprise owners

The reintegration mechanism for returning migrant workers depends on the active participation and collaboration from the Government, non-government organizations, and enterprise owners in the industries in the concerned sectors. The study has found both interest as well as concern among relevant stakeholders regarding the reintegration of the returning migrant workers into the domestic labour market.

The findings from the key informant interviews (KIIs) reveal that employers in the construction industry are quite interested to recruit returning migrant workers to work in their construction sites. However, since the returning workers are used to getting paid higher wages in foreign countries, potential employers perceive that in comparison to non-migrant potential employees, they have to pay relatively higher wages to the returning workers. This belief often discourages them to employing returning migrant workers (KII 3 and 7). The Bangladesh Employer's Federation (BEF) and Bangladesh Association of Construction Industries (BACI) have shown interest in recruiting returning migrant workers. According to BACI, a significant number of returning migrant workers already work at different construction sites (KII 3). The BEF's view is also enthusiastic and promising in this context as they are interested to act as a facilitator in the reintegration process (KII 7). The key informant also informed that the organization are considering initiatives to develop an effective strategy to reintegrate skilled returning workers.

Certain institutions that have the scope to provide training facilities and financial support to potential workers can play an important role in the reintegration of returning migrant workers. The specialized government organization, the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), has shown interest in this regard. One of the key informants noted that BMET requires certain modifications of the existing work agenda and needs an effective set of policies to support reintegration. According to the interviewee, the existing policies are limited to serving only potential migrants, not returning workers. One of the key informants has indicated that the BMET can participate in the reintegration process by providing training facilities at the district level to assess and match returning migrant workers' skills with prospective employment opportunities in participation with the employers in Bangladesh through its existing training centres (KII 1). BGMEA has both interest in and positive experiences with recruiting returning migrant workers. According to BGMEA, although at present it does not have the opportunity to reintegrate returning workers due to cost cutting strategies, in the future, depending on business stability, they are interested in participating in the reintegration process and providing training facilities to the workers (KII 8).

Skill and competency requirements of potential employers

Skilled returning migrant workers are in demand in the construction sector. A key informant from BACI said, “we look forward to employ the skilled workers and most of the returning workers certainly possess such skill—especially painters have higher demand in construction sector” (KII 3). An employer in a real estate company said that the developers are always looking forward to having skilled workers who will be able to manage building sites independently and would not always be dependent on the engineers regarding the matters of construction. One of the key informants also thinks that the skilled returning workers should possess the qualities to manage worksites independently. He opines that the returning migrant workers should be able to adjust themselves to the wage structure of the local labour market (KII 6).

Discussions with BGMEA reveal that although skilled RMG workers are available in the local labour market, the returning workers have certain qualifications to make them better candidates than their domestic counterparts. He opined that the returning workers are generally quick learners, disciplined, and sometimes also possess higher levels of technical skills than the local workers. If the returning workers can prove their professional skills and technical know-how, BGMEA will certainly prefer them when it comes to the question of recruitment (KII 8).

As suggested by the key informant from BACI, access to training facilities requires an organized approach and coordination between the government organizations (GO) and the non-governmental organizations (NGO). One of the key informants also added that training facilities can be initiated according to the interests of the recipients. In this regard, NGOs can play a key role in assessing interest, demand, and rationale for training programmes and can recommend BMET to develop training modules and arrange trainings in the local-level training centre or district-level offices (KII 1).

Scope and opportunities

Returning migrant workers have a scope for reintegration into the Bangladesh labour Market. Employers in both the garment and construction industries were found to be interested in employing skilled returning migrants. Female migrant workers in particular have a good scope to work in the garment sector. Although BGMEA claimed that the garment sector has no opportunity to reintegrate returning workers at present due to cost cutting strategies, BGMEA’s statement reveals that depending on business stability, they are interested to participate in the reintegration process and providing training facilities to the returning workers in the future (KII 8). The opportunity is ripe now with the setup of the RMG Center of Excellence (RMG COE) Project, which has an industry-based training focus. If the RMG COE and BMET can join hands to offer recognition of prior learning (RPL) service and bridge-training courses to fill any gaps in skills and competencies that the returning workers may have, the workers would get certified and the industry would benefit from qualified workers.

Similarly, BACI and BMET may consider a collaboration to set up RPL service, bridge-training courses and job placement services to optimize benefits for both returned migrant workers and the industry.

BMET is a significant player because training is an integral part of industrial growth and urbanization. BMET has the scope to provide training for the purpose helping the returned workers obtain necessary certification. BMET provides technical and vocational training through technical training centres. It conducts both formally recognized training courses certified by the Bangladesh Technical Education Board and special training courses certified by itself in its 51 technical training centres , the Institute of Marine Technology, and three Apprenticeship Training Offices. These centres are spread nationwide. The technical training centres are also a good venue for providing skill-job matching and industry led placement service, which would benefit both the potential migrants and returned migrant workers.

The Government also has the scope to reintegrate skilled workers returning home under adverse conditions into government-funded projects. In such cases, the Government may introduce a quota system for returning migrant workers (KII 6) who require rehabilitative assistance.

If a comprehensive electronic database of local labour market jobs information can be developed, it would be possible to make available work opportunities among the returning workers according to their aspirations, including the local provision of job opportunities (KII 3). A well-functioning online database of returning workers, which also includes their curriculum vitae, which the local employers accredited or registered jointly by the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment or BMET and the Ministry of Labour and Employment , could access would minimise the impact of communication gap between workers and employers (KII 4).

Certain government and semi-government organizations have their own training institutes which provide training at the managerial level. BEF also provides similar training. Special training courses can be initiated and managed for returning workers if a systematic and organized approach can be developed (KII 7). Several NGOs also have the scope to offer training to the returning workers. Welfare Association for the Rights of Bangladeshi Emigrants (WARBE), a non-government organization, has 16 local Migration Information Support Centres (MISC) across the country that offer direct support to the concerned migrant communities. This set-up could be considered as a model for organizing returning workers (KII 5) and putting them in touch with placement service providers, RPL centres, Probashi Kalyan Bank and others. Similar initiatives can be undertaken by other NGOs too who are actively working with the migrant workers and their families.

The furniture sector in Bangladesh has great business potential and might be interested in getting involved in a collaborative process. There are already many furniture enterprises in the country that are owned by returned migrants.

[13] At the time of KIIs, only 38 technical training centres existed. the rest were under construction.

Challenges to reintegrate into wage employment

The process of reintegration comprises some key challenges and limitations, which should be addressed with due importance. Lack of information among the government and employers about the returning workers, insufficient information for workers about opportunities in the local labour market, and the absence of appropriate government policy regarding the reintegration of returning workers were identified by the key informants as the main challenges of the reintegration process. A similar conclusion was drawn by the IOM study over a decade back (IOM, 2002). The returning workers indicated that the key constraints for successful reintegration include a lack of information on business trends, job opportunities, and access to formal credit, along with the absence of advisory services.

Lack of information

Lack of information about the number of returning migrant workers, the skills that they might possess, their reintegration and rehabilitation experiences, among other things, is one of the major constraints for effective reintegration (IOM, 2002). Since the employers and business owners do not have information regarding the skills and availability of returning workers, they are unable to fill the skills gap. In addition, an employer in the construction industry added that the subcontractors or contractors are the ones who recruit workers in the construction sector. Subsequently, most of the owners are unaware about the patterns of work going on in their construction sites. This may affect the employers' positive initiatives and the intention to recruit skilled returning workers to their projects (KII 6) unless the construction companies develop mechanisms to monitor the subcontractors or contractors.

Although initiative is being undertaken by the government to develop a database of retuning migrant workers, the information it may contain about returning migrants is limited. To date, the database only contains name, passport number, and the name of the returning country. Details, including local address, skills, and interests, are not collected. It would be better if an online system is created where the workers themselves or with the help of the District Manpower offices can register themselves and upload their curriculum vitae.

Lack of a platform or fora of returned workers seeking employment

Since information regarding returning migrants is yet to be available, the main challenges at the initial stage are reaching out to returning migrant workers and organizing them. The returning migrant workers, in the absence of a platform conducive to helping them in communication and information sharing, remain out of reach of the employers. Both the employers and returned workers remain almost completely disconnected from each-other due to a lack of a formal system for information sharing and dissemination (KII 3, 7, and 4).

[14] Responsible for all issues concerning labour migration for short-term overseas employment and welfare of the workers and their families.

[15] Responsible for the Bangladeshi labour market.

Mismatch between employers' willingness to recruit returning workers and returning workers' aspirations

Another problem regarding the reintegration of returning workers is that the demands and expectations of returning workers are often quite high with respect to the labour market condition in Bangladesh. According to the key informants, returning migrant workers' higher wage expectations are a constraint to reintegrate them into the domestic market (KII 3 and 7). The interviews also reveal that due to socio-economic reasons, the returned workers, if they take up an employment locally, change their occupations quite frequently and this creates problems for employers to finish work in a timely manner (KII 3 and 5). Although there is no concrete evidence available for the reasons behind their tendency to change occupations frequently, several socio-economic factors, including lack of networking with the local labour market, higher expectations (both monetary as well as non-monetary) in jobs due to exposure to the international market, among other factors, may create instability in their choices.

Lack of institutional support

In spite of the high rates of emigration along with the substantial flow of return migration, there is hardly any institutional support for returning migrants. Currently, there are no support schemes available from the government. A number of NGOs have some relevant schemes such as self-help groups. But neither BMET, which caters to both local and international labour market, nor the local private sector has programmes that make return migration attractive to the workers and local economy. Collaboration between the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, BMET and the Ministry of Labour and Employment towards this end is much desired.

Bangladesh has an active non-government sector and many of the NGOs provide different types of support to potential migrant workers. However, only a few of them currently work on issues related to the reintegration of returning migrants. Most of such activities are confined to the utilization of remittances rather than employment-related projects. No programmes are currently available to returning workers who are interested in engaging in wage employment.

Absence of a policy, business and enterprise development framework

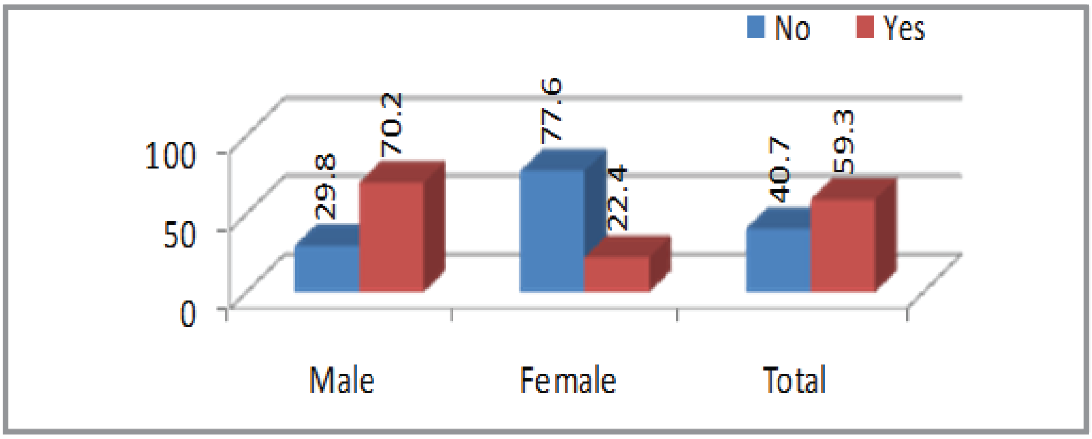
Active government policies and strategies are compulsory for successful and sustainable reintegration. Reintegration issues facing returning migrants are almost absent from the government's agenda. A policy decision was made to provide easy access to credit and allocate resources from the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund (WEWF) to returning workers because the wellbeing of returning workers is crucial for reintegration. With initial funds from the WEWF, a worker-centred Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) has been set up by the government. There seem to a level of general satisfaction about the banking services that the PKB offers to the migrating workers. It also offers small credit to returned workers for entrepreneurial activities. However, it should be kept in mind that access to credit is an essential component but not a panacea to entrepreneurial success.

This is why, perhaps, utilization of credit being offered by the PKB remains low. In order to support returning workers' entrepreneurial activities, a whole host of policy and business or enterprise development support is required along with access to credit. The absence of returning migrants' reintegration issues in government policies and strategic planning is one of the key obstacles for the overall reintegration process for returning migrants.

Self-employment potential for returning workers

As discussed earlier, the survey data reveals that 16.3 per cent of the returning workers were self-employed before migration and that they were primarily involved in small businesses. The preferred small businesses among the returning workers before migration were employment in tailoring and embroidery shop (2.7 per cent), fish farming (0.3 per cent), poultry farming (0.3 per cent), grocery shop (3.8 per cent), peddling (0.3 per cent), fish selling (0.3 per cent), food shop (0.4 per cent), mobile phone shop (0.1 per cent), and vegetable selling (0.4 per cent). Findings of the profiling survey reveal that 60 per cent of returning workers expressed their interest in self-employment activities. More males (70 per cent) than females (22 per cent) are interested in being self-employed (see figure 2.1). More than one quarter of those who want to start entrepreneurial activities want to start some form of agro-based industry, including those related to agriculture and fisheries. In addition, a large number of returning workers expressed their preference for entrepreneurial activities at SMEs. The preferred SME entrepreneurship areas include grocery or stationary shop (42 per cent), business involving green vegetables (3 per cent), transport/car rental (5 per cent), and tailoring shop (16 per cent) (see table 2.1). In addition, certain categories of workers, such as carpenters, supervisors, poultry farmers, and salespeople, had the opportunity to acquire entrepreneurial skills while working abroad. Therefore, with proper training, guidance, and credit support, it is expected these returning workers can initiate successful entrepreneurial activities at home.

Figure 2.1. Intention of the returning workers to be self-employed



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

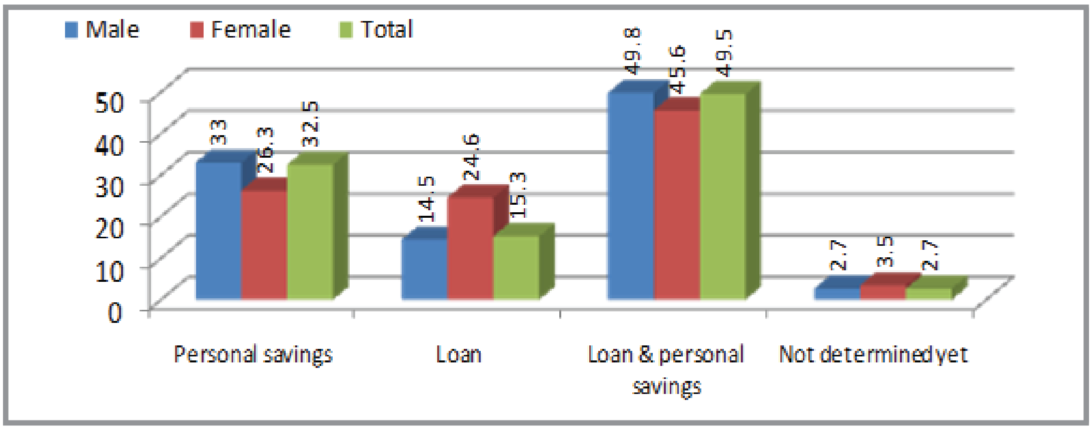
Table 2.1. Preferred areas of self-employment

Sector	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not specified	108	16.6	6	9.8	114	16
Agro-based enterprise						
Agriculture	115	17.7	5	8.2	120	16.9
Fishery	40	6.1	7	11.5	47	6.6
Small and medium enterprises						
Shop (grocery, stationary, other)	168	25.8	26	42.6	194	27.2
Tailoring shop	14	2.2	10	16.4	24	3.4
Transport/car rental	35	5.4		0.0	35	4.9
Clothing business	21	3.2	2	3.3	23	3.2
Electrical shop	20	3.1		0.0	20	2.8
Green vegetable	24	3.7		0.0	24	3.4
Furniture business	21	3.2		0.0	21	2.9
Husk/pulse/bran business	14	2.2	1	1.6	15	2.1
Large enterprise						
Construction firm	16	2.5		0.0	16	2.2
Other	55	8.4	4	6.6	59	8.3
Total	651	100	61	100	712	100

Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

In addition to their skills and experience, availability of credit is another crucial factor for successful entrepreneurship. As shown in figure 2.2 and table 2.2, in addition to personal savings, a majority of those planning to start businesses plan to pursue credit from various sources. Most of the returning workers (73 per cent) preferred banks as the primary source of credit with another 12 per cent preferring NGOs as the credit source.

Figure 2.2. Planned sources of financing for entrepreneurial activities



Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

Table 2.2. Planned sources of credit for entrepreneurial activities

Source of loan	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bank	304	74.3	25	62.5	329	73.3
NGO	44	10.8	10	25.0	54	12.0
Family & relatives	44	10.8	4	10.0	48	10.7
From any source with low interest	14	3.4	1	2.5	15	3.3
Other businessman	3	0.7	0	0.0	3	0.7
Total	409	100.0	40	100.0	449	100.0

Source: ILO and BILS, Returning Worker Survey, November 2013 to February 2014.

From the demand side, there are some thriving trades available to returning migrant workers, such as commercial agricultural production, agro-based trades, agro-processing industries, and SME initiatives in both rural non-farm sectors as well as in urban areas. GO and NGO supported schemes are available in those trades as well.

As for agricultural entrepreneurship, sectors such as poultry, dairy, and fisheries have flourished in recent years. With the provision of required processing and value added, these sectors have ample scope for export. A number of agro-based industries, such as poultry farm, dairy farm, food processing plant, fish freezing/processing industries, among others, have significant potential in this context. Reputed local businessmen and prospective foreign investors have shown interest in communicating with banks for the establishment of agro-processing industries in Bangladesh. Joint venture projects are given special priority in this context as well.[16] Under agro-based industries, certain sub-sectors, such as canned juice/fruit, dairy, and poultry, have significant potential. Given that Bangladesh has a large supply of raw materials for agro-based industries and the existence of a substantial gap between demand and supply, potential entrepreneurs can avail such opportunities. Government and NGOs have been conducting regular training programmes in developing skilled workers for this industry. According to the Board of Investment, progressive agricultural practices, improved marketing techniques, and modern processing facilities would enable the agro-processing industry to improve its quality and expand production levels significantly. [17]

16 See www.bkb.org.bd, accessed August 2014.

17 See www.boi.gov.bd, accessed June 2015.

As shown in box 1, Bangladesh Bank has also taken particular initiative to promote agro-based industries. With a view to reintegrate the returning workers in agro-based industries, a number of models can be considered. Box 2 exhibits two such extensive agricultural interventions that returning workers may consider.

Box 1. Refinance Scheme for Agro-processing Industry

Bangladesh Bank introduced a Refinance Scheme for Agro-processing Industry with a fund of BDT1 billion (ICD Circular 01, 4 November 2001). Through different scheduled banks and financial institutions, around BDT911.6 million in funds have been disbursed through 31 March 2010. As of that date, eight banks and 12 financial institutions have signed participation agreements with Bangladesh Bank to avail this refinance facility. Under this fund, Bangladesh Bank provides refinance facilities through public financial institutions to different agro-based industries in order to enhance the growth of agro-based and agro-processing industries.

Box 2. Model agricultural interventions for agricultural entrepreneurs

Solidaridad Network Asia, national and international stakeholders, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh have started implementing the Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Linkages (SaFaL) programme in south-west Bangladesh. SaFaL is working towards the intensification of agricultural production in the sub-sectors of aquaculture, dairy, and horticulture by means of efficient farm management. The programme targets around 57,000 farm households in Bangladesh in various districts.

Profitable Opportunities for Food Security (PROOFS) is a project carried out by a consortium of organizations, including ICCO[18], iDE[19], BoP[20] Innovation Centre (BoPinc), and GAIN[21]. These organizations organize farmers into producer groups, train them in business skills, facilitate agro-processing and market linkages, and bring in end buyers and local companies. This project will be implemented in the north-west part of Bangladesh (Gaibandha, Kurigram, Nilphamari, and Rangpur districts) and in the south (Barisal, Bhola, and Patuakhali districts), benefitting approximately 340,000 people.

18 Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation.

19 International Development Enterprise.

20 Base of Pyramid.

21 Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition.

Due to a relatively narrow base of heavy industry in the country and resource constraints, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has emphasized the promotion of SME development and has taken a number of steps in this regard. An SME foundation was established to provide technical support to entrepreneurs and a number of policy supports have been provided for the development of the sector. Schedule Banks (e.g. Bangladesh Krishi Bank) and non-bank financial institutions, under the guidance of Bangladesh Bank, have introduced a number of schemes for entrepreneurs to access hassle-free financing. Bangladesh Bank has identified several clusters in this regard, including a light engineering and agricultural machinery cluster in Bogra, a handicraft cluster in Jamalpur, and indigenous *Monipuri Tant* (handloom) cluster in Moulavi Bazar, where specific scheduled banks have been engaged to accommodate and manage the financing needs of the entrepreneurs in the cluster (Rahman, 2013).

Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) is one potential source of financing for returning migrant workers interested in investing in SMEs or agro-based industries. PKB is a specialized bank which works for the welfare of migrant workers and emphasizes the reintegration of returning workers. At present, it has specific financial/loan schemes (up to BDT500,000) to support returning migrants (KII 2). The returning workers who are interested in initiating self-employment can take loans from this bank without any bond or collateral. PKB provides loans, primarily for agriculture, cattle farming, poultry farming, dairy farming, biogas plants, shops or small businesses, electronics and electric businesses, auto bikes, among other ventures. It is of note that the interest rate of loans is higher for returning migrant workers (11 per cent) than for outbound migrants (9 per cent) (KII 2).

Like the Probashi Kallyan Bank, the Agrani Bank has also started a specific loan scheme for returning migrants. Specialized Bank, e.g. Bangladesh Krishi Bank, could also offer such schemes. In this regard, specific policy direction from the government encouraging such schemes is essential.

Information on skills and demand for enterprise support

One of the biggest challenges for reintegrating returning workers is ensuring effective matching between workers' skills and the demand for skills by employers. Employers, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders have all identified that the communication gap between workers and employers is the main barrier to the reintegration process (IOM, 2002). The effective matching of the supply of skills and its demand primarily depends on a well-functioning communication system.

For facilitating communication, information about skills and interests along with returning workers' expectations should be collected and categorized systematically. Development of a comprehensive database to archive information about returning workers is important. The database has to be made accessible to employers through an online platform, regular job fairs, or certain sector-wise mutual arrangements.

In view of the fact that no specialized training programmes are available for returning migrant workers, the public- and private-sector skill training providers should be engaged to develop and certify skills of returning workers according to the requirements of employers. Separate training modules have to be developed for each trade in consultation or direct involvement with concerned employers. The BEF, BGMEA, and BMET training centres can be considered as potential training centres in this regard. In sum, in order to absorb the returning workers into the labour market, the development of demand-driven training programmes should be a top priority.

The BMET district offices, as well as NGOs working with migrants at the grassroots level through community-based organizations such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), can play an effective role in raising awareness and providing suggestions and information for skills development. These organizations can also offer certification of prior skills to the workers who will be accepted by employers.

The Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) has set up some assessment centres that provide assessment certificates for 'recognition of prior learning' after competency-based training and assessment. Returning migrants can also engage in such programmes to assess and certify their skills gained abroad for the consideration of employers in the domestic labour market. To make such information available to returning workers, the government, particularly BMET and local governments, can play an important role by developing information centres.

The GOB, under its recent scheme, "Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Bangladesh: Skills Vision 2016", has emphasized the importance of incorporating returning migrant workers into the proposed framework. Skilled returning workers are offered recognition for prior learning through assessments that certify skills gained overseas. After the assessment, the migrants are provided a formal qualification or some form of credit towards such formalization. All 15 Industry Skills Councils (ISC) under this scheme have committees for curriculum development and standards. Local ISC representatives are working in close connection with 100 polytechnics and technical training centres. It is important to incorporate the returning workers under this programme as well.

An information cell and support centre can bridge the gap between returning workers' interests and available opportunities by providing information about job opportunities, employers' skill requirements, training facilities, trade licensing, microfinance schemes, other relevant supportive information, as well as counselling services for career development. A one-stop service could also be supportive in this regard. The skills data system for the technical vocational education and training (TVET) programme has an online system for skill demand and supply. Such a model can be operationalized for returning workers as well.

The workers returning home after a long time are not acquainted with relevant information on potential investment opportunities and the local economy. The information cell and support centres can play a vital role in this regard. An in-depth analysis of relevant labour market conditions and investment potential can facilitate an effective reintegration programme for returning workers who are willing to be self-employed in SMEs. Agro-business, garments and textiles, real estate and housing, and electronics are some of the thriving investment sectors in Bangladesh that at the same time have high business potential and employment generation opportunities. However, depending on timing, place of business, communications system, availability of raw materials, among other factors, investment opportunities can vary. Investment experts can advise returning workers to make informed decisions through providing a counselling mechanism. This mechanism can be developed using existing human resource capacity or recruiting experienced personnel. The counselling should be provided at the local level, especially in those upazilas (sub-districts) where the concentration of migrants is high.

SME development and management training programmes can turn into important supportive schemes for returning workers who are interested in SME development. The Small and Cottage Industries Training Institute (SCITI) and Department of Youth Development (DYD) training programme can provide support to returning workers on how to be successful entrepreneurs.

Returning migrant workers are still not aware of the supporting schemes, such as loan facilities, training facilities, re-migration opportunities, among others, available to them. Local governments, BMET, district manpower offices, training centres, ISCs, and NGOs can take steps to improve the quality of services for returning migrants.

III. Matching supply and demand in the labour market

With a goal to utilize returning workers' skills and reintegrate them into the economy, this section develops a future direction taking into consideration information from both the demand and supply sides, as well as documented international experiences. This report first analysed the skills and preferences of returning workers, and then explored skill demand and absorptive capacity of the economy via information gathered through the key informant interviews. The report also consulted relevant international literature to understand existing reintegration strategies followed in other countries. This study has identified RMG and construction as the potential sectors for the returning workers seeking wage employment, whereas agro-based industries and small and medium enterprises can be considered as potential areas for those interested in self-employment.

Existing scenario

This report has analysed available schemes, support, and existing opportunities, which can be utilized to facilitate reintegration while complying with the interests and skills of returning workers. Based on the survey data and KIIs, the existing scenario points to the importance of: (i) effective communication between the returning workers and employers, (ii) recognition of skills gained abroad through certification, (iii) support through credit, advice, and information sharing, and (iv) a database to update information concerning returning workers' skills and interests.

The reintegration process into the local labour market should incorporate job placement skills and take steps to initiate entrepreneurship or self-employment. The analysis of skills and interests of the returning workers reveals that most of the workers interests and skills match with the thriving sectors of the country. Existing studies reveal a contrasting scenario in which a large number of skilled returning workers are in fact involved in occupations that are not relevant to skills acquired abroad (IOM and UNDP, 2002). Thus, in order to utilize existing human resources efficiently it is important to align returning workers' skills to their future jobs. An intermediate mechanism to connect demand and supply is currently missing and its development should be prioritized to facilitate the reintegration process. Capacity building is essential for both returning workers who are interested in participating in wage employment and returning workers who are interested in entrepreneurial activities.

This report identified the establishment of a comprehensive database or information centre as a prerequisite for a successful reintegration process. It is essential to bridge the gap between employers and employees. The findings reveal that there hardly exists any counselling services or information channels to help returning migrants to integrate into the domestic labour market. However, the BMET, with help from the Immigration Authority (Special Branch of the Police), recently initiated the development of a database of returning migrant information.

Matching supply and demand depends on proper categorization of both employers and job-seekers along a number of criteria concerning requirements that a job may have and skills and competencies of a worker. Categorizations along variables such as gender and geographical areas would also be helpful in matching supply and demand locally. In addition, wage expectations and interests of returning workers could also be taken into consideration.

As discussed earlier, obtaining recognition for the skills that migrants acquired abroad is another challenge for effective reintegration. In this regard, The National Skills Development Policy 2011 (NSDP) has initiated a number of strategies for overseas employee skills development, but most of the strategies are focused on current migrants. However, the programme mentions a strategy for engaging with returning migrant workers through assessing and certifying skills gained abroad. In addition, the NSDP will initiate a scheme within which returning workers will be provided opportunities for skills testing, skills upgrading, and skills certification before they return to their home country. In this case, the strategies and policies are targeted towards migrants as well as returning workers.

A large proportion of returning workers are interested in initiating small and medium enterprises. In this context, meeting their financial requirements (from the government and other private institutions) is one of the common demands of returning workers. The PKB is the only specialized bank that provides financial support directly for the rehabilitation of returning workers. In addition to this, the Government has the scope to expand these services at the local level by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with other state-owned financial institutions. Specific returning migrant rehabilitation or reintegration schemes can be initiated at banks that have greater geographical coverage, especially in rural areas.

Future direction

While considering the future direction of the reintegration process, a number of issues that came up in the survey data and/or in key informant interviews should be considered. Firstly, a careful analysis of survey data reveals that around 14 per cent of the returning workers have been changing their occupations frequently while abroad. Some may and do argue that this switching of occupations in certain cases can lead to a degradation of workers' skills. In view of this, RPL and certification of the skills is all the more important for both the returned workers and the employers. The reintegration process should carefully consider workers' both pre- and post-migration work experience and training while absorbing them into the local labour market.

Secondly, in terms of training received, due to the differences in the structure of foreign labour markets, certain types of training as well as experience might not be useful in the context of the domestic labour market. Future training programmes must incorporate and carefully consider such an issue.

Thirdly, the human capital acquired in foreign countries may not be of high value and as a result, in spite of foreign work experience, the returning workers might not be able to utilize their acquired human capital. This is particularly important in the context of entrepreneurship development. As revealed in the international literature, it is not only capital market imperfections, but also failure to acquire human capital that constrains the development of entrepreneurship in LDCs. Given that most of the workers are working in low-skilled jobs abroad, this issue is particularly crucial in terms of reintegration. More years of experience working as a domestic worker, for example, is not expected to add any value to the development of entrepreneurial quality.

Fourthly, as revealed in the interviews, certain facilities/options are only available to potential migrants, but not to returning workers. Integrating the returning workers into such schemes is crucial for their successful reintegration.

Finally, KIIs reveal that the returning workers have higher expectations in terms of wages than workers who have not worked abroad. Such perceptions can create discrimination and negative bias when recruiting returning migrant workers. Although this issue has not been examined in the present survey, future research is required to shed light on the reservation wages of returning workers. The government in this regard can also provide guidance to potential employers as to the value of foreign experience.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

In a skill-deficient country like Bangladesh, returning migrants can play a crucial role in terms of the country's development efforts. It is not only the remittances sent or carried by the migrants, but also the social capital generated through migrant networks, flow of knowledge, technical know-how, and skills that can make significant contributions towards the socio-economic and development discourses of the country. Against this backdrop, the aim of this research, amongst others, is to understand and identify an effective policy framework and to design strategies accordingly to reintegrate the returning migrant workers into the domestic economy in an efficient manner. The target is to reintegrate the workers into suitable jobs and to effectively utilize their skills and knowledge that they gained abroad in a manner that they can contribute towards the development of respective sectors.

The key informant interviews, as well as international experiences, have identified the constraints and challenges for efficient reintegration of returning migrant workers. The relevant personnel in the demand side also suggested a number of strategies to facilitate such reintegration. In order to facilitate the smooth reintegration of returning migrant workers into selected sectors, policy-makers may consider designing policies and strategies as suggested in this report.

In order to successfully reintegrate returning workers, the government, as well as development partners, NGOs, and other organizations, should make a coordinated effort. In order to utilize the skills of returning migrant workers, it is of paramount importance that the government takes specific steps in terms of timely implementation of policies and strategies. Based on international experiences along with the experiences shared by the key informants, a number of strategies are outlined below.

Developing a comprehensive database

The main constraint for successful reintegration of the returning workers as pointed out by all of the key informants is the lack of coordination and information. In order to track the returning workers and to share their information among the relevant stakeholders, such as banks, SMEs, and employers, a comprehensive database with detailed information, including socio-economic background, skills, education, training, among other attributes, should be prepared. Apart from the recent initiative to use the immigration desk at the airports to obtain names a few other details of the returning workers, the government should strengthen their role in facilitating better tracking of the returning migrant workers. Online database system, which the returning workers and accredited or registered employers can use, needs to be set up. Such a system by itself would not work. The system would have to be a part of the reintegration strategy involving the employers, training providers, assessment centres and certification bodies. Local governments may be included for mobilization of the workers to update worker profiles by setting up local-level data collection units in the District Manpower Offices.

Setting up an information and business or enterprise support centres

Use of one-stop centres for disseminating information about available training, professional counselling, credit facilities, trade licensing, and enterprise development and employment opportunities can prove to be useful. For providing quick information, the one-stop service centres should be established at the District Manpower Offices in partnership with public or private financial institutions and employers. A strategy of having a helpline and/or a help centre can be a crucial tool to assist the returning workers. Returning workers suffer from a lack of information and a lack of connections with prospective employers. The information and support centre will not only provide information on the reintegration possibilities and connections with prospective employers, but also act as a centre for re-training and refresher training for returning migrant workers.

Promoting coordination and networking

In order to coordinate with the returning workers, collaborative strategies between GOs and NGOs should be in place. Existing NGOs, which already have a network at the grassroots and community level, should be utilized for the purpose of communicating with the returning workers. Involvement of local governments should be taken into account in this regard as well.

Relevant government ministries should play active roles in matching potential returning workers with prospective employers and should help in building the bridge between them. Relevant information regarding the construction and garment sectors, along with information on funding sources and other administrative and legal information for setting up small businesses, should be provided by the Government. To facilitate communication, a website could also be developed through which both the employers and returning workers can communicate with each other.

The government can consider opening a separate cell in Bangladesh Bank as well as in other related institutions to help returning migrant workers in improving their entrepreneurial skills, provide them with necessary credit and business support, offer them entrepreneurship plans, among other services.

Providing support and information on investment opportunities

Providing financial support to returning migrant workers is important for their reintegration into the economy. Although our survey data reveals that returning workers primarily rely on savings for investment purposes, providing credit at lower rates could further help their entrepreneurial initiatives. The government should also allocate separate budget especially for information dissemination for investment. The budget for the training centres for both migrants and returning migrant workers should be increased to match the needs of the returning workers. The GOB can also initiate special investment packages for returning workers for setting up agro-based industries and small-scale enterprises.

A comprehensive support package for returning migrant workers needs to be devised. Along with the above support mechanisms, the government can introduce support for the creation of self-employment. These supports may include (a) allocating plots/land for group investors in Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) industrial parks and/or shops/space for business ventures in government-owned markets; (b) promote public-private partnerships based on returning migrant workers' skills and experiences; and (c) introduce deposit schemes for migrant workers during their stay abroad and ensuring incentive bonuses against their deposits when they return.

Framing pro-migrant policies

Finally, the government should enact necessary policies and strategies in order to make the re-entry of returning workers smooth and to ensure their successful reintegration into the domestic labour market. Strategies should be undertaken to protect the migrants from any fraudulent practices and to safeguard their interests while abroad. In this context, the government should track the migrants and also provide necessary logistical support, such as information, legal, and financial support, while they are abroad. The investment and industrial policy landscape should be encouraging for returning workers in order to enable them to invest in activities in line with their accrued skills and experiences during their stints overseas. Also, pro-migrant policies should entail clear guidelines in improving overall work and workplace governance in the country, such as ensuring decent wage standards, working conditions, and work safety, in order for the returning migrant workers to be interested in returning and being integrated into the local job market.

Above all, greater cooperation and coordination is required across relevant ministries and key national institutions so that potential employees can be matched effectively with suitable jobs (CEDEFOP, 2013). Following the European framework, creating a two-party or three-party body (training providers, firms, and government bodies) for the recognition and validation of course curriculum and monitoring training materials can be considered too. As suggested in NSDP 2011, development of a national qualification system that can provide certification of international skills can be beneficial to the returning migrant workers.

Given the tremendous contributions of returning migrant workers in the Bangladesh economy, it is important that the government, with the help of NGOs and the private sector, enact timely initiatives to reintegrate returning workers into the economy in an efficient manner. It is needless to mention that strong institutional support in terms of developing and maintaining a returnee database, providing special investment packages and credit facilities, offering training facilities to strengthen skills that they acquired abroad, facilitating communications between returning workers and prospective employers, among others, are crucial for successful reintegration. Strategies and policies directed towards reintegration should be designed and implemented in a timely and efficient manner. Finally, no policy will bring the desired results if it is not implemented with careful monitoring. The relevant ministries of the GOB should therefore ensure and enforce effective implementation followed by regular and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the pro-migrant policies.

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Annex I. list of key informant interviews

KII 1: Mr Jabed Ahmed, Joint Secretary and Additional Director General of BMET.

KII 2: Mr C. M. Koyes Sami, Managing Director and CEO of Probashi Kallyan Bank.

KII 3: Engr Shafikul Alam Bhuiyan, Advisor, Bangladesh Association of Construction Industry (BACI).

KII 4: Syed Saiful Haque, Chairman, WARBE Development Foundation.

KII 5: Mr C. R. Abrar, Refugee and Migratory Research Unit (RMMRU).

KII 6: Architect Akhil Akhter Chawdhury, Managing Director, Shuchana Develop ment Ltd.

KII 7: Saquib Quoreshi, Secretary, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka and Representative, Bangladesh Employer Federations (BEF).

KII 8: Md Sahidullah Azim, Vice President, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

KII 9: Md Hasan Imam, Programme Coordinator, BRAC Safe Migration Programme.

The homecoming
Profiling the returning migrant workers of Bangladesh

The survey of returning migrant workers to profile them has been carried out by the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, with technical support from the International Labour Organization and facilitation by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training. The Bangladesh Employers' Federation too assisted in designing the survey. The survey was conducted under the ILO programme for "Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh". This programme, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, is aimed to help improve overall governance of labour migration in Bangladesh.

Supporting the workers, especially, those who return under difficult conditions, has been subject of consideration and a matter of assistance by the government for a while. It is also an issue, which has emerged as one requiring attention not only of the government but also of the private sector, particularly, those sectors which are in need of experienced workforce and would benefit from further enterprise development. In order to plan future activities to support the workers coming back, the ILO and its constituents worked towards the felt-need to define further the profile of the returning migrant workers. This report is being brought out in belief that the survey findings and discussions on labour and entrepreneurship demand would encourage public and private sector organizations to come forward to optimize benefits from return migration.

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DECENT WORK
A better world starts here

ILO Country Office for Bangladesh
House No. S.E.(G) 2, Road No. 140, Gulshan 1
Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh
Tel. : + 88 02 9883973, 9883978
Fax : + 88 02 9883982
Email : DHAKA@ilo.org
Website : https://www.ilo.org/dhaka
Facebook : https://www.facebook.com/ILO.ORG
Twitter : @ILONEWS
ILOTV : http://www.youtube.com/ilotv

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
Probashi Kalyan Bhaban 71-72, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton Garden
Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh.
Tel. : +88 02 8333604
Fax : +88 02 9342755
Email : js@probashi.gov.bd
Website : http://www.probashi.gov.bd

Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
89/2, Kakrail, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh
Tel. : +88 02 9357972, 9349925
Fax : +88 02 8331117
Email : bmet@bmet.org.bd
Website : http://www.bmet.gov.bd

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
House No. 20 (3rd Floor)
Road No. 11 (New), 32 (Old), Dhanmondi R/A
Dhaka1209, Bangladesh
Tel. : 88 02 8123869, 8123870, 9143236
Fax : 88 02 8114820
Email : bils@citech.net
Website : http://www.bils-bd.org

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