

Project Context

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries with a population of over 160 million. With limited space to build new houses, many people set up home in the river basins of the Bay of Bengal. This is causing families to become incredibly vulnerable as the country faces many challenges, including rising sea levels and frequent cyclones – which can quickly destroy homes and livelihoods.

There is wide spread poverty throughout the country resulting in most of the population living on less than £1.50 a day. They depend largely on agriculture to make a living and feed their families, but the low-lying geography of the country makes it extremely vulnerable to flooding.

Food insecurity now means the country has two million malnourished children and the highest rate of underweight children in South Asia. Many people migrate overseas for work to gain a stable income to support their families – estimated to be over 800,000 people who migrate each year to the Middle East and South East Asia. Historically more men have migrated than women, but in recent years there has been a 26 per cent rise in female migrants' which can be due to family based violence, divorce and gender inequality, such as unfair wages, stereotyped work and degrading social attitudes toward women.

Project Summary

Of the 800,000 people who migrate each year, only 50 per cent migrate through official means with certified visas and documentation. Many of whom are not well educated and have limited skills, so they try to find agricultural, manual labour and domestic work.

Although government laws and policies direct safe, systematic and dignified migration, in practice there is widespread corruption and unethical recruitment. Migrants are often deceived of minimum wages and healthcare, as well as facing violence, intimidation and in many cases become victims of trafficking.

This project is vitally important to prospective migrants as it informs them about factors of migration that they may not be aware of, or prepared for. This project has not only increased awareness of what to expect when they arrive, but also helps people who are thinking about migrating, to make informed decisions, considering both the positive and potential negative aspects of migrating.

Together with our partner, Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Programme (OKUP), we teach people planning to migrate about their rights. Our overall aim is to reduce unnecessary violence and exploitation in migrant countries, as well as bringing an end to human trafficking.



Women planning to migrate receive training in avoid trafficking, violence and exploitation

Project Outline

This project aims to tackle the whole migration cycle by providing support in each step of the journey. There are several areas to our programming:

- Awareness campaigns to make prospective migrants aware of the risk of migration and how to be safe – this allows us to reach people at the earliest stage of their preparation
- Pre-departure training to learn about the local culture and language to encourage smoother integration; assistance with applications for passports and visas; support to find fair and safe work; and increase knowledge about migrant rights in their new host country (the rights of movement, employment, dignity and health)
- Helpline for assistance after travelling to the new host country

- Supporting the families who are left behind, particularly women and children to ensure they know how to support themselves in the long run, until their family return
- Re-integration to Bangladeshi society for returning migrants to engage in skills building activities to increase recruitment potential, gain access to healthcare and shelter services.

Objectives and Activities

To empower prospective Bangladeshi migrants who are seeking work overseas to escape poverty and vulnerable situations.

- To provide better access to services and assistance for prospective migrants to increase their chance of success in the new host community
- To reduce migration and trafficking related risks and vulnerabilities of the migrant workers with special focus on women
- To assist with reintegration of vulnerable migrants into Bangladeshi society with special focus on their social and economic needs
- To increase collective voices of the returnees to form a strong community and allow our partner to learn more about safe migration from returnees.

Introducing our Partner

We have partnered with OKUP to reach over 196,000 potential migrants, those who have decided to migrate and those who are returning to Bangladesh. OKUP is a community-based migrants' organisation that promotes safe migration. They have been working in the area since 2004, during this time they have learnt about the needs of the community and the reality of migration from personal experience and their long-standing relationships with returning migrants. Consequently, they are best placed to provide support to people preparing to migrate and the families that remain in the area after.

How you can help

With your help, we can do more to help these communities in Bangladesh to prepare for the challenges of migrating to a new community. Together we can ensure they have the knowledge and skills they require to build a better life for themselves and their families to prosper long in to the future. We can also fight to end human trafficking and unnecessary violence that migrants endure all too often, by informing them of their basic human rights and the support that is available to them.

With an annual donation, you and your friends could change the lives of migrants in Bangladesh:

£5,000 a year could train almost 200 women who are planning to migrate on how to avoid trafficking, violence and exploitation and what to do to seek help if this happens.

£10,000 a year could provide the running costs for a shelter home for trafficked women; train 30 women on garment making skills and help them find jobs back in Bangladesh; meet 50 returning trafficked or exploited migrants when they arrive back in Bangladesh and support them to seek the right health and legal assistance.

£15,000 a year could provide training to 30 women to help them decide whether to migrate – raising awareness on dangers such as trafficking, sexual abuse and violence.



Training is provided to returning migrants in garment making to help find skilled employment