

Reintegration: The Emerging Issue in Bangladesh's Migration Governance

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Abstract: Reintegration issue has long been a missing link in Bangladesh's migration governance. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the issue in the forefront at both global and national level. The paper aims to examine the reintegration component in existing labour migration governance of Bangladesh and identify the key areas of intervention for reintegration purpose. It finds that though the reintegration issue has been overlooked in the country's migration governance until the advent of the pandemic, the government has now taken the issue seriously. The paper shows that various pre-return stages have profound impact on the reintegration outcome. It, therefore, emphasizes on whole-of-the-cycle approach in addressing the reintegration challenges of Bangladesh. For a proper reintegration it also calls for the whole-of-the-government approach.

Key words: Reintegration, Psychosocial reintegration, Social reintegration, Economic reintegration, Migration governance.

1. Introduction

In recent years, discussion on return migration and reintegration came to the forefront particularly after the refugee crisis of Europe in 2015 and hence literature on return migration and reintegration flourished (Katie Kuschminder 2017, A Fonseca et. al. 2015, Nicola Graviano 2017, IOM 2017). Marianne Haase and Pia Honerath (2016) observes that countries of origin and countries of destination usually vary substantially in terms of how they understand and shape return and reintegration. For destination countries, return is mostly understood in terms of controlling migration and preventing irregular migration while in countries of origin, reintegration of return migrants is overlooked particularly when countries of origin face weak economies and labor markets. Though often overlooked, reintegration is important for origin countries like Bangladesh as it ensures greater realization of development potential of migration by channeling the remittance to investment as well as by utilizing the skills earned by the migrants abroad. Reintegration measures are of particular importance for irregular migrants and vulnerable groups including victims of trafficking, migrant smuggling and other forms of exploitation and abuse. By securing the human security of all migrants irrespective of their migration and vulnerability status, proper reintegration measures help the country to uphold its pledges to human rights as voiced in various international human rights regimes approved by it. In Bangladesh, there are only a few studies dealing with the reintegration issue. Siddiqui and Bhuiyan (2013) shows the impacts of involuntary return on the migrants. Siddiqui

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and Abrar (2002) find that a large number of Bangladeshi returnee migrants are engaged in occupations that are irrelevant to the skills they acquired in countries of destination. Inadequate business information and lack of access to credit and technical assistance are identified by them as impediments to investment by them. Islam (2010) briefly mentions about the major reintegration issues for Bangladesh and suggests some prerequisites for a successful reintegration management in Bangladesh. Rashid and ASM Ali Ashraf (2017) proposes a framework for providing reintegration services for the Bangladeshi returnee migrants.

Literature review suggests that there is lack of study that considers reintegration aspect of Bangladesh's migration in a holistic manner. This paper is an attempt to fill in this research gap.

The paper has two objectives: 1) To examine whether and to what extent reintegration component is present in existing labour migration governance of Bangladesh and 2) To identify the key areas of intervention for reintegration purpose. While analyzing reintegration of migrants in Bangladesh, the paper will focus on circular migration of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers as it is the dominant form of migration from Bangladesh.

The paper is a qualitative one. It is organized as follows. Following introduction, section two provides the theoretical framework. Section three examines to what extent reintegration issue has received importance in Bangladesh's migration governance. Section four identifies the key challenges of reintegration in the country with a view to identify the key areas of intervention. Section five makes some concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical Framework

The position of migration theories about the return or reintegration of migrants depends on how they view the migration development relation. The migrant in neo-classical theories tries to maximize not only his earnings but also the duration of his stay abroad to achieve permanent settlement and family reunification. Hence return of migrant is considered by them as the outcome of failed migration (Larry A Sjaastad, 1966). In contrary, the developmentalist approach portrays the returnee migrants as an agent of development who, upon their return to origin, utilizes the monetary and non-monetary resources (new ideas, knowledge and entrepreneurial attitudes) acquired abroad. Thus, for the developmentalists, reintegration of migrants is a smooth process with no major obstacles.

The structuralists, on the other hand, emphasize that the structural factors that lie behind the backwardness of peripheral (origin) countries, also undermine the ability of return migrants to act as agents of development. Hence, according to them, reintegration of return migrants is not necessarily a smooth process (Michael Buraway 1976, Saskia Sassen 1988). Finally, the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) approach views return migration as the logical outcome of a "calculated strategy", defined at the level of the migrant's household, and resulting from the successful achievement of goals or target (Oded Stark and David Levhari 1982, Hussain, A. (2009), Oded Stark and David Bloom 1985).

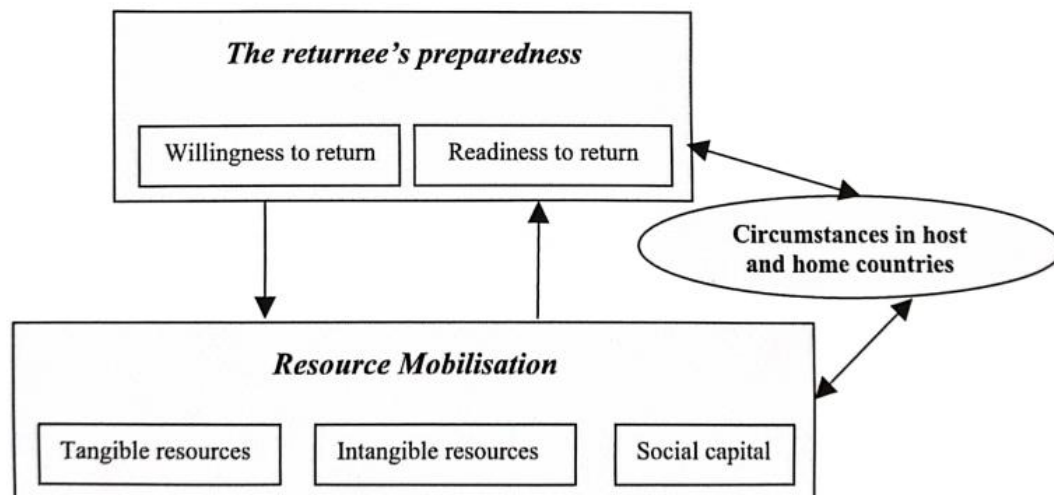
One major limitation of neo-classical, developmentalist and structuralist theories on migration is that they do not consider short term circular migration which is the main form of migration in major origin countries like Bangladesh. Though in NELM theory,

there is room for circular migration and remittance flow, it suffers from the lack of not the role of other meso and macro level actors and determinants which include community, society, local and national economy etc. (Oded Stark 1996, Oded Galor and Oded Stark 1990).

The more recent transnationalism and social network theory (Douglas Massey and Felipe Garcia Espana 1987, Russell King 1978) recognizes the influence of structural micro and macro factors in origin countries in the return and reintegration process and hold the view that the maintenance of linkages between receiving and origin countries fosters the ability of migrants to prepare and secure their own return.

Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004), while adhering to social network theory, draw attention to the growing heterogeneity of returnee migrants - a fact overlooked by earlier works of social network theory. He observes that the gradual broadening of the return migration spectrum has not only entailed the growing diversity of return motivations, but also the variety of resource mobilisation patterns. These patterns are certainly reflective of the returnees' migration experiences abroad, but at the same time they are also responsive to specific institutional, political and economic conditions at home that need to be considered in order to understand why some returnees may appear as actors of change at home while others do not. Augmenting the earlier social network theory, he proposes the following framework (see Figure 1) to analyze the difference in return and reintegration outcomes.

Figure 1: Determinants of Return of Migrant



Though the causes and determinants of reintegration is a debated issue in migration literature, the components of reintegration are less disputed. Three major components of reintegration - economic, social and psychosocial - as derived from the definition of reintegration by IOM¹, is widely accepted in migration literature. Based on the framework of Cassarino on determinants of success of reintegration and incorporating the

¹ IOM defines reintegration as a “process which enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life”, (IOM, Key Migration terms)

components of reintegration as defined by the IOM, the present paper aims to analyze the reintegration situation of Bangladesh and identify its challenges.

3. Reintegration in Bangladesh's Migration Governance: An Assessment

Among the migration related policy documents of Bangladesh, Overseas Employment and Migration Act in 2013 first mentions about returnee migrants. In its definition of "migrant", the 2013 Act included not only those aspiring and working abroad but also those who voluntarily or involuntarily had returned to the country of origin. The 2013 Act deals with issues like legal aid for victims of fraud, right to civil suit for compensation, right to return home for migrants who are detained, stranded or in distress situation etc. Though these issues have important implications on reintegration outcome, particularly for those who have to return involuntarily, they are not directly linked with the reintegration process itself.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 adopts the definition of 2013 Act. Despite the reference of returnee migrants, reintegration issue got little attention in the 2016 policy and none of its six policy objectives dealt with reintegration. The only section/article of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 that has some relation with reintegration is article 2.5 which calls for integrating labour migration with national development through various policy measures. Thus, in Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016, the core policy tool of Bangladesh's migration governance, reintegration issue remains at best sidelined, if not absent and whatever attention the reintegration issue has got in the policy is mainly concerned with economic reintegration where too, the main emphasis is on better utilization the remittance and skills for development of local and national economy, not on the process of reintegration per se.

Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020) was the first five year plan of Bangladesh to include migration as one of its growth drivers and dedicate a separate section on strategies for overseas employment and remittance. The 7th FYP is mainly concerned with development outcome of migration and reintegration issue did not receive attention in the document. Same can be said about the Wage Earners Welfare Board Act 2018 which mentions evacuation and rehabilitation as activities of the Board among others. Reintegration in proper is not a concern for this Act too.

Like other origin countries, in Bangladesh also, Covid-19 pandemic brought the issue of reintegration to the forefront. In the calendar year 2019, a total of 295,210 migrants returned to Bangladesh which is almost six times of a usual year.¹ Migrants who returned during this period, remained stranded till the end of the year and there was apprehension that many of the returnee migrants would not be able to re-migrate. Various study reports were showing that families of returnee and working migrants were in a dire state (BRAC 2020). All these brought the reintegration of migrants to the forefront of discussion.

It was therefore expected that in the Eighth Five Year Plan (2021-2025), which was drafted during the pandemic year of 2020, migration issues including the issue of reintegration would get more attention than they got before. And, the Eighth Five Year

¹ In Bangladesh, usually, 50,000 migrants return each year either on vacation or upon expiration of the visa, and the majority of the latter re-migrate after a certain time. Source: *The Other Face of Globalization*, RMMRU and BCSM, 2020, p. 15

Plan (2021-2025) met that expectation. In the Plan, three sections were dedicated to migration issues. The plan recognized the growing importance of overseas employment and remittance and stressed on maximization of remittance impact through its use in investment. It also vowed for a paradigm shift in the overseas employment and migration framework which would include major shift in the skill composition of the migrants, low-cost migration and sustainable social and economic reintegration.

The Eighth Five Year Plan charted a 10 point agenda for overseas employment and the well-being of migrant workers. Of the 10 point agenda, one agenda is solely on reintegration; reintegration was present as a cross-cutting issue in other agendas too. For example, in the first agenda titled “Institutional and Legal Reform and Capacity Enhancement”, the Plan observes, “Among the three major building blocks of migration, pre-departure, employment at destination countries and return, there is no policy framework to facilitate adequate provisioning of services for returnee migrants. The Ministry will initiate the adoption of a ‘Sustainable Reintegration of Migrant Workers Policy’.” More importantly, for the first time in the Eighth Five Year Plan, social and psychosocial reintegration were not sidelined by economic reintegration. Also, in the discussion of economic reintegration, there is recognition of the fact that migrants cannot automatically reintegrate into the local economy even if they have money and skill at their disposal.

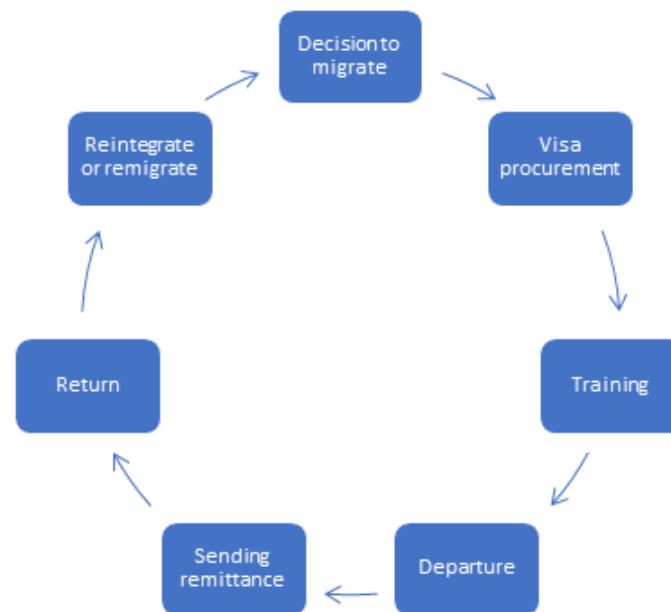
At the implementation level, the government has started the process of formulating a policy titled National Reintegration Policy for Migrants. Also, with financial assistance from the World Bank, the government has undertaken a comprehensive project under which one welfare centre in each district. Each welfare centre has been designed to do the tasks of collection detail data on returnee migrants, screening the needs of the returnee migrant, providing required psychosocial, social and economic counselling, assessment of skill, deliver training etc.¹

To summarize, the issue of reintegration has long been overlooked in Bangladesh’s migration governance. Of the three components of reintegration, only one - economic reintegration could draw some attention at the policy level, that too in a way in which the development aspect received more attention than the well-being of the migrants themselves. Reintegration started to find its place in policy discussion in recent years but it needed a push to gain pace. And, covid-19 pandemic provided the final push to start the journey of reintegration in Bangladesh’s migration governance.

4. Reintegration Challenges and Key Areas of Intervention in Bangladesh

Figure 2 shows the major steps of the cycle of circular migration. As will be shown later, reintegration does not necessarily start after return; rather it is intertwined with various steps of migration shown in figure 2. The paper, therefore, uses the whole-of-the-cycle approach to identify the key areas of intervention for reintegration of Bangladeshi migrants. Reintegration challenges and issues have been classified into two groups; pre-return challenges and issues that take place in steps prior to return and post-return challenges and issues that take place after return.

¹ Interview of MOEWOE official by the author.

Figure 2: Stages of Circular Migration, Bangladesh

4.a Pre-return Challenges and Issues

i) *Pre-migration Decision*

When an aspirant migrant decides to migrate, s/he takes some decisions simultaneously. For example, what will be the probable duration of stay, how the cost of migration will be managed and recouped, who will receive and use the remittance and how, who will substitute the role of the migrant, and so on. These decisions are not only of great importance for the well-being of the migrants and their families, they also have implications for future reintegration in all three aspects - economic, social and psychosocial. It is therefore important that migrants and their families are well informed when they make these decisions. It is also important that the information based on which they make decisions are reliable and complete. For example, if the migrant receives less wage than anticipated in the decision stage, it will have a series of impacts like lengthier recoup time and reduced saving and remittance flow, negatively affecting the migration and reintegration outcome.

In Bangladesh, for the majority of the migrants, the source of information at this decision making stage is relatives. In an IOM study titled “The Mapping and Scoping of Services for The Migrant Workers of Bangladesh at Various Stages of Labour Migration Cycle”, 67 per cent respondents said that they got the relevant information from their relatives while 18 per cent reported middlemen as their source of information. And, none of the respondents reported any government source as their source of information.

What is more alarming is that in most cases, neither the private recruiting agencies/middlemen nor migrants’ social networks share the contract papers with aspirant migrants (Sayeda Rozana Rashid and ASM Ali Ashraf 2019). It implies that most of the labour migrants of Bangladesh are going abroad without proper knowledge about their employment and thus exposing themselves to various fraudulence practices regarding

type of employment, working hour, wage and other benefits as well as to various malpractices including physical and mental abuses which have important implications on their migration as well as reintegration outcome.

ii) Visa Procurement

Another important pre-departure issue that affects the reintegration of the migrants greatly, is high cost of visa. Table 2 shows cost of visa and average monthly salary of major destination countries of Bangladeshi migrants. Fourth column of the Table shows how many months of salary is equivalent to the cost of migration in the respective countries. One can see that on average, cost of visa for a Bangladeshi migrant is equivalent to his 14.5 months of salary. But when the migrant's cost of living is adjusted for, the time required to recoup the cost becomes two to six times higher than this figure suggests (see Table 3). For Saudi Arabia, it takes 3.2 years for a Bangladeshi migrant to recoup the cost of migration; for Singapore it is as high as 6.45 years.

Table 2: Cost of Visa and Average Monthly Wage at Major Destination Countries

Destination Country	Cost of Visa (BDT, male)	Average monthly income (BDT)	Ratio of Cost of visa to average monthly income
Saudi Arabia	547,948	29849	18
Oman	331691	28413	11.6
Malaysia	404774	29745	13.6
Qatar	421173	30208	13.9
Singapore	576763	47110	12.2
Total	471668	32542	14.5

Source: BBS, Cost of Migration Survey Bangladesh 2020.

Table 3: Time Required to Recoup Cost of Migration at Major Destination Countries

Destination Country	Time required to recoup cost of migration (in year)
Saudi Arabia	3.2
Oman	3.9
Malaysia	2.6
Qatar	3.8
Singapore	6.45

Source: Mohammad Moniruzzaman and Margaret Walton Roberts, "Migration, debt and resource backwash: how sustainable is Bangladesh-Gulf circular migration?", *Migration and Development*, August 2017, p.13.

The reason for the high recoup time for Bangladeshi migrants is that compared to other origin countries, Bangladeshi migrants bear higher, sometimes the highest, migration cost while they receive one of the lowest salaries (Gardner et. al., 2013). High cost of migration has long been a concern for Bangladeshi migrants. It leaves the migrants with less savings and thus negatively affects his resource mobilization capacity and thus future reintegration.

iii) Sending Remittance

As discussed in section four, the issue of remittance has always got attention at policy level. Successive governments have shown interest in devising ways to enhance remittance flow. One challenge in this regard has been the preponderance of hundi. A World Bank study estimates that hundi was even more in amount than official remittance over the 1986-1996 (Biru Paksha Paul and Anupam Das 2011).

There are several reasons for choosing hundi for transactions. A study of Tansneem Siddiqui and C R Abrar in 2003 found that transaction through hundi involves less cost and time. The average cost of an official transaction was found to be Tk.136.50 while average cost of hundi was Tk.75.53 per transaction. For official transaction, the time required for receiving cash after depositing the draft in the bank was 12.83 days. For hundi, the average time per transaction following receipt of information was 3 days. Besides low cost, speedy transaction, less paperwork and confidentiality are the considerations for which households choose hundi for transactions.

In their bid to contain hundi, the government of Bangladesh has taken various measures time to time. Thanks to their efforts and gradual liberalization of the economy that over time, the share of hundi in total remittance is on decline. The world bank study mentioned above found the ratio of hundi to official remittance to decline from 1.62 in 1986 to 0.92 in 1996. The study of Tansneem Siddiqui and C R Abrar mentioned above found the ratio to be 0.87. The most recent initiative of the government of providing a 2 per cent cash incentive for remittance also had its desired impact and was one of the reasons for the paradoxical growth of remittance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Another important issue is use of remittance. Pattern of use of remittance in Bangladesh suggests that there is a significant lack in utilizing the remittance for productive purposes. This issue deserves attention as without such productive use of remittance, the country cannot fully utilize the development potential of remittance. Though use of remittance is a pre-return issue in the sense that a significant part of remittance is used up before the migrant finally returns, it will be discussed in the following sub-section on economic reintegration as it is a part and parcel of economic reintegration.

4.b Post-return Challenges and Issues

Post-return challenges and issues can be categorized into three major components of reintegration i.e. psychosocial, social and economic challenges.

i. Psychosocial Reintegration

Psychosocial reintegration is mainly relevant for involuntary return. Involuntary return includes return of victims of trafficking, physical and mental abuses including sexual abuses, return of those who faced detention in destination country or became irregular for various reasons like changing jobs, non-cooperation of the employer, delay in paper-work etc as well as return of those who experienced a “failed migration” in the sense that his/her employment abroad did not match his/her expectations either due to fraudulence or malpractices of some actors or for other reasons.

For these returnees, there is a need for psychosocial support upon their return. Such psychosocial support is necessary not only for the psychosocial well-being of the involuntary returned migrant; it is also a pre-condition to make him/her capable of economic reintegration. At present, such psychosocial support is virtually absent. No government initiative has been taken yet. Some CSOs working on migrants' rights provide such support but at a very limited scale.¹ Now that the government has started giving attention to reintegration issue, it will have to create facilities to provide such support.

While providing psychosocial support, the difference of experiences and associated trauma should be taken into account. Each of the categories of the returnee migrants mentioned above has its own type of trauma and it further varies with sex, age, education and previous socio-economic background of the migrant as well as the social and cultural environment of the migrant at origin country. Psychosocial support that the government would provide should be tailored to the specific needs. There is a good scope for GO-NGO cooperation in establishing such a psychosocial counselling network.

ii. Social Reintegration

Social reintegration involves the acceptance of the returnee migrant by the community and society to which s/he returns. Without social reintegration, a migrant cannot successfully mobilize his tangible and intangible resources. Social reintegration is a precondition for successful economic integration and unlike psychosocial reintegration, it is needed for all returnee migrants.

As suggested by social network theory, in case of circular migration, a migrant periodically comes into touches of the society to which he returns which helps to smoothen the return and reintegration process. Despite this, interviews with officials from NGOs working in reintegration sector suggest that during each of his stay abroad, a migrant loses some of his/her contact with the society, the sum of which becomes considerable when the total stay extends to one or two decades. Another challenge that both male and female migrants face is due to the change that their staying abroad bring in their attitude, norms and values which sometimes might be conflicting with those in the society at origin. Some may find bridging these gaps challenging even after completion of an economically successful migration.

Female returnee migrants in Bangladesh face more problem in social reintegration compared to their male counterparts. Due to social stigma against female migration, female migrants face social obstacles during the whole cycle of migration starting from the decision-making stage to the period of staying abroad; even after returning from abroad completing a "successful migration", a female migrant is not readily accepted as a male migrant is.² This experience is not unique to Bangladeshi female migrants. Female migrants from other South Asian and African countries face similar challenges (Katie Kuschminder 2017). However, reintegration becomes far more challenging for female migrants when they have to return after a failed migration.

The government can contribute in smoothening the social reintegration process through awareness raising at community and societal level. The government of Bangladesh has already started taking awareness-raising activities using instruments like leaflets, booklets, TVCs, social media etc. But so far these activities are focused on ensuring safe and orderly migration. For successful reintegration of the migrants, the issue should now be included in the awareness raising activities. On the other hand, to help returnee

¹ Interview of relevant government and non-government stakeholders taken by the author.

² Interview of officials from NGOs working in reintegration sector.

migrants to adapt to the society, some psychosocial counselling can be provided.¹ In the case of social reintegration too, the government might consider GO-NGO cooperation.

iii. Economic Reintegration

Economic reintegration involves mobilization of tangible and intangible resources acquired by the migrant while staying abroad. First step of mobilization of tangible resource is sending remittance. The way in which a migrant or his/her family spends remittance, not only determines developmental impact of migration on the migrant's household but also shapes the future reintegration of the migrant.

Table 4 shows the use of remittance in Bangladesh as found by various studies. From the Table, consumption dominated nature of remittance use is evident. One can note that expenditure on social ceremony exceeds expenditure on education and business - a trend that deserves policy attention, not only for the sake of national development but for the sake of migrants too.

Table 4: Use of Remittance, Bangladesh

	2001 (% of remittance expenditure)	2009 (Migrants' intended purpose of sending remittance)	2013 (% of from remittance expenditure)
Food and clothes	21.5	81.2	45.5
Construction/purchase of house	15	6.6	
Buying / taking mortgage / releasing mortgaged land	15.5	11.6	17.4
Sending family member abroad	7.2	1.2	1.2
Repayment of loan	14	39.1	9.2
Education	2.75	21.3	3.6
Medical treatment	3.2	22.3	5
Investment in business	4.75	1.3	
Saving	3.5	4.7	
Social ceremony	11	40.8	5.6

Source: Tasneem Siddiqui and C. R. Abrar 2003, IOM 2009, BBS 2013.

In Bangladesh, investment always constituted a minor part of remittance used. Survey on the use of Remittance conducted by BBS in 2013 found that only 25 per cent of remittance receiving households invested part of remittance received. More importantly, 88 per cent of this investment was for constructing or purchasing of dwelling houses and

¹ Interview of officials from NGOs working in reintegration sector.

only 6.75 per cent was invested in business. The expenditure pattern suggests that there is need of financial literacy among the migrants and their families. An IOM study observes that due to lack of financial education, such pattern of use of remittance is common worldwide (IOM 2010).

Besides non-productive use of remittance, another problem that arises from the lack of financial literacy is that in many cases the migrants send their hard-earned remittance to family members only to find upon their return that it has been used up which leaves him/her empty handed after years of working abroad.¹

Some, therefore, suggest making financial literacy a part pre-departure training which has been made compulsory for migrant workers. The extent of the problem, however, demands a more extended programme which may include training on financial literacy, exhibition of financial instruments, publishing leaflets and booklets etc. targeting both migrants at destination countries and their families at origin country.²

Besides use of remittance which affects the migrant's preparation for economic reintegration, migrants face several other challenges while trying for economic reintegration upon their return. It is observed that returnee migrants prefer to do some businesses rather than working in the local job market or being engaged in agriculture as they consider those options to be 'not suitable for a migrant'.³ At the same time, they find it challenging to start a business as most of them had no entrepreneurial experience before. Lack of capital and lack of knowledge about local market are other major challenges. Loan facilities along with entrepreneurship training may help address this problem.

Returnee migrants face challenges in mobilizing their intangible resources (skills and experiences) too. For those who want to join the local job market, the most challenging issue is that they cannot find jobs which match their skills and experiences that they earned abroad and this is true for both male and female migrants. Even if they could find jobs that are in line with their skills, the salaries and positions they are offered are below their expectation.⁴

One reason for this demand-supply mismatch is lack of opportunity of recognition of skill. Bangladeshi migrants lacked facilities of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which helps a migrant to find a suitable job at both home and abroad. Another reason is absence of database of returnee migrants. Due to lack of RPL facilities and database, a demand-supply mismatch takes place; employers want to employ experienced returnee migrants but they cannot find the appropriate ones.⁵

RPL facilities along with a database of returnee migrants with a detail profile of the migrant's skills and experiences can go a long way to solve this problem. Such a database has long been recommended for Bangladesh. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the government of Bangladesh, with assistance from the IOM, implemented a pilot project of returnee database. This can be the starting point of making a comprehensive database of returnee migrants which would benefit the reintegration of migrants in a multifaceted way.

Recently, the government of Bangladesh has also taken attempt to expand RPL facilities. Even the government has offered to bear the expense of the testing and certification procedure. Yet, the response has been low so far. Reasons for low response include lack

¹ Interview of officials from NGOs working in reintegration sector.

² Interview of relevant government and non-government stakeholders taken by the author.

³ Interview of officials from NGOs working in reintegration sector.

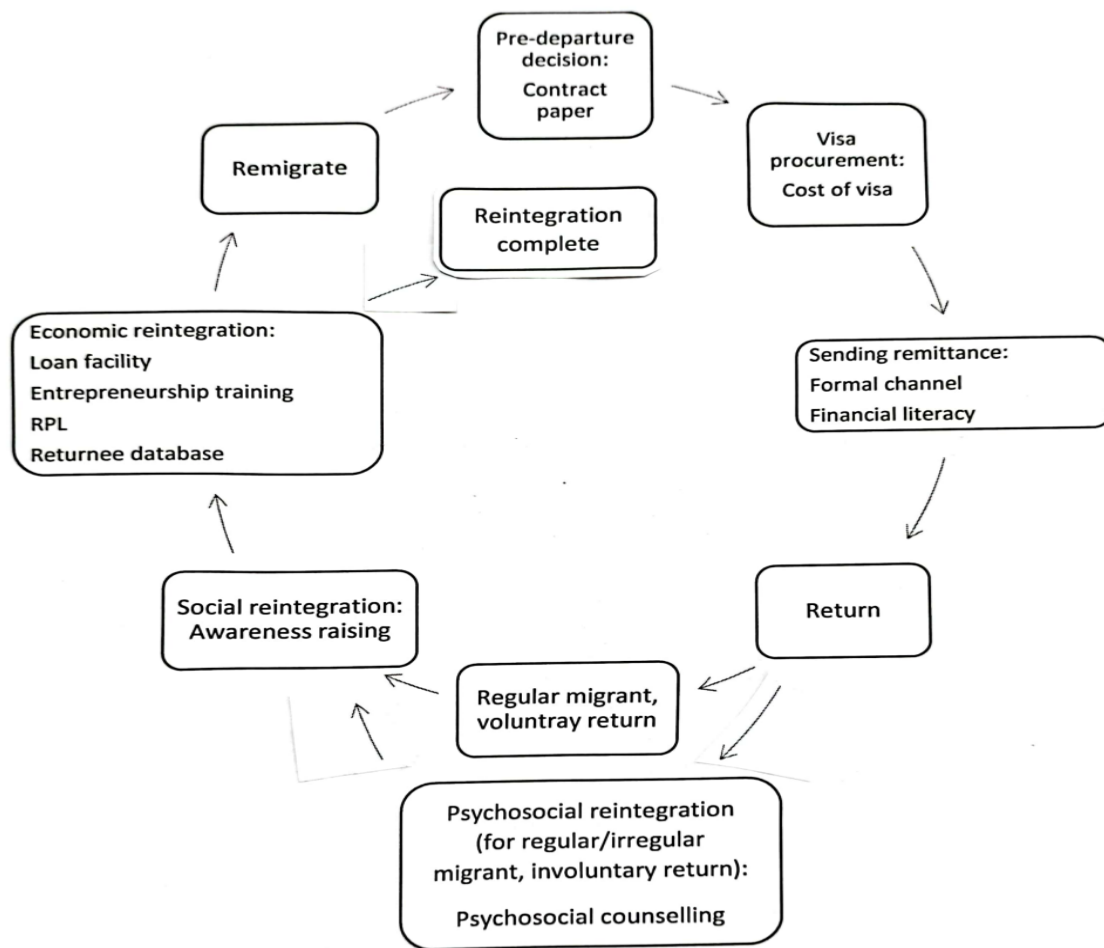
⁴ Interview of officials from NGOs working in reintegration sector.

⁵ Interview of relevant government and non-government stakeholders taken by the author.

of awareness among migrants, lack of decentralization of RPL facilities and lack of standardization.¹

The key areas of intervention, as revealed in the above discussion can be summarized in the graph presented below.

Figure 3: Key Areas of Intervention Required for Bangladeshi Migrants



5. Concluding Remarks

To formulate a reintegration plan in a holistic manner two things should be considered. First, in circular migration that characterizes the migration of Bangladesh, action in one stage influences the outcome of another stage/s. Therefore, for a successful reintegration, which is the final outcome, addressing the post-return challenges in isolation would not give sustainable results. Therefore, while addressing the challenges of reintegration, the whole migration cycle should be kept in mind.

¹ Interview of relevant government and non-government stakeholders taken by the author.

Findings of a survey on returnee migrants conducted by OKUP, a migration-based CSO of Bangladesh, can be mentioned in this regard. In the survey, 40 per cent of the returnee migrants reported that they had completed a successful migration. Of those who reported successful migration, 35 per cent considered their migration to be a success as they have been able to make enough saving, 20 per cent believed so as they could improve their living standard and another 35 per cent considered themselves to be successful as they have returned with certain category of skill. On the other hand, 60 per cent of respondent returnee migrants considered their migration to be unsuccessful. Among them, 50 per cent said their migration was not successful because it was not a fair recruitment process; they did not receive the wage that they were assured to have. 40 per cent considered their migration unsuccessful as they returned with debt burden and 10 per cent believed so as they had to return involuntarily faced with abuse and exploitation. The findings of this survey strikingly shows how closely reintegration is related to various pre-return stages.

Second, from the above discussion, it implies that reintegration measures should be conducted in a whole-of-the-government approach as it demands involvement of various ministries - from home ministry to ministry of finance, law, agriculture, industry, women and children affairs, ICT division, health and so on. A referral mechanism should be built so that the reintegration activities which involves multifaceted actions can run smoothly. The 8th five year plan has already mentioned about this referral mechanism regarding reintegration activities which needs to be implemented for a proper reintegration of the migrants.

In conclusion, it can be said that after being overlooked for a long period, reintegration has started gaining importance in Bangladesh's migration governance. Now the country should advance in a holistic manner in addressing the reintegration issues to ensure that the migrants of the country can see the successful completion of the migration cycle.

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