

# A Study on the Background of Bangladeshi Migrant Labourers to the United Arab Emirates

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyse the background of Bangladeshi international migration and the current living and working conditions of Bangladeshi migrant labourers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where recently the number of migrants has shown the tendency to increase. This study is based on analysis of previous studies, statistical data and the author's research that was conducted twelve times between 1997 and 2012 in Bangladesh, and once each in 2020, 2012 and 2014 in the UAE.

In Bangladesh, large-scale development has been carried out with foreign aid and was led by Japan and the United States of America (USA). Nevertheless, absolute poverty, insufficient employment opportunity and high youth unemployment rate, as well as social issues, have remained unsolved. These issues serve as an ostensible reason which the government of Bangladesh uses to explain the increasing international labour migration from Bangladesh. For the Bangladeshi government, labour emigration is not only a solution for the issues of unemployment and poverty but also a method for accumulating foreign currency. It should be noted that the government has recruited labour migrants based on the demand for cheap labour force from the UAE. Furthermore, it has become clear that in the Kumilla district, where the modernisation of rural areas has promoted through the development and assistance provided by Japan and the USA, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening and that many Bangladeshi labour migrants originate from there.

Most of the interviewees in the author's research originally came from impoverished households. They could not access accurate information about the payment system regarding migration in advance. That is, the majority of Bangladeshi migrants were forced to pay large amounts of money to recruitment agencies in Daka through brokers in rural areas. For that reason, the families of poor migrant labourers often had to sell their cultivated land that was small in size but significant for their self-sustenance, to cover a portion of the fees required by

agencies. Moreover, some families had to borrow large sums of money, so that, as a result, they ended up being plagued by large debt.

Despite the above many hardships, the labourers' occupations upon arrival in the UAE were limited to unskilled work, such as being cleaning workers, construction workers or domestic servants. Therefore, most of them had to endure long hours in harsh working conditions in their destination countries under the Kafala (sponsorship) system and the Kafel (sponsor). Also, the UAE did not recognise the rights to free expression of opinion, collective bargaining, labourers' solidarity and forming labour unions to foreign workers.

Finally, the majority of poor migrant labourers working in the UAE could only earn an equivalent of an average salary of a paid employee in Bangladesh although they were having a hard time struggling with massive debt and harsh working conditions. The Bangladeshis working abroad often had to dedicate the entire income earned during the first contract period of a couple of years to debt repayment. In such conditions, it was not an easy task to remit money to their family members back home during the first contract period. Even if they managed to somehow send money to their families regularly by continuing to endure severe conditions for many years, they suffered in the sense that they had to live separately from their families. Therefore, in this study, we could not find a link between international labour migration and the promotion of labourers' well-being.

While the companies and many sponsors in the UAE provide the demand for cheap labour, they have never stopped oppressing poor migrant labourers. Also, the government of Bangladesh seems to be indifferent to the issues posed by the Kafala and the actual working conditions of Bangladeshi labourers abroad, such as low wages and very long working hours. That is, the faces, voices and participation of the Bangladeshi poor migrant labourers are not visible. The present analysis of the background of Bangladeshi migrant labourers shows that behind it lie not only poverty issues but also the complex social structure of Bangladesh. Dependence on migrant labourers makes difficult the promotion of well-being for people and building a sustainable community; rather, it brings social inequity.

**Key words:** Bangladesh, Migrant Labour, United Arab Emirates, International Labour Migration.

## I. Introduction: Background of the present study

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implemented the so-called 'Comilla Model' as the green revolution in Kumilla<sup>(1)</sup> during the East Pakistan era in the 1960s. Following this experimentation intended for the modernisation of rural Bangladesh, an enormous amount of foreign aid started to flow to the People's Republic of Bangladesh (Bangladesh) since its independence in 1971. Parallel with that; large-scale development has been carried out. In particular, Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the USAID became the largest donors of bilateral aid, with a total grant amount of approximately 14.9 billion U.S. dollars provided by July 2018.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nevertheless, the distortion of the economic structure, which has aggravated the North-South problem, is becoming increasingly complex in Bangladesh. Sobhan examined the impact of foreign aid and warned that development projects that rely on foreign aid can not solve poverty issues, but rather bring inequality in the concentration of wealth and income distribution (Sobhan, 1982).

Some of the principal social issues in the country are the fact that while only a small number of propertied people, such as large landowners, government officials and big corporations, monopolise wealth through vested interests, more than 24 percent of Bangladeshis still lived in absolute poverty as of 2016.<sup>(3)</sup> The absolute poverty rate was higher in rural areas, at 26.4 percent, compared to 18.9 percent in urban areas (BBS, 2020, p.536).

Besides, it is worth noting that for those who own no-farm holdings (cultivated-landless), and those who possess holdings of less than 0.05 acres, which is defined as 'non-farm holding' by the Bureau of Bangladesh Statistics (BBS),<sup>(4)</sup> obtaining nutritious food three times a day is a difficult task.<sup>(5)</sup>

Furthermore, in rural areas, the existence of a huge number of unemployed or underemployed among young people is a serious issue. Due to such poverty, the number of people, including even children below the age of 15 years, who migrate from rural areas to the capital Daka to seek employment or work as day labour or self-employed individuals is increasing. However, the reality is that urban development policies, including employment measures, and the demand for labour force have not kept up with the increase in the labour force in the city.<sup>(6)</sup>

Consequently, the problems of mass unemployment, underemployed labourers, day labourers the phenomenon of and street children have been exacerbated, and other social issues also remain unsolved, with poor people especially vulnerable to such issues. The majority of slum dwellers in Daka come from rural areas and have not been able to find stable employment after migrating to the city. For that reason, poor people in Daka's slums have been forming communities based on mutual assistance within each slum. They have been trying to maintain

their own and their families' livelihood through self-employment or day labour.<sup>(7)</sup>

Nevertheless, many poor city dwellers have been forced out of Daka's slums under compulsory eviction orders brought about by large-scale development. It has not only deprived them of their living spaces and community but also threatened theirs and their family members' bare existence. In addition to that, the problem of child labourers and street children are some of the serious social issues in Bangladesh.<sup>(8)</sup>

These difficult circumstances may have led to a rapid increase in international migrant labourers. Above all, the Government of Bangladesh has focused on solving the country's unemployment issues through encouraging migration,<sup>(9)</sup> in response to the demand for low-wage labour force from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.<sup>(10)</sup> The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment values highly the significant impact that the remittances by Bangladeshi labourers working abroad have on the accumulation of the foreign currency. Also, several previous studies have analysed the positive impact of migrant workers (labourers) on rural household incomes and economic development in Bangladesh.<sup>(11)</sup> However, it is not enough to view Bangladeshi migrant labourers and their backgrounds only through the lens of statistical values. Regarding this, Ali (2010) and Human Rights Watch (2006; 2009; 2014) have pointed out, based on previous studies and many interviews with migrant labourers, that migration involves a lot of risks and problems. Despite that, some of the studies focusing on remittances from migrant workers (labourers) do not address such issues, and they do not head attention to the voices of labourers that have experienced them.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the background of international migration from Bangladesh, and the actual living and working conditions of Bangladeshi migrant labourers, by referring to previous studies, statistical data, and the author's 12 times research conducted in Bangladesh between 1997 and 2012. Also, to shed light on the above issues, references will be made to case studies, interviews with migrant labourers, and research by the persons involved in international labour migration.

Needless to say, it is impossible to grasp the background behind international labour migration by doing research in only one country. International labour migration should be regarded as a global flow of labour, and not as an isolated phenomenon occurring between the migrant's homeland and the destination country (Morita, 1994 p.25).<sup>(12)</sup> In order to grasp the current conditions surrounding migrant labourers, perspectives based on fundamental human rights are necessary, such as those previously employed by Ali (ibid.) and Human Rights Watch (ibid.).

For the above reason, the author visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE)<sup>(13)</sup> three times between 2010 and 2014 and interviewed Bangladeshi and other migrant labourers from developing countries. Also, the author has been researching about Bangladeshi immigrants in

New York City since 2010. In addition, the author conducted many interviews with Bangladeshi labourers who migrated to the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the State of Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Maldives. Furthermore, the author also conducted a few interviews in the Republic of Singapore. Details of the survey methods will be presented in section three of this paper.

## II. Current situation in Bangladesh

### 1. The absolute poverty rate in Bangladesh

**Table 1** shows the absolute poverty rate by educational status in Bangladesh estimated by the BBS, also, it was the latest data as of 2020. The absolute poverty rate in 2016 was 24.3 percent, which means that, although there was a 7.2 percent decrease compared to the data in 2010, more than 24 percent of Bangladeshis still had to face difficult living conditions.

As mentioned above, the absolute poverty rate in rural areas was 26.4 percent, significantly higher than in urban areas, where it stood at 18.9 percent. Those in rural areas who did not obtain any education faced the most severe living conditions, the poverty rate was 30.1 percent. The data suggest a high poverty rate even among peoples in urban areas at 27.3 percent who could not access education. Both of these peoples indicated poverty rates higher than the national average.

On the other hand, the poverty rate for those who have obtained a Secondary School Certificate (SSC) or higher education was the lowest in the country at 6.6 percent. However, among these educated people, the poverty rate was higher in rural areas, at 9.6 percent,

**Table 1: Incidence of poverty (CBN) by educational status (2010 and 2016)**

(%)

	2010			2016		
	Rural	Urban	National	Rural	Urban	National
National	35.2	21.3	31.5	26.4	18.9	24.3
Literacy Status						
Illiterate	43.5	39.4	42.8	30.1	27.3	29.5
Literate	23.3	11.4	19.0	17.5	10.3	15.1
Educational Level						
No education	43.5	39.4	42.8	30.4	27.4	29.8
Completed Class 1 ~ 4	38.1	28.3	35.7	25.3	24.3	25.1
Completed Class 5 ~ 11	24.9	16.7	22.6	17.9	13.1	16.5
Completed Class SSC +	11.2	3.9	7.5	9.6	3.6	6.6

Note 1: CBN means Cost of Basic Needs method.

2: SSC means Secondary School Certificate.

3: This table was compiled by the author.

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2020) p.536.

compared to only 3.6 percent in urban areas, which clearly indicates a widening disparity between rural areas and urban areas. Namely, this may also suggest that having access to better education in urban areas helps mitigate the risk of living below the poverty line. In addition, according to the data (see **Table 3**), a higher level of education is a necessary requirement for avoiding unemployment (see below for further details).

## 2. Unemployment issues in Bangladesh

**Table 2** shows the number of unemployed populations aged 15 and over by age bracket, sex and an area in Bangladesh.<sup>(14)</sup> The BBS estimated the total number of unemployed populations at more than 2,587,000 in 2015. In terms of the total number, there was no significant difference between females and males in Bangladesh as a whole, or in rural and urban areas. Also, a large number of the unemployed belonged to the age bracket of 18-24 years old, accounting for almost 36.6 percent of the total. Notably, the number of unemployed in rural areas was more than 1,819,000, which was 70.3 percent of the total.

**Table 2: Unemployed population aged 15 and over, by age bracket, sex and area (2015)**  
(in thousand)

Age bracket	Rural			Urban			Bangladesh		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
15-17	50	137	186	22	44	66	72	181	253
18-24	269	391	660	130	156	286	399	547	946
25-29	232	182	415	93	103	196	326	285	611
30-64	365	176	541	125	90	215	490	265	756
65+years	8	10	18	1	3	4	9	13	22
Total	923	896	1819	372	395	768	1295	1292	2587

Note 1: This table was compiled by the author.

Note 2: Numbers may not sum due to rounding by BBS.

Source: BBS (2017) p.68.

**Table 3** shows the unemployed population aged 15 and over by education qualification in 2015, estimated by the BBS. The largest number of unemployed (853,000) was among those who have basic obtained secondary education, followed by 574,000 individuals who have higher secondary education. The total number, which is 1,427,000, accounts for almost half of the entire unemployed population. Also, reflecting the overall large number of unemployed in rural areas, 601,000 people with secondary education who live in those areas are still jobless. These data suggest that there are problems in Bangladesh that can not be overcome simply by obtaining SSC or Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC).

On the other hand, the data also points to one of the most important issues in Bangladesh: that the number of unemployed with no-education and primary education (grades 1~5) is 838,000 people, which accounts for 32.4 percent of the entire unemployed population. Those among them who could not access higher education have been forced into extreme poverty and have many difficulties getting formal employment or a decent job.

Furthermore, the number of unemployed females with no-education in rural areas was 213,000, which is 23.1 percent of all unemployed females in rural areas. They belong to the poor or the most impoverished families. It suggests that unsolved issues remain despite rapid economic development.

It is important to note that whenever there is a widening disparity, the burden ultimately falls on the vulnerable members of society — harmful effects especially tend to affect disproportionately the vulnerable members of rural areas.

**Table 3: Unemployed population aged 15 and over, by education qualification and area (2015)**

(in thousand)

Education qualification	Rural			Urban			Bangladesh		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
None	213	135	349	56	35	91	269	171	439
Primary	196	115	311	49	39	88	244	154	399
Secondary	314	287	601	125	128	253	438	415	853
Higher Secondary	139	244	383	79	111	191	218	356	574
Tertiary	61	110	171	64	80	144	125	190	315
Others	1	4	6	0	2	2	1	6	7
Total	923	896	1819	372	395	768	1295	1292	2587

Note 1: This table was compiled by the author.

Note 2: Numbers may not sum due to rounding by BBS.

Source: Ibid., p.69.

**Table 4** shows the unemployment rate for aged 15 and over, sex and an area in 2015, according to the BBS. The unemployment rate in Bangladesh was 4.2 percent. The proportion in urban areas was slightly higher (0.3 percent) compared to rural areas. Also, the unemployment rate was higher for young people under the age of 24, standing at more than 10.1 percent at the national level. In all categories displayed in the table, the female unemployment rate was higher than men. Among them, females from rural areas at ages between 15 and 17 have the highest rate, 14.1 percent, followed by the age bracket 18 to 24 at 12.2 percent. Moreover, even in urban areas, the unemployment rate for females aged between 18 and 24 was high at 12.8 percent.

However, it should be noted that an extreme gender gap exists in the labour force in Bangladesh. The total male labour force was 43.1 million, substantially larger than the female labour force of 19.1 million. The trend has been the same in Bangladesh as a whole, and in both rural and urban areas (BBS, 2017, p.40).

**Table 4: Unemployment rate for aged 15 and over, by age bracket, sex and area (2015)**

(%)

Age bracket	Rural			Urban			National		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
15-17	14.1	10.1	10.9	9.0	9.7	9.5	12.0	10.0	10.5
18-24	12.2	8.9	10.0	12.8	9.1	10.4	12.4	8.9	10.1
25-29	9.8	4.6	6.5	10.7	5.6	7.3	10.0	4.9	6.7
30-64	4.0	0.9	1.9	4.8	1.1	2.0	4.2	1.0	1.9
65+years	2.5	0.6	0.8	2.2	0.7	0.9	2.4	0.6	0.9
Total	6.5	2.9	4.1	7.7	3.2	4.4	6.8	3.0	4.2

Note 1: This table was compiled by the author.

Note 2: Numbers may not sum due to rounding by BBS.

Source: Ibid., p.70

### 3. Frequency of payment and the average monthly income

**Table 5** shows the frequency of payment for paid employees by age bracket in 2015.<sup>(15)</sup> The BBS estimates that there are 23,565,000 paid employees in Bangladesh.<sup>(16)</sup> Among them, 55.1 percent has a monthly salary, followed by 35.1 percent who have daily pay and 8.3 percent receive a weekly wage. The proportion of those with monthly salaries in urban areas is 73.6 percent, which is fairly high compared to 43.4 percent in rural areas. It is worth noting that the proportion of female employees who receive a monthly salary is higher than that of male employees.

**Table 5: Frequency of payment of the paid employees by age bracket (2015)**

(%)

Age bracket	Rural			Urban			National		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Daily	23.5	48.8	44.6	6.8	25.7	20.0	14.6	40.8	35.1
Weekly	12.8	9.5	10.0	3.9	6.1	5.4	8.1	8.3	8.3
Monthly	61.4	39.8	43.4	88.4	67.2	73.6	75.8	49.3	55.1
Others	2.3	1.9	2.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note 1: This table was compiled by the author.

Source: Ibid., p.85.

**Table 6** shows the average monthly income for paid employees by age bracket in 2015. The average monthly income was 12,897 takas<sup>(17)</sup> at the national level, while the average in urban areas was 15,066 takas, significantly exceeding the average of 11,527 takas in rural areas. Also, the average for male employees was higher than that for females on the national level, as well as in rural and urban areas. In addition, a characteristic of Bangladesh is that the majority of workers there engage in non-regular employment. Concretely, at the national level, 86.2 percent of the employed population engaged in informal employment, of which 95.4 percent were females and 82.3 percent, males.<sup>(18)</sup>

**Table 6: Average monthly income for the paid employees by age bracket (2015)**  
(Bangladesh Taka)

Age bracket	Rural			Urban			National		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
15-24	10959	10488	10565	11034	11503	11323	11004	10814	10862
25-34	11261	11885	11771	13173	14800	14288	12303	12955	12801
35-44	11846	12208	12147	14631	17846	16948	13305	14254	14053
45-54	10047	12616	12232	14733	20540	19204	12304	15416	14857
55-64	9890	11388	11164	14173	18073	17438	11333	13492	13160
65 over	8189	9862	9611	11554	15480	14879	8990	11173	10844
Total	10988	11635	11527	13021	15945	15066	12072	13127	12897

Note 1: This table was compiled by the author.  
Source: Ibid., p.88.

**Table 7** shows the proportion of formal employment concerning in relation to educational attainment. As is apparent, the percentage of formal employment is high among the higher educated people. In this context, some Bangladeshi parents believe that education will bring a better life to their children. Unfortunately, although they are interested in furthering their own children's future, they are often indifferent to empowering poor children and child labourers.<sup>(19)</sup> Especially in Daka, some privileged individuals force their domestic servants (including child domestic servants) to do all the housework so as to create an environment in which their children can focus on studying and attain the highest possible educational levels.

Almost all child domestic servants come from rural areas and have to live in their employer's house. Even when parents in rural areas want to have their children attend at least primary school, they often face a myriad of problems due to the social structure in Bangladesh. This is also what deprives poor children of their rights to compulsory education. Some local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are working not only to protect and to empower child domestic servants but also to raise employers' awareness and nudge to them social action in Bangladesh.

**Table 7: Formal employment (proportion) by education attainment (2015)**

(%)

Education attainment	The proportion of total employment		
	Female	Male	Total
None	1.4	6.3	4.6
Primary	2.0	12.8	9.6
Secondary	3.9	23.1	17.4
Higher Secondary	18.5	37.0	33.2
Tertiary	46.5	47.3	47.1
Others	6.1	13.3	12.7
Total	4.6	17.7	13.8

Note 1: This table was compiled by the author.  
Source: Ibid., p.63.

### III . Bangladeshi international labour migration

#### 1. Methodology of this study

The author introduced an outline of my research since 1997 in the first section. Among the author's past studies, the main research related to this section is as follows.

Firstly, the author conducted several interviews with government officials and collected data on international labour migration at the Ministry of Expatriate' Welfare and Overseas Employment and the Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL) in 2012. Interviews were also undertaken with staff members of two recruitment agencies in Daka. Also, the author conducted in-depth interviews with a migrant labourer who had returned from the UAE for a few months and his family members at his home in Daka.

Furthermore, the author had conducted door-to-door surveys of poor households in Daudkandi, Kumilla district between 2000 and 2012, and revisited households whose family members were working as international migrant labourers. Also, the author visited all households in a slum where the poorest people of the area lived and conducted in-depth interviews with slum dwellers.

It became clear that the family members who remained in Bangladesh do not often have an accurate grasp of the living and working conditions of their children and other relatives in destination countries, through the author's previous research. For this reason, the research places emphasis on the destination areas for Bangladeshi migrant labourers, since 2012.

Concretely, the author conducted interviews with many migrant labourers in Dubai in 2012, in Dubai and Abu Dhabi in 2014, and Abu Dhabi in 2014. Also, a boy from a household which had been among the subjects of the author's research area conducted in Daudkandi since 2000, started working as a construction worker in Abu Dhabi in 2009. Because of that, the author visited the man, who lived at a labour camp surrounded by desert outside of Abu Dhabi, to

conduct an interview with him in 2012 and 2014.

Among all interviewees, the overall number of Bangladeshi migrant labourers interviewed was as follows: 9 (2 females and 7 males) in Dubai in 2010, 32 (5 females and 27 males) in Dubai and 23 (8 females, 15 males) in Abu Dhabi in 2012, and 21 (12 females, 9 males) in Abu Dhabi in 2014.

## 2. Trends of international labour migration in Bangladesh

Following the independence of 1971; the international migration of Bangladesh began in response to the demand for labour force from the GCC countries since 1976. The Government of Bangladesh states that “manpower export is an economically important sector in terms of overseas employment and flow of remittances”<sup>(20)</sup> in 2012.

From 1976 to 2011, the GCC countries accounted for 80 percent of the destinations for Bangladeshi migrant labourers. Of these six countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) led with 33.9% (the total number of migrant labourers was 2,584,175), while the corresponding number for the UAE stood at 26.8% (the total number of migrant labourers was 2,045,504). Also, from 2006 to 2011, the UAE topped the list of destination countries for Bangladeshis, having the largest total number of Bangladeshi labourers.<sup>(21)</sup> Also, most of the occupational classification are unskilled workers, and about half of them are low-income construction workers.<sup>(22)</sup>

**Table 8** displays only 12 out of 64 districts in Bangladesh, in which the annual number of migrant labourers exceeded 20,000 people, from 2005 to 2010. The proportions of migrant labourers in the Kumilla district was the highest: between 9.4 percent and 12.6 percent of the total migrant labourers for each year. Also, from 2005 to 2010, Kumilla had the largest total number of migrant labourers at 342,431, followed by Chittagon at 302,423, and Brahmanbaria at 159,712. These three districts gave more migrant labourers than Daka, from where 159,982 people left the country to find employment abroad.

That is to say, the data shows that the largest number of migrant labourers comes from Kumilla district, the author's research area. The Comilla Model, a prototype of the rural development, was introduced in Kumilla in the East Pakistan era in the 1960s, and has, since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, further spread to the whole country through the International Rural Development Programme for Bangladesh. Following that experiment, the Model Rural Development Program (MRDP) was implemented by Japan's ODA, increasing the production of the High Yield Variety of Boro rice in the dry season, mainly in Daudkandi, Kumilla district. It had a significant influence on reducing the amount of land devoted to the planting of traditional varieties of rice in the rainy season, causing many poor people to lose the opportunity for employment as agricultural workers in the rainy season. What is more, the prices of crops now tend to rise in that season, forcing many people to borrow money in order to purchase food during the rainy season.

Table 8: District-wise migration from Bangladesh (2005-2010)

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2005-2010
District							
Brahamanbaria	13692	22974	43522	36765	23161	19868	159982
Chandpur	10270	16536	33974	33739	18369	16552	129440
Chittagong	21538	30207	55502	88385	58307	48484	302423
Kumilla(Comilla)	27303	46282	90410	80946	51150	46340	342431
Daka	14927	20067	39447	37152	20448	18639	150680
Feni	7058	10919	20583	23752	14624	12257	89193
Gazipur	7716	10840	21898	19520	8990	8113	77077
Munshiganj	8000	13345	30052	25962	13119	11799	102277
Narayanganj	6406	10335	24050	21039	10068	9211	81109
Narsingdi	7852	11876	27536	23143	11904	9914	92225
Noakhali	8351	13820	29765	33055	22440	18233	125664
Tangail	15410	25802	48562	42383	19905	15758	167820
Sub-total (12 districts)	148523	233003	465301	465841	272485	235168	1820321
Sub-total (52 districts)	88385	134847	355858	397648	192880	147987	1317605
Total(64 districts)	236908	367850	821159	863489	465365	383155	3137926

Note 1: This table was compiled by the author.

Source: Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (2012).

### 3. The current situation in the UAE as a destination country

#### 3-1 The Kafala (sponsorship) system

This section focuses mainly on the UAE, where the number of Bangladeshi migrant labourers has increased in recent years. The number of foreign nationals in the UAE was more than 8 million in 2013, accounting for as many as 88.5 percent of the population in the UAE (World Bank Group, 2016, p. 258).

According to Kakande (2014) the expression 'Kafala' (sponsorship) and the phrase 'Kafeel' (representing the sponsor) come from the Arabic 'KA Fa LA', meaning 'to be a guardian', 'to vouch', or 'to take responsibility' for someone (Ibid., p. 9).

Ali has pointed out that "in Dubai, the most basic principle underlying the relations between citizens, expatriates and the state is the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, which is common throughout the Gulf states, and is the main way (Ali, 2010, p.27)." "This system requires all businesses to have nations as majority owners (outside of free zones, the first of which was Jebel Ali Free Zone Area, established in 1985), and requires all expatriate workers to be sponsored by their companies or, in the case of domestic workers, by their employers (Ibid.)." Furthermore, he emphasises that

the system restricts labourers' mobility by tying their labour permits and residency visas to their employers (Ali, 2008, p.84).

Among other previous studies too, there are critical perspectives on the Kafala system in the GCC countries.<sup>(23)</sup> Moreover, international NGOs and some human rights organisations shed light on controversial conditions and the stark reality of migrant labourers' working and living in the GCC countries under the Kafala system. — they analysed the cruel conditions imposed by the Kafala system that has deprived foreign labourers of their fundamental rights.

Specifically, migrant labourers coming to the GCC countries have to obtain explicit written permission from a Kafel (the sponsor). Furthermore, a sponsor's permission is required not only for entering and working in the Gulf countries but also for any changes in employment and for leaving them. In effect, the workers' status is legally bound to their Kafel under the Kafala system for the entirety of the contract period.<sup>(24)</sup>

MIGRANT-RIGHTS.ORG has stated that GCC countries manage migrant labourers' residency and employment through the Kafala. Migrant labourers often have no choice but to endure poor working and living conditions, including underpayment, nonpayment, excessive working hours, or abuse. In short, an individual's basic right to work, as well as the legality of their presence in the GCC countries, depend on her or his employer. Such inequity and dependency render workers vulnerable to control and exploitation by their employers.<sup>(25)</sup> "Some countries claim that they have abolished or reformed the Kafala, but the system's most critical vulnerabilities remain."<sup>(26)</sup>

According to Human Rights Watch, "migrant workers who leave their employers without permission faced punishment for 'absconding', including fines, prison, and deportation. Many low-paid migrant workers remain acutely vulnerable to forced labour."<sup>(27)</sup>

Also, according to the International Campaign for Freedom in the United Arab Emirates (ICFUAE), withholding wages, sometimes for months, is a common practice.<sup>(28)</sup> "Additionally, the enormous debts migrant workers incur to pay for the staggering recruitment fees leave them no chance to negotiate the conditions of their contract but instead are forced to accept the terms dictated by their employer."<sup>(29)</sup>

These organisations have insisted on the importance of an improvement plan. Unfortunately, the government of the UAE has refused to allow workers to organise trade unions and to bargain collectively, and has placed labour strikes under a ban. Therefore, it is exceedingly hard or impossible for foreign workers to demand the enforcement of their rights.<sup>(30)</sup>

According to the ICFUAE, if workers unionise or strike, they are often arbitrarily detained. As a result, they lose their jobs and end up being deported. As workers do not have any institution representing their interests, they have no chance of communicating their grievances to government bodies. It is a fundamental human right for workers to organise and joining trade

unions that protect their interest. “Therefore the UAE legislation is violating international human rights law. In addition to that, all members of the International Labour Organisation, including the UAE, are obligated to allow freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Until today, the UAE has not signed the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.”<sup>(31)</sup>

### **3-2: Hazardous working conditions**

#### **3-2-1: Previous research**

As previously stated, Ali (2010) and Human Rights Watch (2006; 2009; 2014) conducted field research into migrant workers in the UAE. Human Rights Watch warned that the hazardous working conditions faced by construction workers (ibid. 2006) and domestic servants (ibid. 2014) are among the most serious issues concerning migrant labourers.

Also, Ali analysed the conditions faced by the so-called ‘most exploited’ workers, such as construction labourers, domestic servants and prostitutes, and children who were kidnapped and used as a camel-jockey.

They have pointed out issues that labourers’ low wages, the fact that employers seize their passports as soon as they arrive in the UAE, working in hazardous conditions with little social security, as well as the fact that migrant workers have little opportunity to voice. Also, they owe a massive debt to the recruitment agencies. This paper is indebted to these previous studies. Also, they have already shown that interviews and field research, in the UAE as a destination country, is difficult.<sup>(32)</sup>

#### **3-2-2: Harsh reality for Bangladeshi migrant labourers**

##### **a) Rural Bangladesh**

Potential migrant labourers and their family members who lived in the rural areas of Bangladesh where the author conducted the research had received certain information on work abroad from brokers associated with recruitment agencies in Daka. Some of the brokers were good conversationalists. When they had to send many labourers to the agencies, because of the demand for low-wage labour force from the GCC countries, they would skillfully talk to poor people and let direct their attention to overseas work. Their interest lay in accumulating profit and assets by earning a broker’s commission or agent charge. On the other hand, the poor, because of their harsh living conditions, had no room for doubt in the brokers’ engaging stories about work in overseas countries, and the opportunities for migrant workers to support their family members through remittances.

Information or, rather, rumours spread fast because people who live in villages are closely

interconnected. However, look the truth squarely in the face, it can be said that they never obtained accurate information. Mobile phones had spread since the middle of 2000 in the rural areas in Bangladesh the author researched. However, the internet was still not accessible, and electronic mails could not be used. If people needed access to the internet, they had to go to the local bazaar<sup>(33)</sup> In this way, poor people were at a disadvantage in terms of access to the information on the labour market and working conditions abroad. Among slum dwellers there were a few who fell in debt to pay a part of the mediation cost to the brokers, but, as a rule, they would lose touch with their brokers as soon as they would pay. The majority of the poor people had never been outside of their rural areas, which is why they believed that realizing the dream of overseas work would take a lot of money.

In all cases, the potential migrants' family members struggled to raise funds to pay large sums to recruitment agencies in Daka through brokers in advance. The total amount that had to be paid was at least 20,000 Bangladesh takas — a considerable large amount. Not only poor people but also even middle-class Bangladeshis could not afford or would have significant difficulties to pay such an amount from their family budget. For that reason, those who owned ancestral cultivated land had to sell their small farmlands or borrow money using the land as collateral to cover a part of the payment.

#### **b) Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the UAE**

Even though migrants' families spent a lot of money to enable labour migration to the UAE, the majority of Bangladeshi migrant labourers' engaged in unskilled labour that is, in a limited number of low-income occupations, such as a cleaning worker, a construction worker, or domestic servants. Companies or sponsors took up and stored the passports of all migrant labourers for security reasons. The initial contract period was, generally, 2 or 3 years. At the end of this cycle, they would temporarily return to Bangladesh.

Migrant labourers who had no farmland and could not find anyone to borrow money had to take a loan and repay it with the income obtained from their work in the GCC countries. In their interviews with the author, these poor Bangladeshis said that because of that they could not even muster enough funds for the travel expenses for the first temporary return.

Also, it is worth noting that even if they performed the same duties, for example, as a cleaning worker, at the same place and the same time, the wages varied depending on migrant's country of origin. Thus, although they had to work long hours, the Bangladeshis received lower wages than Filipinos, for example. Most Bangladeshis earned around 800 UAE dirhams.<sup>(34)</sup> Nevertheless, to say, the costs of living in Dubai and Abu Dhabi are higher than in Bangladesh. Food costs much more in the UAE than in rural Bangladesh, and almost all migrant workers expected that the company hiring them would bear the food cost, but that was not to be — they had to spend a

significant portion of their limited budgets on food. Especially, female labourers were trying to cut their spending on food by bringing a lunchbox every day to work, but some of them had to eat it close to toilets since some workplaces did not even have proper resting spaces for them.

Furthermore, all interviewees who were working as cleaning workers had no opportunity to check the terms and conditions of their contracts in advance. Among them, there were those who had obtained HSC or higher degree in Bangladesh, but even they did not have the power to choose the job. A Bangladeshi labourer responded to the author's inquiry by saying the following: "The agency decided my job in the UAE. I was disappointed because I hoped I would have a specialist kind of job in the UAE. I never expected I would work in a restroom for such long hours."

Moreover, Bangladeshi construction labourers too faced serious issues.<sup>(35)</sup> An interviewee who had come to the UAE from Daudkandi, Kumilla district, said he would get on the company bus at 6 o'clock with his ID card that records all his working hours. It took him almost two hours for a round trip from the labour camp to the construction site. The lunch break was one hour, and he would return to the labour camp at 20:00. His working conditions were always dangerous because his job was to screw bolts in high-rise buildings (a tower block), all the while using a safety harness. He had to do this dangerous work six days a week. Nevertheless, his salary was just 500 UAE dirhams per month, and was paid only three times a year per every four months, during his first contract of three years.

Furthermore, his supervisor informed him, without explaining the reason, that the payment he had made to his recruitment agency in Daka was insufficient, and that, therefore, he was in debt and had to clear his debt through physical labour. He was disappointed with this harsh reality because he could not afford to send remittance to his family members who lived in rural Bangladesh.

He did not inform his family about the wretched conditions he was facing in the UAE because he did not want to make his parents worry. There was interaction and mutual support between Bangladeshi migrants in Abu Dhabi, so he told his close friends about this tragedy. Some of his friends responded to that by collecting money for him, which he wired to his parents.

All the interviewees mentioned above were recruited for as the low-wage labour through agencies in Daka, but there were also some exceptions against this vicious custom. A man who was working as a salesclerk at a franchise store in a shopping centre in Abu Dhabi found that job through a classified advertisement in an English newspaper in Bangladesh. He was receiving hourly wages, so the amount he was able to earn depending on the number of hours he worked. He stated the following: "The recruitment agencies are getting illegally large sums of money from the poor people in Bangladesh, which is not a good thing. Many poor Bangladeshis could not read

an advertisement or the newspaper, even in Bengali. For that reason, they have no useful information about the actual working conditions in the GCC countries, namely, some agencies take advantage of their weakness.” Another interviewed Bangladeshi man was working as a concierge at a hotel in Abu Dhabi in 2012, sometimes also serving as a doorman or providing room services. His elder brother had worked at the same hotel, a job he had obtained through an agency in Daka, and introduced him to the hotel, skipping the agency. While the interviewee (the younger brother) returned to Bangladesh after his first contract, his elder brother was again working in the hotel in 2014. None of the Bangladeshi interviewees brought their family members with them. More accurately, Bangladeshi migrant labourers, who have to work for cheap wages abroad, have no choice but to migrate alone.

#### IV . Conclusions

This paper has focused on the background of international migration from Bangladesh and the actual living and working conditions of Bangladeshi migrant labourers in their destination countries. The international labour migration from Bangladesh began in response to the demand for labour force from the GCC countries in 1976, following the independence in 1971. Recently, the number of migrant labourers to the UAE has been increasing. For that reason, the author first considered the absolute poverty rate, the unemployed population aged 15 and over, the frequency of payment and the average monthly income for paid employees in Bangladesh. Next, the paper analysed the trends in the migration of Bangladeshi labourers and the harsh reality they face in the UAE based on previous studies and the author’s research.

In Bangladesh, almost one-quarter of the population faced absolute poverty, and it was evident that there were few formal employment opportunities and that the youth unemployment rate was high. It is worth noting that 70 percent of all unemployed Bangladeshis lived in rural areas and that most of them were young people under the age of 25. Also, the proportion of those having formal employment was low at only 13.8 percent. However, when the impact of education is taken into account, the higher a person’s educational attainment, the more likely they are to have formal employment.

There is a great social divide when it comes to job opportunities, acquiring literacy and access to education and accurate information. As different from the rural poor, the vested people living in urban areas have been more proactive regarding their children’s education. Among the privileged classes, even those highly educated have tended to employ poor children as domestic servants. These working children come from the most impoverished families in rural areas, and working as live-in maids has inevitably deprived them of their fundamental rights, such as the right to education. Therefore, some NGOs are working not only to empower children but also to

contribute to social development so as to alleviate the problem of child labour.

Nevertheless, employers tend to have not empathised with the plight of poor child labourers. Moreover, those Bangladeshi parents who are very enthusiastic about investing in their children's education will never let their beloved children experience the harsh realities of working as the unstable labour in the UAE. Thus, there is a large disparity between the privileged and the poor in Bangladesh, which affects even the primary education of children, and contributes to the massive unemployment people and the poverty rate in rural areas.

Even within Bangladesh, the number of migrant labourers differs depending on the district. What is worth noting is that the number of migrant labourers is the highest in the Kumilla district, where economic development was promoted by foreign aid organisations, that is, in the area where the author conducted the research. Kumilla district is a distinctive area where efforts for modernisation were led mainly by USAID and Japan's ODA. This top-down approach was developed and managed by foreign financial resources and materials is very different from endogenous development at the grassroots level that is led by local NGOs in rural Bangladesh. The former approach has, as one of its consequences, brought profit to some vested interest groups, but the disparity between the rich and poor widened. Therefore, it may be said that it was one of the causes of the mass accumulation of the unemployed and underemployed labourers in the area, with the poverty issues remaining unsolved.

As mentioned above, a significant issue of mass unemployment exists in Bangladesh along with other economic problems and unresolved social problems. These statistics data serve as a ground for the government's argument that is allowing the expansion of Bangladeshi labour migration as a way of solving domestic unemployment issues and boosting economic development.

However, it should be noted that the government has made a blueprint regarding international labour migrants based on the demand for cheap labour from the UAE. For that reason, it has regarded international labour migration to the GCC and other countries as Bangladeshis' workforce export. If a poor migrant labourer is only viewed as a workforce for earning foreign currency and sending remittances, then what we see is a faceless top-down policy. In other words, the government will never see the faces of the poor working labourers.

Work abroad, indeed, may have the potential to, if individuals continue unskilled work in harsh conditions and with extended hours for many years, to prop up household budgets back home and alleviate the domestic unemployment issues. Also, remittances from migrant labourers are increasing, and they contribute to the economic development in Bangladesh. That is why several previous studies have positively evaluated the effectiveness of remittances from Bangladeshi migrants. However, the question is: were they able to grasp accurately the full circumstances faced by poor Bangladeshi migrant labourers in their destination countries?

As this paper focuses on the present situation of migrant labourers, it emphasises the need to understand through the migrants' perspectives. That is to say — this study should focus on the actual living and working conditions of Bangladeshi migrant labourers who have been placed under the Kafala and the Kafeel in the UAE. The majority of Bangladeshi migrant labourers come from poor households. They are at a disadvantage when it comes to acquiring correct information on international labour migration.

Due to that, low-income or poor households are as usages forced to prepare large amounts of money in advance to make it possible for their family members to work abroad. Despite all this, the Bangladeshi migrant labourers are limited in terms of occupation in the UAE to being only construction workers, cleaning workers or domestic servants, i.e., to unskilled professions with long working hours.

Besides, UAE citizens not only never do these types of work, but also do not accord respect to foreign labourers, who find themselves in a weak position. On top of this, construction labourers face many risks. Despite such extremely harsh working conditions, migrant labourers are unable to unite and form labour unions or express their opinions. Moreover, their salaries are very different from those of UAE citizens. That is, the amount they earn also is, in fact, equivalent to the average income of regular employees in Bangladesh. Put simply, poor migrant labourers working in the UAE were able only to earn the average Bangladeshi wage, which they achieved through massive debt, long hours and hard work.

Therefore, for most Bangladeshi migrant labourers, it is not an easy task to become able to remit money to their family members back home only after a couple of years of work during the first contract. It is because they often have to dedicate their entire income earned during the first contract period to debt repayment. Even if they do become able to send money to their families by enduring harsh working conditions over a long period, the fact remains that they have to live far away from their irreplaceable family members for many years. It is worth pointing out that Bangladeshi people do not prefer migrating to a new destination without taking their family members with them. For that reason, work abroad tends to be a painful experience for them that does not promote their well-being.

This paper also pays attention to the social structure of Bangladesh. Its analysis of the background of the increase in poor Bangladeshi migrant labourers reveals that there are not only poverty issues involved, but that a distorted social structure in Bangladesh is also behind the immigration. Socially vulnerable people are significantly affected by disparities. The blueprint aimed at increasing international labour migration does not reflect the voice of migrant labourers — their faces remain invisible. In other words, such policies are faceless and inhuman.

Also, the rapid modernisation and economic development of the UAE have been achieved by

relying on disposable migrant labourers with low wages from developing countries such as Bangladesh. While many companies and sponsors in the UAE create the demand for cheap and disposable labour force, they have never stopped oppressing poor migrant labourers. In other words, migrant labourers are not only thoroughly restrained by the Kafala in the UAE society but also forced to remain at the bottom of the global social structure.

The UAE society needs to review and abolish the excessive pressure by the Kafala and the Kafael. At the same time, the government of Bangladesh should recognise the harsh conditions faced by poor Bangladeshi migrant labourers and has to take responsibility to provide the necessary information to potential candidates for work abroad on the working conditions and contracts before it responds to the foreign demand labour.

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<sup>(1)</sup> 'Kumilla' is the original Bengali spelling for this district of Bangladesh, which is why the authors use it in this paper. However, we retain the US English spelling 'Comilla' in the case of the Comilla Model to indicate that it was a rural development method led by the United States of America (USA).

<sup>(2)</sup> This paper is computing a total grant amount of Japan's ODA and USAID from the following. Table-5.0 *Summary of Disbursement of 20 Major Development Partners* (1971/72-2017/18) ([https://erd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/erd.portal.gov.bd/page/b09c0301\\_8d15\\_49e1\\_8af9\\_3231f08b8ad8/Tbl-5.0%20%281%29.pdf](https://erd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/erd.portal.gov.bd/page/b09c0301_8d15_49e1_8af9_3231f08b8ad8/Tbl-5.0%20%281%29.pdf)) in Government of the Republic of Bangladesh (2019) (<https://erd.gov.bd/site/page/f2ac89b3-da47-4f2f-99cf-be352e15a40e/Flow-of-External-Resources-into-Bangladesh-2016-2017>) (accessed 5 September 2020). In Bangladesh, the fiscal year is counted between July of a year and June of the next year.

<sup>(3)</sup> Bureau of Statistical Bangladesh (BBS), (2020) p.536. BBS used the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) method to derive poverty lines.

<sup>(4)</sup> BBS (1999) p.9.

- <sup>(5)</sup> Research in rural Bangladesh by the author between 1997 and 2012.
- <sup>(6)</sup> Suzuki (2016) p.2. Also, *ibid.*
- <sup>(7)</sup> Research in Bangladesh by the author between 1997 and 2012.
- <sup>(8)</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>(9)</sup> In this paper, the definition of international migration or migration means who migrate to a country other than of their usual residence for a period of at least one year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes their new country of usual residence (World Bank, 2011). Also, in this paper, the term 'migrant worker or migrant labour' refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in other countries of which she or he is not a national or a citizen. Refer to United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, Adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990 (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CMW.aspx>) (accessed 6 September 2020).
- <sup>(10)</sup> The Gulf Cooperative Council is composed of the State of Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the State of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- <sup>(11)</sup> For example, Siddiqui (2003: 2004).
- <sup>(12)</sup> Refer to Morita (1994) in Japanese. The author translates it into English.
- <sup>(13)</sup> The UAE is a federation of seven emirates. Also, the UAE is composed of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Al Qaiwain, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah.
- <sup>(14)</sup> According to the BBS "The definition of unemployment is based on the following three criteria, which should be satisfied simultaneously: 'without work', 'currently available for work' and 'seeking work'. For the survey, regarding unemployment 'job search' applied only to people not employed in the seven days prior to the interview. Requirements for unemployment were defined as follows: a) In the past 30 days, did you look for a job or try to start a business? b) Did you want to work in the past seven days? c) If an opportunity to work had existed, would you have been able to start work in the past seven days? (BBS, 2017, p.67)."
- <sup>(15)</sup> The characteristics of the data gathered by the BBS survey are as follows: "For the survey, data on wages and salaries were collected only from paid employees and not from people who were self-employed or contributory family helper. All other forms of income (remittances, rental income, bank interest, etc.) received by paid employees were excluded. Wage and salary earnings can be of two types, in cash or in kind, and information was collected on both. Earnings paid in cash or by cheque or direct bank deposit was considered as cash earnings. Earnings in kind included the regular supply of food, clothing, housing, water, electricity, fuel, transport, etc. on a free or subsidized basis." (BBS, 2017, p.85).
- <sup>(16)</sup> BBS (2017) p.85.
- <sup>(17)</sup> 1 Bangladesh taka was exchanged for 1.53 Japanese yen as of 5 September, 2020. (<https://www.xe.com/ja/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=%EF%BC%91&From=BDT&To=JPY>) (accessed 5 September 2020).
- <sup>(18)</sup> BBS describes the statistical definition of informal employment as follows. "1. All individual job-based informal

employment—operationally comprises all employed persons in the non-agriculture sector, both wage and salaried workers (employees) with no pension or no contribution to a retirement fund; 2. All contributing family workers; 3. All employers and own-account workers in the informal sector enterprises (operationally defined in Bangladesh as all private unincorporated enterprises engaged in non-agriculture work that do not have any registration); 4. All own-account workers employed in a private household.” (BBS, 2017, p.59).

- <sup>(19)</sup> Milldale class people also employ domestic servants. Author’s research in Bangladesh. Besides, see Suzuki (2002) and Blanchet (1996).
- <sup>(20)</sup> Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (2012). The total amount of remittances from migrant labourers was 10,114 million USA dollars in 2011 (ibid).
- <sup>(21)</sup> Based on the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (ibid) and from interviews with government officials in this Ministry of 2012.
- <sup>(22)</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>(23)</sup> Refer to Ali (2010), Longva (1997), Baldwin-Edwards (2005), Mahdavi (2011) and Vora (2013). The Kafala system is beset with complex and serious issues. For that reason, in this section, the author has directly referred to several papers that point out those issues well.
- <sup>(24)</sup> Refer to *Policy Brief No.2: Reform of the KAFALA (Sponsorship) System*. (<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/132/PB2.pdf>) in *Migration Forum in Asia* (<https://mfasia.org/mfa-policy-briefs/>) (accessed 7 September 2020).
- <sup>(25)</sup> *Campaign Reform the Kafala System* in MIGRANT-RIGHTS. ORG (<https://www.migrant-rights.org/campaign/end-the-kafala-system/>) (accessed 1 September 2020).
- <sup>(26)</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>(27)</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Event of 2019, United Arab Emirates*, (<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/united-arab-emirates#b94615>) (accessed 3 September 2020).
- <sup>(28)</sup> ICFUAE (October 16, 2017) *Migrant Workers’ Rights* (<http://icfuae.org.uk/issues/migrant-workers%E2%80%99-rights>) (accessed 3 September 2020).
- <sup>(29)</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>(30)</sup> Refer to Human Rights Watch (2006, p568) and ICFUAE (ibid).
- <sup>(31)</sup> ICFUAE (ibid).
- <sup>(32)</sup> For example, refer to Ali (2007; 2010) and Human Rights Watch (2006).
- <sup>(33)</sup> For example, some of the poor applied online to the electronic Diversity Visa Program in the USA, using internet access provided at the local bazaar. However, none of the village poor actually obtained a visa.
- <sup>(34)</sup> As of 25 September 2020, 1 UAE dirham was exchanged for 28.8 Japanese Yen. (<https://www.xe.com/ja/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=AED&To=JPY>) (accessed 25 September 2020).
- <sup>(35)</sup> Human Rights Watch has mentioned that “construction workers face some of the most hazardous work conditions in the country. The extent of death and injury of migrant construction workers are some of the most troubling if poorly documented” (2006, p.10).

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