International Migration Literature
Search in Bangladesh during the period of 1971-2020

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Abstract

The Bangladeshi diaspora consists of people of Bangladeshi descent who have immigrated to or were born in another country. First generation migrants may have moved abroad from Bangladesh for better living conditions, to escape poverty, to support their financial condition or to send money back to families in Bangladesh. With a total of 10 million Bangladeshis living abroad, the country has ranked fifth among top 20 countries of origin for international migrants. There is a large Bangladeshi diaspora population in Saudi Arabia. There are also significant migrant communities in various Arab states of the Persian Gulf, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Oman, where Bangladeshis are mainly classified as foreign workers. British Bangladeshis are mainly concentrated in east London boroughs Tower Hamlets and Newham; the migration to Britain is mainly linked with chain migration from the Sylhet Division. Besides the UK and Middle East, Bangladeshis also have a significant presence in the United States, Malaysia, South Africa, Singapore, and in other Western countries such as Italy, Canada, and Australia. This research paper is designed to provide an illustrated account of what kind of research has been done on these migrants at home and abroad over the past fifty years.

Keywords: migration, expatriate, diaspora, temporary, workers, labour, literature
1.1 Introduction

Bangladesh has a relatively small land mass of 147,570 sq. km (about 0.03 per cent of the world’s land surface) and a population of 144.03 million people making it the 8th largest densely populated (976 person km²) country globally [Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2012]. Of its population, 23.30 per cent and 76.60 per cent live in the urban and rural areas, respectively, with an average household size of 4.36 and 4.46, respectively. Agriculture is Bangladesh’s main source of livelihood with the labour force 25.7 per cent is involved in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The major challenge facing Bangladesh is poverty: it ranks 112th among the 123 countries on the human poverty index (IOM 2009). One consequence of its widespread poverty is international migration as a common livelihood strategy for many Bangladeshi households. Remittances sent by its migrant workers contributed 9.04 per cent to the country's GDP in 2010-2011 (BMET 2013).

Globalisation as a phenomenon not only involves the movement of goods and services worldwide but has resulted in major flows of workers across countries in search of livelihoods that are not sustainable in the originating countries. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has accounted in 2000-2010, the global migrant stock has grown twice as fast as in the previous decade, from 2 million per year to about 4.6 million migrants annually in the next decade. There are currently 232 million international migrants globally (UN 2013).

In 2006, migrant worker remittance flows was estimated to be about USD 276 billion internationally, of which USD 206 billion were sent to developing nations (Mannan et al. 2014). The World Bank estimated, the international remittance flows that touched USD550 billion in 2013. It is anticipated to increase by 8 per cent annually over the subsequent years (Mannan & Farhana 2014). Of the global remittances in 2013, USD$414 billion were received by the developing nations, such as Bangladesh, China, India, Mexico, the Philippines and Pakistan (Mannan & Farhana 2014).

Bangladesh has been recording migration data officially since 1976 for workers on contract employment in the Middle East. After Independence in 1971, migration was accelerated because of political reasons spreading beyond the Middle East to its neighbouring countries and the EU. International migration has become a livelihood strategy reflecting the unstable political and socio-economic situation in Bangladesh.

The COVID-19 pandemic is adding to these challenges. As the coronavirus outbreak has spread rapidly around the globe, the Bangladeshi government has struggled to combat it. The public-health crisis has been exacerbated by the economic ripple effects resulting from the pandemic-induced difficulties faced by Bangladeshis working abroad: Large-scale job loss, salary reductions, and increase in deportations from the GCC. The migrant workers’ sudden loss of income and unexpected financial precarity have profound consequences for their families and communities, with remittances that normally equal nearly one-third of Bangladesh’s national budget now predicted to fall significantly.

2.1 Methodology

Once the scope was defined, this paper combined in-house expertise libraries or bibliographies referred to us from members of our team with online searches using the citation database ISI Web of Knowledge. A bibliography such as this can hardly be complete. Despite our efforts, it is obvious that there will be gaps. First, the pace of publication
is such that a handful of new publications would need to be added every week. Second, our systematic search for journal articles is limited to ISI-indexed journals; many articles from other journals have also been included, but not in an exhaustive way. Third, even with the range of search terms used, we may have missed ISI-indexed articles that address return migration but use an unusual terminology. Finally, there are probably relevant books and book chapters that we simply did not discover. On the other hand, the bibliography also contains entries that may seem at odds with the scope of the bibliography as described above. These are likely to be publications sourced from the pre-existing bibliographies of the team members, which would not have otherwise come up in this searches. Despite these inconsistencies, it is confident that the bibliography constitute a reasonable representation of the literature on return migration. The ambiguities of inclusion and exclusion nevertheless caution against bibliometric analysis.

3.1 Findings

The results obtained are divided into the following five categories:

3.1.1 During the period of 1971-1980

(Hussain 1979; ILO 1980; Islam 1980).

3.1.2 During the period of 1981-1990


3.1.3 During the period of 1991-2000


3.1.4 During the period of 2001-2010

3.1.5 During the period of 2011-2020


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