SWiFT Evaluation
EVIDENCE FOR SAFE MIGRATION

LONDON SCHOOL of HYGIENE &TROPICAL MEDICINE

South Asia Work in Freedom Three-Country evaluation: A theory-based intervention evaluation to promote safer migration of women and girls in Nepal, India and Bangladesh

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Modern slavery is estimated to affect over 10 million people in South Asia (Global Slavery Index 2018). The South Asia Work in Freedom Transnational Evaluation (SWiFT) is a five-year programme of research and evaluation funded by the UK Department of International Development (DFID/UKAID). SWiFT assesses and informs the International Labour Organization's (ILO) DFID-funded "Work in Freedom" (WiF) multi-country intervention to minimise women's vulnerability to labour trafficking in South Asia and the Middle East. Primarily a mixed-methods theory evaluation of WiF's community-based component, SWiFT examines the validity of the intervention rationale and assumptions by analysing how it can affect modifiable causes of labour exploitation among migrant domestic workers in South Asia. It seeks to answer the question: What type of actions can prevent labour exploitation of migrant domestic workers, how and in which circumstances?

SWiFT evaluation methods

This report summarises the evaluation findings related to pre-migration planning and processes implemented in Bangladesh, Nepal and India, specifically the implementation and effects of WiF pre-decision migration training with returned and prospective women migrants. Two-day training emphasised women's and workers' empowerment and rights, avoiding deception during recruitment processes and assistance in destination settings. Self-care and financial literacy were also included. Training modules and evaluation tools were implemented by local partners in each country. Evaluation methods included quantitative and qualitative research in each country. Methods included a survey with prospective and returned migrants in Nepal, a large household survey in India, and in-depth repeated qualitative interviews with migrant women in Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

Female migration in SWiFT

In Nepal and Bangladesh, female migration was primarily international to Gulf states for domestic work, while in Odisha, India, migration was internal and often short term. For all the women, migration was generally circular, with women migrating multiple times. While migration for all women was driven by economic need, in India, levels of distress migration were particularly severe due to entrenched poverty and landlessness.

Findings indicate that in some settings, migration-decision-making can be highly gendered, with women's migration decisions frequently dominated by male household members, especially among married women, whereas men report more independent decision-making.

Pre-departure orientation findings

Findings suggest that women in the WiF interventions valued the practical information they received, for example, about the importance of having written contracts to help deter deceptive work conditions. Participants were particularly interested in hearing the first-hand experience of women who had migrated and some of the difficult realities of the jobs.

However, solely being aware of the processes and potential deception and abuses does not necessarily affect one's risk of being exploited. That is, women would be mistaken to believe they will be protected by possessing information gained in the training. Perhaps the most misleading information that women were given

was the suggestion that there is adequate overseas assistance for women who need help.

Although women can benefit from improving their understanding of rights, women's empowerment alone is unlikely to prevent human trafficking or exploitation. Effective empowerment strategies to reduce a woman's vulnerability to forced labour cannot rely exclusively on strategies to promote power within (self-worth and confidence) but depends on structural changes creating the conditions for women to assert their power to (agency) and power with (collective action). Empowerment in the migration process can potentially encourage women to make informed choices and protect them from pressure and excessive influence by others in their community of origin and at destination. But for women to act on their power, structural conditions need to be in place that allow negotiation throughout the migration trajectory.

Recruitment and migrant networks

The majority of women who plan to migrate overseas rely on the assistance of a local broker, but most seem to know very little about the recruitment and placement processes. The complex bureaucracy, geographical span, logistical challenges and political uncertainty of the migration process make labour recruiters indispensable for most migrants (Kern 2015; Jones 2015; Blanchet 2018). In the SWiFT study sites, brokers were often embedded in the communities and part of a prospective migrant's social network. A broker could be someone belonging to a woman's caste network or her religious affiliation. They could be a family member, a friend, a neighbour or a religious leader, or simply someone local with known connections to the broader recruitment network. Recruiters have different practices and their factual knowledge can facilitate safer migration but, at the same time, it can create a false sense of security. Many women may be exposed to misleading recruitment ploys, deceptive work contracts and types of financial exploitation, non-payment and deceptive pay arrangements by both recruiters and employers. However, within the current system, where impunity is the norm in the recruitment process, sometimes it can be impossible to hold recruiters accountable, especially in contexts where female migration is shrouded in secrecy.

Recruiters can often be the ones to commit the first in an ongoing series of exploitative acts. However, they may also be the only reliable source of help or redress when their clients find themselves in a difficult situation abroad. At the same time that recruiters have no binding obligation to ensure their clients' safety, fair pay or assist clients out of bad situations, they do need to maintain a sufficient business reputation to continue to recruit clients. Moreover, in many communities in South Asia, female migration is associated with the stigma of family break-up, men's weakened power and female sexual promiscuity. Therefore, abuses in the recruitment process tend to remain secret and agents can sometimes benefit from this lack of transparency to ensure their business remains reputable. As a consequence, most migrant women from a low social status are rarely in a position to seek financial or legal remedies from deceptive or exploitative brokers.

Importantly, informal recruiters seem to have very limited control over migration outcomes and may themselves be liable to deception by overseas agencies. Informal recruiters at the local level will often not be able or willing to check the legitimacy of overseas agencies. Additionally, regulations at origin are commonly ignored at destination. Therefore, migration itineraries and promises around return-on-investments are often ignored, without further consequences for the deceiver at origin and/or destination.

Empowerment messages versus power differentials during labour migration

Findings across countries and migration trajectories imply that there is a disconnect between empowerment messages and power differentials throughout the labour migration process. Gender inequalities and deeply entrenched social norms can hinder women's ability to assert new ideals around women's rights and contributions within the family, and ability to exert her preferences in migration decision-making. Women were not always able to negotiate better recruitment or working conditions at destination. Pre-orientation decision training over-emphasised women's agency in the face of power differentials, which widened along the migration journey, from households, agents, public officials and employers.

Lessons and future actions

Findings from the SWiFT evaluation indicate a number of lessons and future actions which should be taken when designing anti-trafficking interventions:

LESSON: Anti-trafficking programmes that invest primarily in awareness-raising, knowledge-building and empowerment as a means to prevent forced labour are unlikely to achieve these intended reductions in abuse.

ACTION: Strategies to support safe labour migration must adopt a 'trajectory approach' that address power dynamics in transit and at destination, rather than singular 'pre-migration' interventions. Programmes must promote a more equitable balance of power between migrants, recruiters, employers and the state. Interventions must invest in mechanisms and resources that give migrants more autonomy, help them assert their rights and facilitate exit from abusive situations at each stage of migration.

LESSON: Pre-migration training can create false expectations about migration-related benefits and security and unintentionally promote women's migration. These beliefs may then persuade women to migrate, who otherwise may not have considered it safe.

ACTION: Returnee migrants must be included in the design and planning of pre-departure training. Curricula must avoid messages that imply women will be able to fully assert their rights and new knowledge. Moreover, curricula will rarely be identical across contexts. Training staff must be able to depict the reality of many migrant women's experiences and address questions honestly about a woman's options to resolve dangerous or distressing situations. Returnee women may be able to provide a range of examples of experiences and tactics, if non-stigmatising environments can be created.

LESSON: Recruitment for overseas migration frequently relies on a complex network of brokers from village to urban centre to destination. Pre-migration information sessions that suggest women use only licensed brokers will be seen as unrealistic, both because rural women may not have access to licensed brokers and because women are rarely able to learn who will be involved in the network of brokers. Moreover, the broker is often someone from their social network who women know and trust. Policies to mandate licensing of brokers or regulate recruitment practices will likely miss the least formal local agents. However, at the same time that brokers may remain unaccountable to the larger society, they need to manage their reputation locally to maintain their business.

ACTION: Efforts to tighten legislation around recruitment licensing must be accompanied by strategies to ensure that women in rural areas can easily access licensed agencies. Moreover, recruitment agencies in countries of origin must retain some accountability for the behaviour of their overseas partners. Yet, overseas partners are obliged to respect regulations from the country of origin. Furthermore, mechanisms that build on brokers' need for a "good" business reputation combined with methods that publicise abusive broker practices may help women to avoid abuses and hold local agents accountable.

LESSON: Women highly value knowledge about resources at destination. Women sometimes need assistance to escape restrictions imposed on their freedom and abuses by employers. Hotlines may be a useful resource in these situations. However, the availability of emergency assistance and 'hot lines' should never be oversold. Women should not be led to believe that they can rely on urgent extraction and support if they are in an exploitative or abusive situation – especially overseas – when these resources do not exist or are insufficient.

ACTION: Investments in emergency assistance and hotlines must be accompanied by trustworthy testing and dissemination of how these assistance mechanisms are working. Women must be provided context-specific results on the reliability of these mechanisms and how they have acted in response to women in need of help.

LESSON: Migrant women, especially domestic workers, are frequently isolated once at their destination. Many are exposed to verbal and physical abuse and some to sexual violence and coercion. SWiFT participants often indicated they were distressed and unclear how to respond or what their options were to improve or leave their situations.

ACTION: Future pre-migration strategies and destination interventions should try to promote migrant network-building and foster workers' collective organisation. Contacts within local migrant networks may help women feel less socially isolated and offer shared information for small and large employment challenges.

LESSON: Women rarely recouped compensation for financial, physical or social harm. It is not uncommon for women to keep secret what they consider to be migration 'failures', including lost income, psychological trauma, and damage to their reputation and/or marriage.

ACTION: Greater investment in post-migration assistance is needed. Interventions should aim to help migrants recoup lost wages, seek damages from exploitative parties, including abusive intermediaries and employers. Legal actions and financial penalties against extortionate, deceptive or irresponsible recruiters may serve to deter abuses by intermediaries in the future. Post-migration strategies will also need to identify ways to confront the stigma that is often associated with female migration – especially for women whose migration is considered to have been a 'failure'.

LESSON: Poverty alleviation and economic development activities are excellent avenues to improve individual and community financial outcomes. However, these large-scale development activities may not directly affect the risks of human trafficking or forced labour.

ACTION: Governments and donors seeking to invest in pre-migration actions that have the specific goal of preventing entry into forced labour, should consider the overlaps between development activities and interventions to prevent modern slavery. Modern-slavery strategies should avoid misconstruing the different outcome and impact indicators for each (e.g., poverty alleviation vs reduced migration vs decrease in forced labour).

LESSON: Labour migrants frequently come home with a myriad of health and other support needs, which are often neglected. Donors and policy-makers must invest in post-migration support as well as prevention. Remigration and circular migration is common and many migrant workers will undertake multiple journeys for which they will benefit from support and recovery services at home.

ACTION: Future investments should be made in post-migration support services, which can address the health, financial and legal needs of returning migrants. These services should form a referral network that includes, at a minimum, the health system, social support services and financial and legal aid.

Forced labour risks are driven by economic, social and gendered inequities that fuel momentous power imbalances between migrant workers and the mechanisms that facilitate migration and underpin exploitative labour. Until strategies can shift the structures that grant supremacy to labour intermediaries, employers, corporations and the state, workers will remain at a fundamental disadvantage – no matter how much or what kind of information we provide to them. Ultimately, what change demands is for policy-makers and corporations, who are in a position to govern over these powerful forces, to step forward and stand at the side of their workers to ensure they are in a position to negotiate decent work and fair wages.

LESSON: Women travelling to countries where labour migration is tied to work sponsorship programmes – such as the *kafala* system in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries – are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuses.

ACTION: Governments from these destination countries should eliminate regulations that legislate worker vulnerability and should be held accountable

for abuses in their countries. Policy-related interventions will benefit from establishing incentives that favour legislation eliminating worker's job and residency dependency on employers and recruitment services.

LESSON: The development and assessments of policies and interventions should be informed by evidence on the magnitude, distribution, dynamics and potential causes of forced labour in each specific context. Findings from our evaluation have shown that some widely held assumptions about forced labour are not supported by data. Furthermore, the prevalence of migration and/or forced labour in some of the regions targeted by the project seemed relatively low when compared to others.

ACTION: Investment in formative research to guide the design of interventions on forced labour is necessary. We still know very little about how migration and labour exploitation occur in each context, and interventions that are not informed by locally-specific evidence may fall short of hitting meaningful targets.

LESSON: Interventions to prevent human trafficking and labour exploitation seek changes in complex causal pathways. Because of this complexity, it is often difficult to predict the effect of interventions amidst multiple interacting factors. Thus, the risk of unintended outcomes is substantial. For example, migration training may push women to migrate, who were otherwise seeking local livelihood choices.

ACTION: Monitoring systems are essential for documenting interventions' implementation processes, short-term effects and to stem emerging adverse consequences. This information can provide immediate feedback to the intervention's design and prevent negative unintended outcomes, promote unplanned positive outcomes and suggest methods for remedies in cases where harm may have occurred.

STUDY BACKGROUND

The South Asia Work in Freedom Transnational Evaluation (SWiFT) is a five-year programme of research and evaluation funded by the UK Department of International Development (DFID/UKAID). SWiFT assesses and informs the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) DFID-funded WiF multi-country intervention to minimise women's vulnerability to labour trafficking in South Asia and the Middle East. Researchers from the Gender, Violence and Health Centre (GVHC) of the London School of Hygiene &Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) are leading the research and evaluation of WiF activities in collaboration with specialist research institutes in Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

SWiFT follows a large-scale, multi-country, community-based trafficking interventions from conception to implementation. Evidence from this work provides a rigorous assessment of the Work in Freedom programme logic, assumptions and activities. Findings are designed to inform policy and practice, provide insights into the magnitude and characteristics of labour trafficking in the study sites and identify promising approaches to reduce workers' vulnerability.

BANGLADESH

Research sites

SWiFT research is focused in Narayangani, one of seven districts with high rates of women undertaking cross-border migration. Here, the ILO and local partner, the *Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program* (OKUP), are implementing the WiF intervention in five *upazilas* (sub-districts). SWiFT evaluation sites include rural, peri-urban and urban contexts to enable comparison.

Research aims

SWiFT explores the resonance of the WiF programme logic for different categories of 'beneficiary' over time. How do participants understand WiF content in light of their prior experiences? How do their perceptions, awareness and practices change as a result of the programme? And, is vulnerability to trafficking thereby reduced?

Bangladesh

The annual rate of international migration from Bangladesh has slowed in recent years, but the proportion of women migrant workers has grown rapidly. In 2002, women accounted for just 0.5% of Bangladeshi international migrants; by 2014, that figure was 17.9% or 76,007 women migrating internationally for work through formal channels. The Government of Bangladesh fully supports women's cross border labour migration. In February 2015, Nepal signed a MoU with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, promising to send 200,000 women as domestic workers over two years. This 'feminisation' of Bangladeshi international migration has generated interest in the gender dimensions of labour migration and vulnerability to trafficking. Assumptions that women's mobility necessarily entails coercion have given way to more nuanced analyses of women's labour migration. In Bangladesh, the Work in Freedom programme (WiF) framed women's labour mobility as a right rather than a compulsion, and trafficking as a risk rather than a certainty.

The SWiFT research focused on women's migration to destinations in the Middle East, the most common destination for those using formal channels, and to India, a major destination for those using 'irregular' migration channels. As elsewhere, international migration is commonly financed by usurious loans and mediated by a network of unregulated labour contractors. In both formal and informal processes, Bangladeshi migrant workers can be vulnerable to entrapment and exploitation: their vulnerability to exploitation is often exacerbated by limits on their legal status and rights related to, for example, immigration status or labour rights. The *kafala* system, which operates in many Middle Eastern states to regulate migrant labour status, serves to limit worker

rights and to foster abuses. Abusive practices by employers such as non-payment of wages, long working hours, precarious accommodations, unsubstantiated penalties, limited access to justice and exposure to violence have been reported among domestic workers in the GCC countries.[1]

India

Odisha is among the poorest states in India, with an official poverty rate of 32.6% as against the all India average of 21.9%[2]. Both seasonal and longer- term female and male migration rates are amongst the highest in India. Pressures to migrate, for at least part of the year, are created by a largely agrarian economy, high rates of poverty and inequality, infringements of customary land rights, frequent natural hazards, and ongoing political violence.

Labour mobility within India's national borders, or 'internal migration' is common. Conservative estimates suggest 400 million Indian citizens – 30% of the country's total population – are internal migrants. An estimated 80% of these are women. Census figures show that female work participation rates in Odisha increased from 24.7% in 2001 to 27.2% in 2011.[3] With 33.45% of rural households in Odisha sending out migrants, the state had emerged as among the most prominent states receiving domestic remittances, of which the major part (63%) came from inter-state transfers.[4]

Migrant workers are vulnerable to entrapment and exploitation but for many the income is essential for meeting basic needs. Earnings permit modest advancement and accumulation for some, and even a rare opportunity for autonomy. WiF therefore aimed to reduce women migrant workers' vulnerability to labour trafficking while acknowledging the necessity and even the attraction of internal migration for many.

WiF activities in East India, where the evaluation was conducted, focused on paid domestic work. This highly feminised sector has grown rapidly and is now the largest employer of women in urban India and the second largest in rural India. Workforce composition has shifted substantially. Multiple-employer, non-residential 'live out' arrangements increasingly replace the classic single-employer, 'live in' arrangement.

In February 2018, the Indian Union Cabinet cleared the Trafficking of Persons Bill (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation). The new legislation created a rehabilitation fund which will be allocated independently of criminal proceedings. The mandate of anti-trafficking actions is currently under the responsibility of the National Investigation Agency, India's agency for combating terror. Additionally, bilateral anti-human trafficking pacts have been signed with Bangladesh and Bahrain. The government is also working in partnership with charities and non-profit organisations to train law enforcement officers.[5]

INDIA

Research sites

SWiFT research is focused on the Ganjam district of Odisha State in East India. Odisha has relatively high and growing rates of seasonal and longer-term labour migration. With neighbouring states Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, Odisha has become a hub for the recruitment of paid domestic workers.

Research aims

SWiFT produces new evidence on the varied ways in which a broad range of factors interact to shape migrant workers' plans, practices and strategies. Migrant workers' vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation are affected by general factors such as informal labour, under-employment, over-indebtedness, sub-contracting and out-sourcing and discrimination by gender and caste. These are exacerbated by migrant workers' 'outsider' status. But how and why do some migrant workers elude or overcome these factors while others, similarly positioned, become entrapped in forced labour?

1. Malit Jr, F.T., Naufal, G. (2016). Asymmetric information under the *kafala* sponsorship system: Impacts on foreign domestic workers' income and employment status in the GCC countries. *International Migration*, 54(5), 76-90.

2. World Bank. 2016. Odisha – Poverty, growth and inequality (English). India state briefs. Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/484521468197097972/Odisha-Poverty-growth-and-inequality

3. Ministry of Rural Development Government of India. Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC). https://secc.gov.in/welcome

4. Ibid.

5. Lai, N., India Cracks Down on Human Trafficking, in *Inter Press Service News Agency*. 2018.

In a recent statement by activists and academics, the Trafficking of Persons Bill's focus on sex work was largely criticised, and alternative priorities for intervention were outlined. One important point of contention is the "sensationalist" dominant international discourses on modern slavery which are perceived to not reflect the nature and conditions of exploitation in India. The authors oppose the focus on criminalisation and assert that "the problem of trafficking can only be addressed through a multi-faceted legal and economic strategy that strengthens the implementation of labour protections such as those guaranteed by the constitution, and laws such as the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, and the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979"[6].

They also make recommendations, many of which are relevant for WIF and similar programmes:

- anti-discrimination provisions
- self-organisation of workers
- a robust labour governance system
- strict and effective implementation of labour and criminal laws
- safe migration promotion
- prevention of distress migration
- alternative paradigms for sustainable development
- redistribution of resources
- rights protection for migrant women
- adoption of the National Draft Policy on Domestic Workers and a special legislation covering domestic work.
- Ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention 2011 (No. 189)
- value of women's care work must be adequately recognised in the gross domestic product (GDP)
- address the problem of sexual harassment of domestic workers working in gated communities through the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
- regulate placement agencies that place domestic workers with employers
- ensure accountability of corporations
- adequate wages, mobility, welfare benefits, and safety for textile and garment workers

Results from our policy analysis in India suggest a non-siloed approach that crosses multiple government agencies. In India, discussions around conditions of work and related elements of coercion/bondage do indeed interact with labour law, labour administration, and may even engage with economic policy paradigms, but are generally separated from debates around trafficking. Anti-trafficking frameworks on the other hand, interact with criminal law, policing, and often emphasise sexual exploitation of young women and particularly minor girls. However, anti-trafficking approaches rarely engage with labour relations, structural agrarian distress or displacement, livelihood options (or lack thereof) in source areas of women's migration. Responses to poverty and financial distress, generally under the rubric of 'rural development', are principally focused on 'empowerment schemes' that seldom take account of women migrants.

Nepal

In Nepal, as more women entered the labour market,[7] they have increasingly sought to migrate to the Gulf countries. Although historically India has been a common destination for Nepali migrant workers,[8] more recently, the Gulf countries have emerged as key destinations, and by 2015 close to 60% of women migrants had migrated to the GCC countries[9,10]. Men have represented the vast majority (over 95%) of labour migrants from Nepal. However, in 2014/15, over 21,000 women were documented as legally emigrating for work,[11] but actual numbers are likely to be much higher, as many women migrate through irregular channels and are not captured

6. No easy answer for ending forced labour in India, in Open Democracy: free thinking for the world. 2017. https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/collected-activists-and-academics/no-easy-answers-for-ending-forced-labour-in-india

7. Acharya, S. (2014). *Gender, Jobs and Education: Prospects and Realities in Nepal*. Kathmandu: UNESCO.

8. Seddon, D. (2005). Nepal's Dependence on Exporting Labour. Migration Information Source. *The Online Journal of Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/nepals-dependence-exporting-labor/

9. The GCC countries consist of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

10. An estimated 80 per cent of women migrant workers in the Gulf are engaged in domestic work within private homes or caring for children or elderly family members while others were employed in hotels, restaurants, beauty parlours, catering and manufacturing, as well as health and medical facilities within Asia and beyond (ILO, 2015: 2-3)

11. GoN (Government of Nepal), Ministry of Labour and Employment 2016 *Labour Migration for Employment – A Status Report for Nepal: 2014/15*. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Kathmandu, Nepal.

in official statistics.[12] For instance, statistics do not capture migration to India, the top destination for female migrant workers from Nepal,[13] since labour permits are not required for migration between these two countries. Recent estimates suggest that Nepali women migrants make up 30% of total Nepali migrants,[14] and reports suggest that of all the irregular migrant workers from Nepal, 90% were women.[15] The reasons for such large numbers of women migrating irregularly are manifold but chief among them are the restrictions on the legal migration of women.[16] Aside from India, common destinations for female labour migrants from Nepal include the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Malaysia, Kuwait and Qatar.[17] There, they mainly work in hotels, catering, domestic work and caregiving, manufacturing, and health and medical services.[18]

The WiF programme was implemented in five districts in Nepal and targets women interested in migrating for work in the domestic or garment sectors in the Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates). The open border between Nepal and India means that Nepali women working in India are largely unaccounted for. In 2006/07, women constituted only 0.2% of those granted labour permits to work abroad. By 2013/14, this proportion had risen to 3.1%. However, women constitute about 13% of the country's absentee population and, although this figure includes (for example) students and those travelling with husbands, irregular or unofficial migration is considered a primary reason for the discrepancy. To address human trafficking, the Government of Nepal introduced the Foreign Employment and Anti-Trafficking Law and bilateral agreements with destination countries. These pieces of legislation have been a source of substantial debate.[19]

Labour migration can provide social and economic benefits to women and their families, but at the same time workers may be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse of their irregular legal status, unregulated work sector and social marginalisation. For instance, without collateral for loans from formal institutions, women may be forced to borrow from money-lenders or recruiters who may charge excessive fees. With periodic restrictions on female migration in Nepal, women may be trafficked or smuggled via a third country. In destination countries, women migrant workers often have poor living and working conditions and there are regular reports of physical and sexual abuse. Despite the positive contributions that women migrants make to their household and national economy, many returnees experience difficulties at home, including enduring debts and social stigma. To address human trafficking, the Government of Nepal introduced the Foreign Employment and Anti-Trafficking Law and bilateral agreements with five destination countries. These agreements address recruitment issues, contracts, accommodation and other workers' rights.[20] They have also doubled the dedicated budget for assistance of female victims of violence

NEPAL

Research sites

SWiFT is conducted in three of the five WiF districts: Chitwan, Rupandehi and Morang.

Research aims

In Nepal, SWiFT is designed to inform the WiF programme and other trafficking prevention programmes on the nature and scale of adverse migration outcomes; factors that increase or decrease a woman's risk of being trafficked; and prospective women migrants' pre-departure knowledge and decision making. How does WiF affect individual migration decisions, behaviours and experiences? Are WiF's assumptions valid and widely applicable?

12. Sijapati, B., and P. Nair 2014 *Gender and Safe Mobility: Promising Global and Regional Practices*. International Organization for Migration.

13. World Bank. 2011 *Large-scale Migration and Remittance in Nepal: Issues, Challenges, and Opportunities* (Report No. 55390-NP): World Bank Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Unit: South Asia Region.

14. Amnesty International. (2011). *False Promises: Exploitation and Forced Labour of Nepalese Migrant Workers*. London: Amnesty International Ltd.

15. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2015). *No easy exit – Migration bans affecting women from Nepal*. International Labour Office, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FUNDAMENTALS), Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT). Geneva: ILO.

16. Amnesty International. (2011). *False Promises: Exploitation and Forced Labour of Nepalese Migrant Workers*. London: Amnesty International Ltd.

17. Government of Nepal (GoN) *Labour migration for employment. A status report for Nepal: 2015/2016–2016/2017*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ministry of Labour and Employment.

18. World Bank. Nepal development update. Remittances at risk. 2016.

19. Sijapati B, Mak J, Kiss L and C Zimmerman (forthcoming. Nepali Women's Labour Migration: Between Protection and Proscription.

20. Sijapati, B., Limbu, A., Khada M. (2011). *Trafficking and forced labour in Nepal: a review of the literature*. Kathmandu: Himal Books for the Centre for Study of Labour and Mobility.

including trafficking survivors, dedicated resources to conduct awareness-raising activities across the country, and revoked licenses of more than 400 foreign employment agents outside of Kathmandu[21].

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the Government of Nepal has implemented a number of restrictive measures on female mobility. This migration bans were imposed as a response to cases of exploitation and abuse of Nepalese domestic workers, especially in the Gulf States. Research has suggested these bans have pushed many female migrants into risky migration through informal channels and made it more difficult for women to protect their rights abroad[22]. SWiFT findings show that women migrating during the most recent bans, were less likely to experience forced labour. However, the fact that these bans had a protective effect on forced labour should not distract from other potential consequences of these restrictive measures, such as further limiting livelihood options for women, restricting women's mobility and choice and reinforcing gender asymmetries[23].

During our fieldwork in 2015, Nepal was hit by a severe earthquake which killed almost 9,000 people and displaced some 2.8 million[24]. The effect of this earthquake on migration and human trafficking is unclear. Anecdotal evidence suggests a rise in human trafficking in the aftermath of the earthquake[25]. Nepal's data on the number of women and children intercepted before the earthquake and after three-months post-earthquake reveal that the risk of trafficking increased after the earthquake by at least 15%[26]. These estimations are prone to significant doubt and criticism as there is still a huge data gap in baseline prevalence to be able to say accurately what increase there was during post disaster or crisis contexts. It is notable that there were various other types of gender-based violence (GBV) reported in the immediate period following the earthquake and there has been explicit feedback that greater social protection and law enforcement protection must be implemented to prevent women and children from trafficking and other forms of GBV[27].

Research has shown how human trafficking may increase in conflict settings, linked to the breakdown of safety mechanisms,[28,29] but there is still scarce evidence on the effect of natural disasters, climate change and other livelihood emergencies[30]. However, as we take into account the prevalence of forced labour among female migrants (estimated at 90% among SWiFT female participants), the sheer rise in migrant numbers are likely to have produced a proportional increase in the number of cases of human trafficking.

In any case, strong social protection systems need to be in place to reduce harm caused to families by natural disasters, including forced migration. Nepal's social protection system is thought to have helped reduce negative consequences of the 2015 earthquake by building on the existing social protection system to scale up vertically (a temporary increase in benefit levels) as well as horizontally (an extension of benefits to new beneficiary groups) in the affected districts[31].

21. US State Department, 2017 *Trafficking in Persons Report*. 2017.

22. International Labour Organisation (2015b). *No easy exit – Migration bans affecting women from Nepal. Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

23. Davidson, J.O. (2015). *The margins of freedom: modern-slavery*. Palgrave MacMillan.

24. Rafferty. Nepal earthquake of 2015. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nepal-earthquake-of-2015

25. Gyawali, B., J. Keeling, and P. Kallestrup, Human trafficking in Nepal: post-earthquake risk and response. *Disaster medicine and public health preparedness*, 2017. 11(2): p. 153-154.

26. National Human Rights Commission, H., Lalitpur, N.N.H.R. Commission, Editor. 2017.

27. Government of Nepal, N.p.c. *Nepal Earthquake 2015: Post Disaster Needs Assessment: Key Findings*. 2015.

28. Devakumar, D., et al., The intergenerational effects of war on the health of children. *BMC medicine*, 2014. 12(1): p. 57.

29. McAlpine, A., M. Hossain, and C. Zimmerman, Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in settings affected by armed conflicts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East: systematic review. *BMC international health and human rights*, 2016. 16(1): p. 34.

30. Potts, A. *Nobody will answer you if you talk': The case for research on trafficking in emergencies*. 2017; Available from: https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/nobody-will-answer-talk-case-research-trafficking-emergencies/

31. Koehler, G. and N. Mathers, Forum Introduction: Dynamics of social protection in fragile contexts: Nepal and Myanmar. *Global Social Policy*, 2017. 17(3): p. 347-352.

METHODS

Research aim

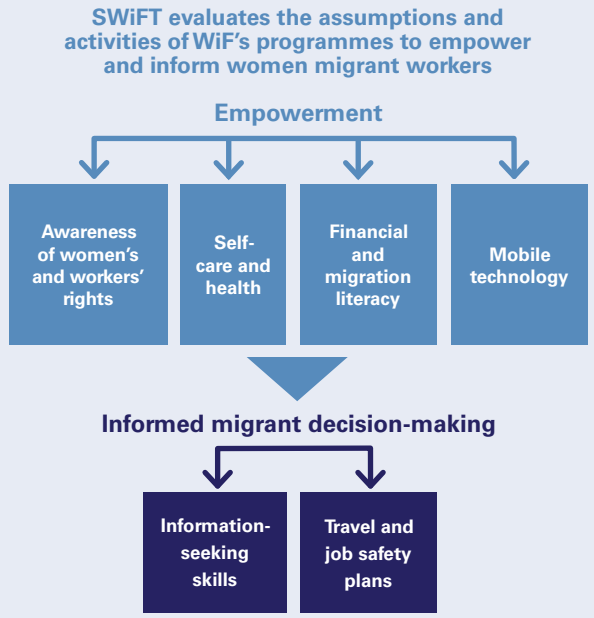
SWiFT evaluated the programme logic and elements of the WiF programme. This adaptive programming research aimed to assess WiF programmatic assumptions. WiF community-based interventions aimed to prevent labour trafficking by: enhancing women's autonomy; generating awareness and adoption of 'safe migration' practices; and promoting migrant workers' and women's rights. WiF community-based sessions also aimed to inform women about health and self-care, increase their financial and migration literacy and enhance their use of mobile technology. See Figure 1.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

SWiFT research questions included:

- What puts migrant workers, particularly women, at risk of being exploited? What might protect them from these abuses?
- How do these risks and protective factors vary within and between the study sites?
- How do women who want to migrate for work gather information and make decisions about how to migrate?
- What are the characteristics of labour trafficking? What forms and dynamics of exploitation are experienced by female labour migrants?
- How does the WiF intervention influence participants' vulnerability to trafficking and opportunities for safe migration and decent labour?
- How does the implementation context facilitate or undermine the WiF programme's effectiveness and impacts?
- Are there unintended or adverse consequences of the WiF interventions?

FIGURE 1. Programme assumptions and activities change theory for evaluation



Mixed methods

SWiFT is a mixed-methods theory evaluation of the WIF community-based component. Specifically, the evaluation examines the validity of the intervention rationale and assumptions by analysing how it can affect modifiable causes of labour exploitation among migrant domestic workers in South Asia. It seeks to answer the question: What type of actions can prevent labour exploitation of migrant domestic workers, how and in which circumstances?

The research focuses on causal pathways, decision-making, knowledge-transfer and knowledge application. It assesses the intervention's implementation (e.g. intervention feasibility, accessibility, acceptability) in different contexts in South Asia. This work produces findings that enable us to offer recommendations for intervention adaptation, replication and/or scale-up.

The evaluation was conducted in three countries, Bangladesh, India and Nepal:

- In Bangladesh, we conducted qualitative research in three research sites in the district of Narayangani. 30 migrant women were interviewed at three separate points over WiF's duration, with separate but parallel interviews of respondents' husbands or fathers. Ten WiF programme staff were also interviewed at two different times. This research was undertaken with local partners Drishti Research Centre and South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM).
- In India, surveys were conducted with 1,255 households, 1,218 women and 1,156 men in 20 villages across the Ganjam District of Odisha. Of these, 117 women and 429 men were migrants. We then interviewed 50 women who had migrated or intended to at four time points during WiF. Respondents' husbands or fathers were interviewed in parallel. This research was undertaken with our national partner, the Centre for Women's Development Studies.
- In Nepal, surveys were conducted with 521 returned and 340 prospective migrants in three of the five WIF districts: Chitwan, Rupandehi, and Morang. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 55 survey respondents who were prospective migrants. Formative research involved a survey on migration and forced labour of 1,257 households and 5,984 individuals in the district of Dolakha. This research was undertaken with national partner Social Sciences Baha.

In all three study countries, SWiFT conducted policy analyses to identify potential impact from policies on preventing labour exploitation

BANGLADESH

- Ethnography
- Longitudinal study with semi-structured interviews

INDIA

- Population Survey
- Longitudinal study with semi-structured interviews
- Policy analysis

NEPAL

- Formative survey
- Survey of prospective and returnees
- Semi-structured interviews

In Bangladesh, SWiFT worked with local partners Drishti Research Centre and Sanem to:

- conduct qualitative research in three research sites in the district of Narayangani
- interview 30 migrant women at three separate points over WiF's duration
- interview respondents' husbands or fathers separately but in parallel
- interview 10 WiF programme staff at two different times

In India, SWiFT worked with local partner, the Centre for Women's Development Studies to:

- conduct surveys with 1,255 households, 1,218 women, and 1,156 men in 20 villages across the Ganjam District of Odisha, of whom 117 women and 429 men were migrants
- interview 50 women who had migrated or intended to at four time points during WiF
- interview respondents' husbands or fathers in parallel

In Nepal, SWiFT worked with local partner Social Sciences Baha to:

- conduct surveys with 521 returned and 340 prospective migrants in three of the five WiF districts: Chitwan, Rupandehi, and Morang
- conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with 55 survey respondents who were prospective migrants
- base formative research on a survey on migration and forced labour of 1,257 households and 5,984 individuals in the district of Dolakha

This collaborative research generated evidence on:

- Dynamics and patterns of labour migration decision-making, preparation and practices and potential influences of the WiF intervention in this process.
- Priority programmatic intervention points and actions required to protect migrants throughout the labour migration process.
- Intervention's potential for impact, pathways for trafficking/forced labour prevention and process of change.

Findings and recommendations were produced in a series of briefing notes, reports and peer-reviewed journal articles.

Realist and theory-based evaluation

The community-based interventions studied in this research were innovative and nascent. As emerging versus well-developed interventions, they required approaches that could help inform the development and refinement of the activities. This type of adaptive programming calls for theory-based approaches to evaluation, which "use an explicit *theory of change* to draw conclusions about whether and how an intervention contributed to observed results". Specifically, *theory-based approaches are a "logic of enquiry," which complement and can be used in combination with most of the evaluation designs and data collection techniques.*[32]

Forced labour measurement

To examine prevalence and types of exploitative experiences, we used the ILO's forced labour measure, which includes three dimensions: (1) unfree recruitment; (2) work and life under duress; and (3) impossibility of leaving the employer.[33] Within each dimension are indicators of involuntariness and penalty, further divided into strong and medium categories (Table 1). Indicators were constructed from a group of variables (questions) asked in the survey in order to reduce

TABLE 1: Outcome: Forced Labour Measure – ILO indicators

Unfree recruitment

- Recruitment linked to debt (advance or loan)
- Deception about the nature of the work
- Deceptive recruitment
- Denunciation to authorities
- Confiscation of identity or travel documents
- Sexual or physical violence
- Withholding assets (cash or other)
- Threats against family members
- Exclusion from community and social life
- Financial penalties

Work and life under duress

- Forced overtime (beyond legal limit)
- Limited freedom of movement and communication
- Degrading living conditions
- Multiple dependency on employer (housing)
- Denunciation to authorities
- Confiscation of identity or travel documents
- Confiscation of mobile phone
- Isolation
- Locked in workplace/ living quarters
- Sexual/physical violence
- Withholding assets (cash or other)
- Threats against family members
- Dismissal
- Financial penalties

Impossibility of leaving employer

- No freedom to resign
- Forced to stay longer than agreed while waiting for wages due
- Forced to work for indeterminate period in order to repay outstanding debt or wage advance
- Denunciation to authorities
- Confiscation of identity or travel documents
- Locked in workplace/ living quarters
- Sexual/physical violence
- Constant surveillance
- Withholding of assets (cash or other) or of wages
- Threats against family members
- Dismissal
- Financial penalties

32. Theory-Based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices. https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/centre-excellence-evaluation/theory-based-approaches-evaluation-concepts-practices.html

33. Mak J, Abramsky T, Sijapati B, et al What is the prevalence of and associations with forced labour experiences among male migrants from Dolakha, Nepal? Findings from a cross-sectional study of returnee migrants. *BMJ Open* 2017;7:e015835. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2017-015835

bias, as individuals may define exploitation and forced labour differently from the ILO measure. Where indicators measured similar concepts (exclusion from social and community life, isolation, surveillance), these were checked to ensure that only one was counted as medium and strong indicators. Positive experience of a dimension is defined as at least one indicator of involuntariness and one of penalty within a dimension, of which one must be a strong indicator. Positive experience of any one of the three dimensions constitutes a positive experience of forced labour.[34]

To explore vulnerability to exploitation, we examined three groups of exposure variables:

1. demographics: age at departure of most recent migration, caste/ethnicity, education;
2. most recent migration destination and type of work; and
3. potential associated factors: debt (taken for the migration), social network (have contact with other migrants or contact information of migrant organisations), previous labour migration experience, attendance of training prior to departure, and awareness that agreed terms and conditions may be breached at destination.

Work in Freedom pre-decision training and information sessions

The aim of WiF's community-based programme is to support prospective migrant women in their decision to migrate. Sessions are meant to foster more informed choices about women's economic strategies by either equipping them to migrate or by increasing access to local livelihood opportunities.

The SWiFT evaluation focused on the pre-decision orientation sessions held in all three countries. The sessions were held on two non-consecutive days and the content included, for example: criteria for legal migration; adjusting to life abroad; migration risks; women's rights as workers and alternative livelihood opportunities. Training modules were prepared based on input from Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) and Migrant Forum Asia (MFA). The training sessions emphasised women's and workers' empowerment and rights, avoiding deception during recruitment processes, assistance in destination settings and applied a "feminist participatory methodology", which included health information to ensure "women had a better understanding of their bodies and some skills to look after themselves".[35]

WORK IN FREEDOM COMMUNITY-BASED ACTIVITIES

Community orientation (up to four hours): Focus on gender equality, employment, workers' rights and safe migration.

Two-day pre-decision-making training: Expands on equality and rights, discusses employment opportunities in Nepal, points to be considered before deciding on migration including costs and benefits, migration preparations; common potential problems, skills training and emergency contact details.

Analytical framework

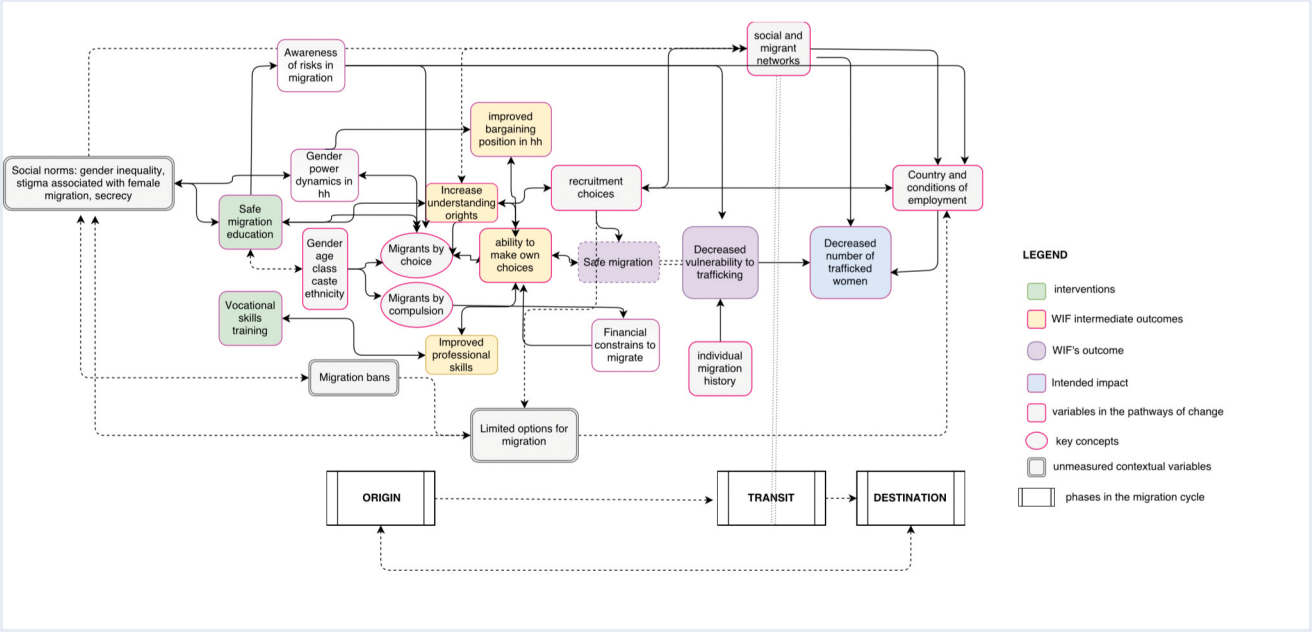
Figure 2 shows a schematic representation SWiFT's analytical framework. This framework was based on: the WIF's logframe developed by DFID, the ILO and LSHTM; iterations of the ILO's theory of change for WiF; programme documents; contextual information; and evidence and theory from the fields of trafficking, forced labour and migration.

WIF's community-based strategy relied on safe migration education and skills training, seeking to foster women's improved bargaining position in her household, her ability to make her own choices, her understanding of rights and her professional skills. Results from our analysis show that the main risks in migration are linked to a woman's recruitment process, destination country and terms and conditions of employment. Women's choices, ability to negotiate and exert their rights are constrained by aspects of legislation and cultural institutions that engrain and reinforce power inequities and do not hold accountable those who are responsible for abuses.

34. ILO. *Hard to see, harder to count. survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children.* Geneva: ILO, 2012.

35. Community Empowerment Report, Work in Freedom Bangladesh, ILO, 6 February 2015.

FIGURE 2: Schematic representation SWiFT's analytical framework



SWIFT RESULTS

Female migration in SWiFT research

In Nepal and Bangladesh, female migration was primarily international to Gulf states for domestic work, while in Odisha, India, migration was internal and often short term. For all the women, migration was generally circular, with women migrating multiple times. While migration for all women was driven by economic need, in India, levels of distress migration were particularly severe due to entrenched poverty and landlessness.

NEPAL

- Return migration, economic reasons, and target earners

BANGLADESH

- Primarily international return migration

INDIA

- Internal short-term migration in situation of distress, landlessness

DOLAKHA, NEPAL

Labour migration is an important source of household and national income in Nepal, with remittances estimated to represent over 30% of Nepal's GDP in 2016.[36] According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey, 53% of Nepali households had at least one member absent in 2010/2011, of whom 33% were believed to be living outside the country.[37] Current projections suggest that levels of migration will continue to increase.[38] Approximately half a million permits to work abroad were issued by the Nepal government in 2014/15,[39] and remittances comprise over 30%. A considerable proportion of the migration is repeat migration. Approximately one third of the labour permits issued are labour permit renewals,[40] and more than half of returnee migrants surveyed in 2009 reported that they were at least somewhat likely to migrate again in the next 12 months.[41]

A household migration census was conducted among 1,253 households in Dolakha (Bhimeshwor-1, n=1,045; Kavre-3, n=164; and Suri-6, n=44) to learn about migration patterns in Dolakha. Within these households, demographic and migration information on 5,961 individuals were collected. Households represent a range of castes/ethnic groups, the most common being Chhetree, Brahman-Hill and Newar. Kavre is the survey site with the highest concentration of people from the Dalit caste (14%).

Prevalence of labour migration in Dolakha:

- One-third of households had at least one member who had ever migrated outside of Nepal for work.
- 15% of households had at least one member currently working abroad.
- 7% of household heads reported that a member of their household intended to migrate in the next six months.
- Men were more likely than women to have migrated for work (21% versus 2%).

36. World Bank. Nepal Development Update. Remittances at Risk. May 2016

37. Central Bureau of Statistics, *Nepal Living Standards Survey* reports,1995/96, 2003/04, 2010/11.

38. Sijapati B, Bhattarai A and Pathak D. 2015. *Analysis of Labour Market and Migration Trends in Nepal.* Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, International Labour Organization (ILO): Kathmandu, Nepal.

39. Government of Nepal, & United Nations Development Programme 2014 *Nepal Human Development Report 2014.* Government of Nepal, Kathmandu.

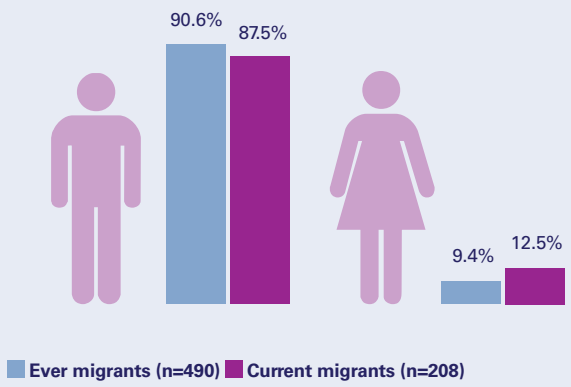
40. Ibid.

41. Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal Living Standards Survey reports, 1995/96, 2003/04, 2010/11.

- 65% of women who reported ever having migrated were younger than 30 years of age (possibly related to bans and minimum age requirements).
- 56% of female migrants versus 28% of male migrants reported migrating multiple times.

More detailed findings can be found in the SWiFT briefing note: *What do we know about labour migration in Dolakha, Nepal?*

FIGURE 3: Labour migration by sex of migrant



BANGLADESH

In 2016, over 118,000 Bangladeshi women migrated through official channels to take up primarily low-skilled or semi-skilled work overseas (primarily in the Middle East). Compare this with the late 1990s and early 2000s when, in the wake of the Government of Bangladesh's 1997 clampdown on women's migration, the corresponding figure was just a few hundred per year.[42] Alongside repeated relaxations of restrictions,[43] the Government of Bangladesh has increasingly taken to actively promoting women's international migration for low-paid work.[44]

Table 2 illustrates the growing importance of Saudi Arabia and the sharp drop of Lebanon as a destination country for women migrants.

The qualitative research in Bangladesh included 49 women from the Narayangonj District, including 40 women interviewed in the first round, plus nine women in subsequent rounds. Ages of the women ranged from 17 to 55, 77% were either illiterate or had not studied beyond primary level. Half the women were married and living with their husband, with 89% married before the age of 18. The mean age of women married under

TABLE 2: Destinations of female migration from Bangladesh: 2015–2017

Destination/Year	2015 (%)	2016 (%)	2017 (%)
Saudi Arabia	20,952 (20.2)	68,286 (57.8)	83,354 (68.4)
Jordan	21,776 (21.0)	22,689 (19.2)	19,872 (16.3)
Lebanon	8,782 (8.5)	2,450 (2.1)	1,642 (1.3)
UAE	24,307 (23.4)	5,151 (4.4)	3,272 (2.7)
Oman	16,980 (16.4)	12,897 (10.9)	9,199 (7.5)
Qatar	86,42 (8.3)	5,381 (4.6)	3,209 (2.6)
Others	2,279 (2.2)	1,234 (1.0)	1,377 (1.1)
Total	**103,718 (100.0)**	**118,088 (100.0)**	**121,925 (100.0)**
Female as % of total migration	18.7	15.6	12.1

Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), 2018.

42. BMET (2017a) Overseas Employment and Remittances From 1976-2016. Retrieved from: http://www.bmet.org.bd/BMET/stattisticalDataAction. BMET (2017b) Overseas Employment of Female Workers from 1991-2016. Retrieved from: http://www. bmet.org.bd/BMET/stattisticalDataAction.

43. Islam, MN. (2010) Migration from Bangladesh and Overseas Employment Policy. Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh.

44. Not least through the signing of a series of memoranda of understanding (MoU) pledging to supply female labour for factories and homes in Malaysia and the Middle East.

the age of 18 is 14 years old. Of the 40 women who participated in the first round of interviews, 15 reported they had previously migrated.

More detailed findings can be found in the DRISHTI Bangladesh report: *From Risks to Rights: Evaluation of a Training Programme*

ODISHA, INDIA

Odisha is an Indian state with relatively high, and growing, rates of labour migration. Both seasonal and longer-term female and male migration rates are amongst the highest in India.[45] Pressures to migrate, for at least part of the year, are created by a largely agrarian economy, high rates of poverty and inequality, infringements of customary land rights, frequent natural hazards and ongoing political violence.[46] Migrating for work is a disproportionately male activity in our study setting (as it is throughout India). While 44% of households reported male household members had migrated for work, the corresponding figure for women was 7%. This latter figure is not inconsequential. It should be understood within the context of caste and class-based sanctions on female mobility,[47] declines in female participation in the Indian labour market more widely,[48] and the restrictive definition of 'labour migration' we employed (in accordance with the study aims). Findings from our household migration census conducted in Ganjam, Odisha include:

- 45% of households have at least one member who has migrated for work.
- 12.5% of households have one or more household members who intend to migrate for work within 12 months.
- Labour migration is a highly gendered activity. 44% of households have male migrants and 7% female.
- Migrant worker households are geographically clustered and widely dispersed.
- The majority of migration is short-term, usually seasonal or cyclical, and lasting less than 10 months.
- 'Intention to migrate' is much higher for households with current or prior experience of migration.
- Dalit households have the highest proportions of both male and female labour migration.
- Labour migration is less prevalent among the poorest and the wealthiest household quartiles.
- For both women and men, migration is inversely associated with the number of dependent children and is positively associated with household size.


SWIFT Evaluation

SWIFT RESEARCH BRIEFING NOTE

Gender and internal labour migration from Odisha, India

BACKGROUND

HOUSEHOLD CENSUS

More detailed findings can be found in the SWiFT briefing note: *Gender and internal labour migration from Odisha, India.*

It is noteworthy that many returning women workers will opt to re-migrate. For instance, among the women who reported migrating from Nepal, 50% had migrated than once, with the large majority (81%) having reported employment as domestic workers. Findings from Bangladesh indicate that even women who feel their first attempt at migration was a failure (e.g., not achieving expected earnings, returning early, tainted reputation) or suffered conditions that were abusive (e.g., sexual abuse), will strongly consider re-migrating. They believe that they are now armed with the understanding of what to expect – and what they might now accept. As one participant in Bangladesh noted:

> *One must never forget the purpose for which one goes abroad. Any work should be considered as part of the job.*

Several women who returned early because they were distraught by sexual advances in the employer household, subsequently told interviewers that they would now consider re-migrating with these expectations in mind.

45. NSSO (2010) *Migration in India 2007–2008*, National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO): New Delhi.

46. GO (2004) *Orissa Human Development Report 2004*, Government of Orissa (GO), Bhubaneswar.

47. Neff D., Sen, K., Kling, V., (2012), 'The Puzzling Decline in Rural Women's Labour Force Participation in India: A Re-examination'. *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 55 (3-4): 408–429.

48. Keshri, K. and R.B. Bhagat (2013), 'Socioeconomic Determinants of Temporary Labour Migration in India'. *Asian Population Studies*. 9(2): p.175–195.

Pre-migration knowledge and training

The SWiFT evaluation examined women's pre-migration knowledge to learn about their information needs. These studies also established women's migration knowledge prior to and after participating in WiF information and training sessions.

Findings suggest that women in the WiF interventions valued the practical information they received, for example, about the importance of having written contracts to help deter deceptive work conditions. Participants were particularly interested in hearing the first-hand experience of women who had migrated and some of the difficult realities of the jobs.

On the other hand, solely being aware of the processes and potential deception and abuses does not necessarily affect one's risk of being exploited. That is, women would be mistaken to believe they will be protected by possessing information gained in the training. Perhaps the most misleading information that women were given was the suggestion that there is adequate overseas assistance for women who need help. Finally, future investments in pre-migration information and training should recognise the likelihood that community-based activities such as these can often have the unintended effect of promoting migration among those that might otherwise not have considered migrating.

MORANG, CHITWAN AND RUPANDEHI, NEPAL

Surveys were conducted among prospective migrant women in Morang, Chitwan and Rupandehi among women identified by the WiF implementing partners. Data included follow-up telephone surveys (n=188) and qualitative follow-up interviews with six women who attended the WiF two-day pre-decision-making training.

Women who attended the two-day pre-decision-making training reported high-levels of satisfaction particularly in helping them understand what was needed for migration. Women noted the importance of knowing which documents are required for migration, understanding the proper routing (flying from Kathmandu airport, not travelling via India). Women felt the emergency contact information provided at the training would be useful. The training provided a forum for women to share knowledge and receive information from more experienced migrant peers and suggests the potential benefits of peer-to-peer activities. However, findings simultaneously indicate that returnee workers do not necessarily have accurate or up-to-date administrative information about labour migration processes, documents and regulations. At the same time, returnees appear to be well-positioned to share practical and emotional aspects of migration and working abroad (see Figure 3.)

STRENGTHS

- Women value practical information.
- Written contract may protect women from deception.
- Women appreciate first-hand experiences of other female returnees.
- Women needed warnings about contracts. Half of the women planning to migrate (within 3 months) had no information about clauses in their contract.

CHALLENGES

- Awareness alone does not seem to affect risk of forced labour.
- Over-reliance on training information.
- Some thought that the training provided assurances that they would be rescued, if needed.
- Need regular monitoring for unintended, adverse consequences.
- May inadvertently promote migration.

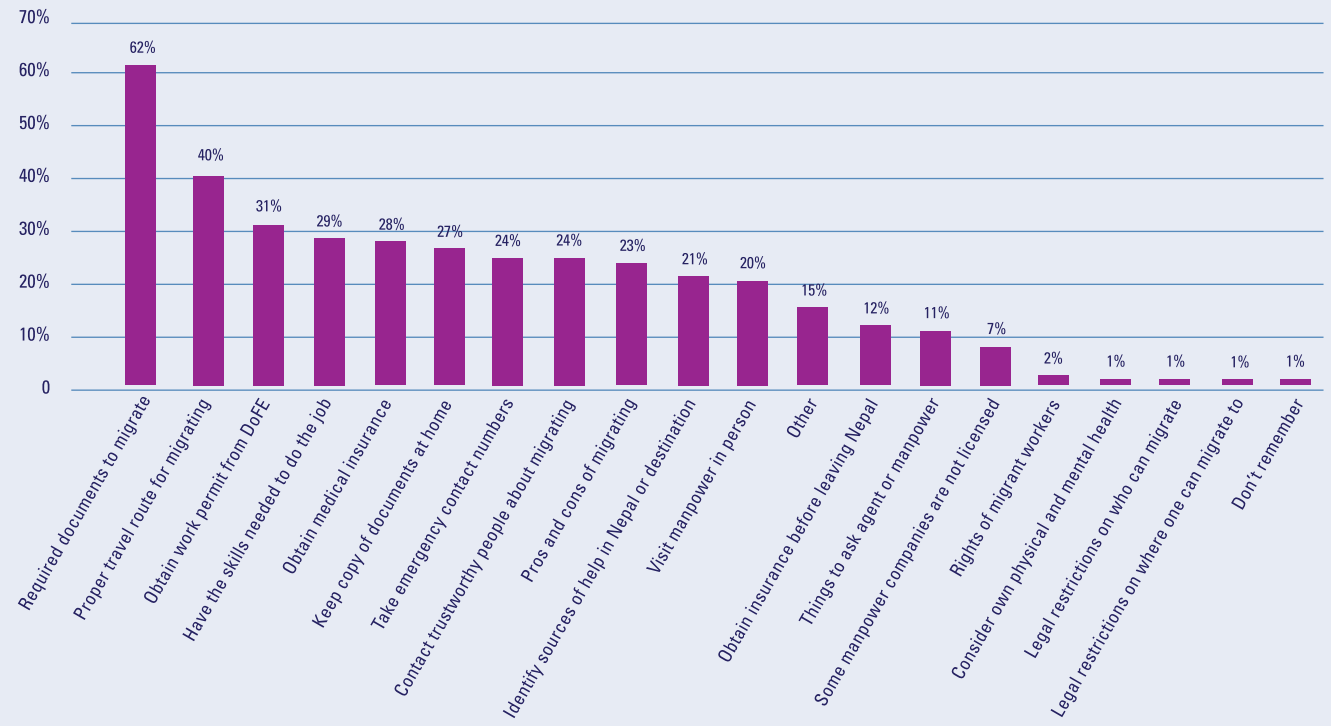

SWIFT Evaluation

SWIFT RESEARCH BRIEFING NOTE

Lessons from prospective migrant women's participation in the Work in Freedom community intervention activities in Nepal

For further details, see: *Lessons from prospective migrant women's participation in the Work in Freedom community intervention activities in Nepal* and *Migration planning among female prospective Labour Migrants from Nepal: a comparison of first-time and repeat migrants.*

FIGURE 4: Most important thing learned from WiF pre-decision-making training (n=94)



NARAYANGONJ DISTRICT, BANGLADESH

Forty women (about 80%) attended the 2-day pre-decision orientation. This includes the five women who admitted signing their name only to collect the lunch box. 14 women participated in the 5-day pre-departure training. Another six women were enlisted but could not attend because the *dalal* (recruiter-broker) and the family discouraged participation. Ultimately, 11 out of 49 women had minimal exposure to the WiF messages, which suggests the caution needed in using participant registration as an indicator of 'an informed participant' or a measure of 'success'. Participants in the five-day training session commonly reported a cheerful atmosphere, in which they appreciated the songs, good food and monetary allowance distributed at the end.

The findings suggest that there was a critical social distance between the participants and trainers. Trainers were from a more-educated urban class and participants were less-educated village women, which seemed to hinder good communications and mutual understanding.

ODISHA, INDIA

Pre- and post-training questionnaires were administered to 347 women who participated in the WiF two-day pre-decision-making training. Awareness scores about migration risks, practices, benefits (i.e. constructs) were very low both before and after the training. There were greater changes in attitudes towards women's work and modest changes for attitudes towards migration practices and paid domestic work. Women endorsed very few indicators of awareness, indicating their limited awareness of migration risks and opportunities, worker's rights and collective bargaining. And, after the training, their knowledge seemed to improve only slightly. Findings suggests that the short-term effects of the training were marginal for awareness and moderate for attitudes across all domains.

Women's stated intention to migrate was very low at the start of the training and decreased after the training. Just 34 participants (10.4%) had thoughts of moving away from the village to work before the training, compared to 25 participants afterward (7.7%). Training may have exposed women to further risks and dangers of migration, which discouraged intent to migrate.

Empowerment messages vs power differentials during labour migration: a 'Trajectory Approach'

The community-based approach and training emphasis on gender equality recognised the complexity and power differentials involved in migration-decision-making. Findings continually emphasised that decision-making frequently involved multiple male and female household members, other family members, neighbours and local brokers. The trainings' emphasis on women's rights and their contributions to household operations and income was likely to raise women's awareness of their rights within their family and marriage. Trainings also posited women's rights workers, especially their right to review their contracts, which may have persuaded women to believe they needed to adopt a stronger position in negotiations with local recruiters. However, at the same time, the reality of deeply entrenched local social norms that set gender inequalities in the household and community hinder women's actual ability to assert these ideals with their husbands, male family members or local brokers. Moreover, because of the nearly insurmountable power differentials that increase throughout the migration process, women were not in a position to apply their new perspectives or negotiate better terms of recruitment or work conditions. It was common for women to explain that programme messages were not applicable during migration, especially as they become more isolated from support resources. Women frequently perceived that risk, isolation and harm increased over time during their migration.

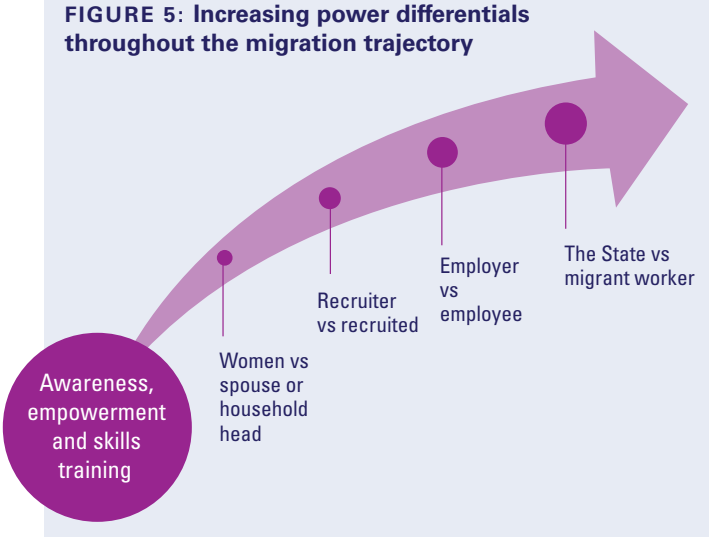
Findings indicate that migration-decision-making is highly gendered, with women's migration frequently a household decision or, for married women, often dominated by their husband, whereas men report more independent decision-making. For instance, when study participants in Nepal were asked how much involvement they had in the decision to migrate, the majority (58%) said the decision was taken jointly with others (mostly family members), while well-over two-thirds of the men said the decision was their own, either completely or mostly. Similarly, when asked who actually made the decision to migrate, only 46% of the women said they took the decision themselves in comparison to 93% of the men. Findings from Bangladesh also suggest that local gender norms dominate migration-decision-making, as illustrated by an interview with a husband of a female migrant:

> *My wife told me she wanted to go abroad to work. I told her clearly that the day she leaves, she is also walking away from me. She is my son's mother… She did what she wanted before marriage but, as a husband, it is my duty to keep her on the right path. Women who go abroad get defiled… In this way, their marriage ends. Only husbands without backbone stay married to such women.*

In India, these gendered decision-making patterns were similar. Almost one-third of the women said their spouses took the decision to migrate, and 18% said other relations took the decision, while less than one percent of men said that their spouses had taken the decision.

While women's power of negation can be difficult within their own household, the power imbalances increase exponentially at each stage of international migration. Women are at greater and greater disadvantages against the local brokers, international manpower agencies, and then within the employer-foreign employee relationship. Furthermore, government laws and regulations almost always favour recruiters and employers over migrants and workers. Among the strongest examples of legislation that works against migrant workers is the *kafala* system in Gulf states, which imposes many restrictions on migrant workers and favours sponsoring agents. The SWiFT evaluation indicates that, in reality, women's safety and decent work will depend on interventions that support women throughout the migration process. Without interventions that follow a migration trajectory, pre-migration messaging will have little impact and, by creating false empowerment hopes, may even put women at greater risk.

FIGURE 5: Increasing power differentials throughout the migration trajectory



When dealing with recruiters, women in each study location repeatedly reported various misleading recruitment ploys, deceptive work contracts and types of financial exploitation, non-payment and deceptive pay arrangements by both recruiters and employers. For instance, half of Nepali women planning to migrate (within 3 months) had no information about clauses in their contract. Moreover, women in each study explained that they had little means to obtain what was owed to them.

Once at the work destination, women reported having little to no control over the abuses they suffered at the hands of employers. For example, nearly all returnee migrant women participating in the Nepal study arm reported being yelled at, insulted, or humiliated (94%) while working overseas. Many were threatened (36%), some reported being slapped, hit with a fist, or having something thrown at them (22%), and a high proportion were pushed, shoved, kicked, dragged, or beaten up (18%). Over one in ten had their personal belongings damaged intentionally (11%). In most of these cases, the perpetrator was the employer (65%) or the employer's relatives (42%).

NEPALI MIGRANT WOMEN REPORTED:

- 94% were yelled at, insulted or humiliated.
- 36% were threatened.
- 22% were slapped, hit with a fist or had something thrown at them.
- 18% were pushed, shoved, kicked, dragged or beaten up.

In the Bangladesh study, women gave similar accounts of abuse. For example, Asha Begum and Shahinur (fictitious names) were lured, abused, molested, sold, held captive – one in Lebanon and the other in both Qatar and Syria. However, during the training, when these stories were offered, trainers were unable to address these topics and fell back on guidance from the training manual: the women should have migrated with a licensed recruiting agency and avoid *dalal* (brokers). Yet, to date, there is little evidence that using licenced recruiter leads to women's safety – moreover, few women in the study believed the possibility of migrating without a broker.

Women from Ganjam also reported abuse and harassment. For instance, construction workers reported verbal abuse by employers, recruiters, co-workers, local residents, police and other authorities. Blackmail or extortion was also common. Women also described sexual abuse, as one participant talked about her experience as a very young domestic worker:

> *The unpleasant experience with that old man in Kerala has indeed left a lifetime [impact] on me…That old man was not good. He put his hand on me …I don't know whether [his wife] knew about what he did, I was very young and could not express myself. I used to spread a mat under the bed of a room and sleep there like a dog in fear.*

Certainly, young women who are living away from home are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse and will have little recourse.

Ultimately, while pre-migration training may provide information that fosters women's sense of empowerment and practical knowledge about migration processes and actual work experiences (from returnees), these sessions seem unable to offer real protection from future harm. For female migrant workers, there are currently few pre-migration interventions that have proven effective to address the most untenable points of abuse and exploitation during migration. Trainings have yet to demonstrate that they can offer sufficient applicable guidance to help women overcome risks along

STRENGTHS

- Community-based strategies to promote gender equality that involve men and women may create better environments for shared decision-making.
- Women's knowledge of their rights may foster morenegotiation with local recruiters.

LIMITATIONS

- Social norms reinforce power differences related to gender, age and caste.
- Some women have difficulty talking to their husbands about topics discussed in the training.
- Many risks in the migration pathway are beyond individual control.
- Women rarely feel they are in a position to negotiate their rights during migration.

the migration-work trajectory. Findings suggest that pre-migration advice has little influence on migrant women's safety because women's capacity and resources to apply the guidance generally diminishes throughout their journey. Migrant workers are in increasingly weaker positions to negotiate their circumstances, avoid ill-treatment and effectively respond to abuses. Findings also seemed to indicate that by attending the trainings, and especially by hearing encouraging messages about safety during migration, women may have gained a positive view of migration – perhaps making migration appealing to women who had not previously planned to go overseas for work.

Although women can benefit from improving their understanding of rights, fostering individual resourcefulness alone is unlikely to prevent human trafficking or exploitation at a population level. Empowerment in the migration process can potentially allow women to make informed choices and protect them from pressure and excessive influence by others in their community of origin and after migration. However, the conditions that allow women to assert power need to be in place before this can be achieved. See: *What role can empowerment play in preventing exploitation of migrants?*

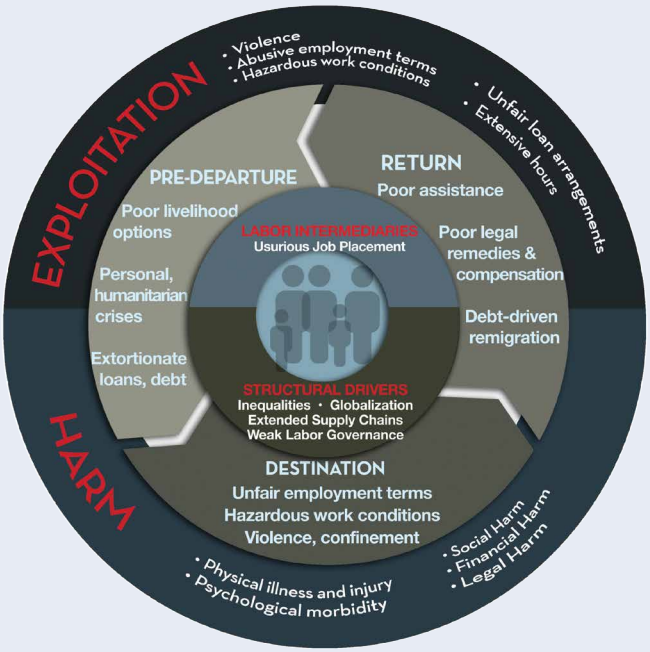
Prevention of labour exploitation: a public health approach[49]

There is growing recognition of how precarious employment and legal and entitlement structures affect individual and population health.[50] Addressing these structural determinants among marginalised populations is at the core of effective prevention efforts. Extreme exploitation, like other complex social phenomena, such as violence against women or substance misuse, has multiple and interacting causes and effects.[51,52]A prevention lens directs one to consider the interaction of multiple factors that protect or put individuals and populations at risk of labour exploitation and to seek potential mechanisms to minimize these risks or enhance protection of low-wage workers.

To prevent the exploitation of aspiring labour migrants, further evidence is needed about the multi-level determinants of exploitation and, specifically on what factors promote safe migration and decent work. Theoretical or policy frameworks such as Figure 5, are a good starting point to consider how individual, group, and structural factors (including economic, social, legal, and policy-related aspects) influence exploitation and health along a migration trajectory, which can guide our search for evidence to inform interventions.[28–31]

Figure 2 depicts factors associated with labour exploitation across a migration process and includes dimensions of exploitation and various dimensions of harm. It is worth noting, however, that while structurally driven social, economic, and gendered power imbalances underpin exploitation more generally, they often manifest differently between

FIGURE 5: Socioeconomic determinants of labour exploitation and harm



Source: PLOS Medecine. doi: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002437.g002

49. Zimmerman C, Kiss L (2017) Human trafficking and exploitation: A global health concern. *PLoS Med* 14(11): e1002437. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002437

50. Ahonen E, Benavides F, Benach J. Immigrant populations, work and health – a systematic literature review. *Scand J Work Environ Health*. 2007;33: 96–104. pmid:17460797

51. Michau L, Horn L, Bank A, Dutt M, Zimmerman C. Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice. *The Lancet* 2015;385(9978):1672–84.

52. Heise L. Violence against women an integrated, ecological framework. *Violence against women* 1998;4(3):262–90. pmid:12296014

different forms of exploitation. In many low-wage production sectors, for instance, exploitative practices are sustained by business models that rely on labyrinthine supply chains, myriad labour intermediaries, and high demand for inexpensive and disposable labour. It is not coincidental that exploitation of workers has occurred alongside the diminishing power and density of trade unions and shrinking freedom of association and collective bargaining.[53] These interactions are exacerbated by weak labour governance[54] that fails to protect workers from production processes frequently fuelled by demands for low-cost goods and services – despite international conventions to protect workers.[55] The framework in Figure 5 depicts a process of complex, cumulative causation of potential harm throughout a migration cycle. It highlights interactions between macro-level structural factors (e.g., global, national, social, etc., systems and institutions) that influence the persistence of trafficking and harm among individuals in communities (micro-levels). And, while not explicit, this conceptualisation also acknowledges the role of inequalities such as age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and class[56] to each individual's vulnerability to exploitation.[57]

Recruitment: country findings

Because recruitment is the first stage in the labour migration process, it was a significant focus of attention in the community-based training. The majority of women who plan to migrate overseas rely on the assistance of a local broker, but most seemed to know very little about the recruitment and placement processes. For women in rural areas in particular, local brokers are generally the most readily available, or only, source of migration assistance, as they are often the link to registered agencies based in urban areas. Overseas labour placement frequently involves fragmented and/or informally connected networks of brokers and job placement agencies. Other than word-of-mouth, women had few ways to learn about brokers, so relied primarily on referrals by family and returnee migrants.

Brokers were often embedded in the communities and part of a prospective migrant's social network. A broker could be someone belonging to a woman's caste network or her religious affiliation. They could be a family member, a friend, a neighbour or a religious leader, or simply someone local with known connections to the broader recruitment network. Recruiters have different practices and their factual knowledge can facilitate safer migration but, at the same time, it can create a false sense of security.

Recruiters can often be the ones to commit the first in an ongoing series of exploitative acts. However, they may also be the only reliable source of help or redress when their clients find themselves in a difficult situation abroad. At the same time that recruiters have no binding obligation to ensure their clients' safety, fair pay or assist clients out of bad situations, they do need to maintain a sufficient business reputation to continue to recruit clients. Moreover, in many communities in South Asia, female migration is associated with the stigma of family break-up, men's weakened power and female sexual promiscuity. Therefore, abuses in the recruitment process tend to remain secret and agents can sometimes benefit from this lack of transparency to ensure their business remains reputable. As a consequence, most migrant women from a low social status are rarely in a position to seek financial or legal remedies from deceptive or exploitative brokers.

Importantly, informal recruiters seem to have very limited control over migration outcomes and may themselves be liable to deception by overseas agencies. Informal, local recruiters seldom have the ability or willingness to check the legitimacy or reliability of overseas agencies. Moreover, regulations at origin are commonly ignored at destination. Therefore, migration itineraries and promises around return-on-investments are often ignored, without further consequences for the deceiver at origin or destination.

53. Visser J. Union Membership Statistics in 24 Countries. *Monthly Labor Review*. 2006;129:38–49.

54. Lee J. Global supply chain dynamics and labour governance: Implications for social upgrading 2016.[27 Oct 2017]. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—dgreports/—inst/documents/publication/wcms_480957.pdf

55. Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers, (1975).

56. Urry J. Mobilities: Polity Press; 2007

57. Polaris. *The Typology of Modern Slavery Defining Sex and Labor Trafficking in the United States*. 2017 [27 Oct 2017]. https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris-Typology-of-Modern-Slavery.pdf

Figures from Nepal suggest that most women rely on local recruiters who were recommended by family or acquaintances, but few know whether the recruiter was licensed or not. Specifically, findings indicate:

- 65% of women had help from a recruiter to find a job.
- 77% did not know if the recruiter was licensed.
- 54% of women using local recruiters relied on recommendations by returnees (relative or community members).

IN NEPAL

- A majority of women used a recruiter to find a job and did not know whether they were licensed.
- Women relied on recommendations by returnees (relative or community members) to recruiters.

Women in Bangladesh who intended to migrate internationally were also committed to relying on local recruiters (*dalal*) who are rarely licensed. Yet, the training messages in each study site strongly emphasised that women should not use unlicensed recruiters. Yet, in Bangladesh, these messages to avoid the local *dalal* rang especially hollow, because rural women had few other options but to rely on local brokers.

IN BANGLADESH

- Women were reluctant to adopt training advice to engage only official recruitment agencies.
- Recruitment agents (*dalal*) were viewed as the only realistic option.

In India, where women who participated in the study migrated in-country, most reported migrating 'independently' (52%) or via family members (33%). The mineral rich locations of the region have become the prime hunting grounds for contractor-driven migration most famously to the brick kilns of Andhra and Telangana. For domestic workers, the northwest district of Sundergarh has become well known as a recruiting ground for work as live in domestic workers in metropolises like Delhi. In India, as well, messages about adhering to formal recruiters would likely have met with disregard, as well.

IN INDIA

- Women engaged with fragmented recruitment networks.
- Women are likely to trust recruiters who belong to their family or a caste-connected network.

While there is often good reason to focus on the recruitment process and recruiters when trying to influence safer migration, our findings strongly suggest that the risk of exploitation is closely associated with the destination. In fact, it seems to be a common 'business model' to recruit women with low information and educational levels to work in countries with ingrained gender, economic, cultural and structural inequalities, where they will find themselves socially isolated and without recourse to assistance or justice. Recruitment-linked individuals and agencies from villages, central urban areas and abroad perpetuate this 'business model' because it is lucrative for everyone – except the employee. Sadly, for the employees, there is no real system for recruiter or employer accountability, justice or redress.

SWiFT findings leave little doubt that few women are able or willing to use 'licensed' recruiters. Interventions that focus primarily on licensed recruiters are very unlikely to influence the safety of the majority of migrating women from rural areas. Moreover, recruitment in rural areas often involves both unlicensed and licensed agencies, as the urban agencies utilise local networks, which further diminishes the transparency in the recruitment chain. Thus, regardless of migration

LESSONS FOR FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

Focussing exclusively on licensed agencies will have limited effect on women's safety.

- In places where recruitment options are scarce, it is naïve to discourage use of informal recruiters.
- Local networks commonly provide access to clients for other recruiters, obscuring who may be involved in recruitment transactions.
- Prevailing gender norms stigmatising female migration may prevent women from seeking remedies for physical or financial harm.

training sessions and attempts to dissuade women from using informal services, rural women will continue to rely on local, informal agents for all the reasons stated above, including poor access to formal recruitment services and their limited power to negotiate migration terms and conditions. Similarly, few women will be in a position to pursue action against those who may have cheated them or knowingly put them in harm's way. Future actions to protect women from early engagement in exploitative activities will need to address the power and knowledge differentials and access gap between women and recruiters. That is, until governments and non-governmental agencies can reach out into the rural areas to give women more honest and reliable migration options, which also ensure recourse for abuses and punishment for abusers, interventions providing migration-information as a form of prevention will have primarily a 'feel-good' factor, versus actual protective consequences.

Migrant networks and communications

SWiFT findings indicate that for some, migrant networks that put women in touch with other migrants at their destination can be protective, as others have found in previous research.[58] For example, SWiFT household census data from Nepal indicate that nearly all migrants stayed in touch with family using mobile phones. Moreover, one-third of women used some form of social media and very few participants reported having their phones confiscated. As the use of mobile technology spreads, the opportunity for migrants to share information, alleviate loneliness and respond to urgent assistance needs will grow. However, at the same time, women may be reluctant to share information because of the stigma often associated with migration. Regardless of what has occurred overseas, international returnee migrants are often suspected of having engaged in sex work. Moreover, returnees are frequently averse to complaining about their recruiter for fear of retaliation, because these brokers commonly live in their community.

MIGRANT NETWORKS: OPPORTUNITIES

- Knowing a migrant at destination may be protective.
- Women commonly possessed a mobile phone.
- Fostering information flows could help build networks to share resources and counteract social isolation.
- Women migrants may not share information for fear of risks to their reputation and because of possible retaliation by agents.

Findings from India indicate how women are increasingly recognising the usefulness of mobile phones to manage their migration. As noted by one participant:

> *Now nobody is taking help from agents to migrate. Everyone is making contact by phone. When they get a contact, they go for work by themselves. In this way they can also save their first month's salary and the migration charges.* **18 YEAR OLD DOMESTIC WORKER, WHO STARTED WORK WHEN SHE WAS 13**

It must be noted, however, that participants in India were migrating within India and did not have to undertake any of the onerous administrative processes that are required for international migration.

At the same time, however, while women may have greater access to their own phones, women in Bangladesh appear to have been misled about the usefulness of the helplines that were described during the pre-departure trainings. First, although helpline workers may have helpful intentions, they simply do not have the resources to provide assistance to women who are overseas and services are rarely if ever available 24 hours per day. Findings from Bangladesh indicated that the helpline was of little to no help, but had created some level of false hope and a sense of frustration:

> *...I phoned...[the NGO] office... A woman picked up the phone... She said, why do you want to come back. I could not tell her the real reason... I feared for my honour and my reputation. I called my family several times... I cried a lot. I said I would die if I was forced to stay... Two days after these phone calls, I fled my employer's house. Again, I called ...[the NGO] from the agency office. Communication was*

58. Bilecen B, Sienkiewicz JJ (2015). Informal Social Protection Networks of Migrants: Typical Patterns in Different Transnational Social Spaces. *Population, Place and Space*: Volume 21:3 (pp 227-243) https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1906.

difficult. I could not tell them where I was. They got annoyed with me. **MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKER TO SAUDI ARABIA, AGE 23**

Hotlines have become a growing intervention to respond to trafficking. While our study did not attempt to evaluate the benefits and challenges of hotlines, some of the results suggest that providing information about hotlines to prospective migrants must be done with a great deal of caution. Women should not be led to believe that a phone call will result in rapid extraction and assistance. The woman above further explained:

They said at least 3 to 4 months would be required to get me repatriated through government channels. My guardians went to the…[NGO] office. They were told that at least 150,000 Taka would have to be paid and they repeated it would take 3 to 4 months.

Our findings suggest that migrants will benefit from some form of 'migration insurance' that is secured prior to migration. For instance, the Philippines has established the *Labor Export Policy* in which the Philippine government provides a number of subsidized benefits including pre-migration life insurance and pension plans, medical insurance and tuition assistance for the migrant and his or her family, and eligibility for pre-departure and emergency loans.[59]

Additionally, where possible, prospective migrants and their families might be advised that when they are calculating the costs of migration, it could be useful to consider setting aside an emergency fund. These messages might be best communicated by returnee migrants, who are often able to offer the most credible insights about what assistance women can really expect and advice about how to plan for potentially difficult situations. However, interventions involving returnees will have to identify ways of overcoming the stigma many women experience following migration, especially where sexual abuse or implications of sexual exploitation are involved. Safe and encouraging environments must be created for women to be willing to share their information and advice.

59. O'Neil K. 2004. *Labor Export as Government Policy: The Case of the Philippines*. Migration Policy Institute: Geneva.

LESSONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

Many interventions launched to prevent modern slavery and exploitation assume that people would be less vulnerable to forced labour if they were more aware of trafficking risks and of existing regulations and their rights. However, very limited evidence supports the assumption that vulnerability is driven by a lack of knowledge among prospective workers. Rather, findings from SWiFT in Nepal indicate that awareness of migration risks very rarely changes any aspect of a woman's migration plans, nor does it influence her risk of forced labour.

Our findings suggest the following lessons for future interventions:

LESSON: Managing labour migration risks are not within an individual's control. Anti-trafficking programmes that invest primarily in awareness-raising, knowledge-building and empowerment as a means to prevent forced labour will not achieve these intended reductions in abuse. SWiFT findings strongly indicate that programmatic assumptions (or theories of change) that link 'knowledge and empowerment activities' with the impact of 'reduced forced labour' are erroneous.

ACTION: Strategies to support safe labour migration must adopt a 'trajectory approach' rather than singular 'pre-migration' interventions. A trajectory approach means investing in activities that simultaneously address the power dynamics at the transit and destination stages of a woman's migration. Programmes must promote a more equitable balance of power between migrants, recruiters, employers and the state. Interventions must invest in mechanisms and resources that help migrants assert their rights at each stage of migration.

LESSON: Pre-migration training can create false expectations about migration-related benefits and security and unintentionally promote women's migration. Programmes that promote empowerment are important for advancing gender equity and women's rights, but for prospective migrant women, these messages may mislead women to believe they can assert these rights with recruiters, employers and in destination countries. These beliefs may then persuade women to migrate, who otherwise may not have considered it safe.

ACTION: Where pre-migration training and knowledge-building curricula are to be implemented, the content should be based on evidence, and returnee migrants must be included in the design and planning. Curricula must avoid messages that imply women will be able to fully assert their rights and new knowledge (e.g., contract negotiation, employment conditions). Moreover, curricula will rarely be identical across contexts. Training staff must be able to depict the reality of many migrant women's experiences and address questions honestly about a woman's options to resolve dangerous or distressing situations. Returnee women may be able to provide a range of examples of experiences and tactics, if non-stigmatising environments can be created. Reliable information on resources available for migrant women in abusive situations should be shared.

LESSON: Recruitment for overseas migration rarely involves a single agent and instead frequently relies on a chain of brokers from village to urban centre to destination. Pre-migration information sessions that suggest women use only licensed brokers will be seen as unrealistic both because rural women may not have access to licensed brokers and because they may not know who is in the brokerage chain. Similarly, policies to mandate licensing of brokers will likely miss the least formal local agents, who will remain at liberty to impose extortionate terms.

ACTION: Efforts to tighten legislation around recruitment licensing must be accompanied by strategies to ensure that women in rural areas can easily access licensed agencies. Moreover, recruitment agencies in countries of origin must retain some accountability for the behaviour of their overseas partners.

LESSON: The availability of emergency assistance and 'hotlines' should never be oversold. Women should not be led to believe that they can rely on urgent extraction and support if they are in an exploitative or abusive situation – especially overseas.

ACTION: Investments in emergency assistance and hotlines must be accompanied by trustworthy testing and dissemination of how these assistance mechanisms are working. Women must be provided context-specific results on the reliability of these mechanisms and how they have acted in response to women in need of help.

LESSON: Migrant women, especially domestic workers, are frequently isolated once at their destination. Many are exposed to verbal and physical abuse and some to sexual violence and coercion. SWiFT participants often indicated they were distressed and unclear how to respond or what their options were to improve or leave their situations.

ACTION: Future pre-migration strategies and destination interventions should try to promote migrant network-building. Contacts within local migrant networks may help women feel less socially isolated and offer shared information for small and large employment challenges.

LESSON: Women rarely recouped compensation for financial, physical or social harm. It is not uncommon for women to keep secret what they consider to be migration 'failures', including lost income, psychological trauma, and damage to their reputation and/or marriage.

ACTION: Greater investment in post-migration assistance is needed. Interventions should aim to help migrants recoup lost wages, seek damages from exploitative parties, including abusive intermediaries and employers. Legal actions and financial penalties against extortionate, deceptive or irresponsible recruiters may serve to deter abuses by intermediaries in the future. Post-migration strategies will also need to identify ways to confront the stigma that is often associated with female migration – especially for women whose migration is considered to have been a 'failure'. See: *From Risks to Rights: Evaluation of a Training Programme*

LESSON: Poverty alleviation and economic development are excellent avenues to improve individual and community. However, these large-scale development activities may not directly affect the risks of human trafficking or forced labour.

ACTION: Governments and donors seeking to invest in pre-migration actions that have the specific goal of preventing entry into forced labour should consider the overlaps between development activities and interventions to prevent modern slavery. While recognising and utilising the linkages between community development and migration, nonetheless modern-slavery strategies should avoid misconstruing the different outcome and impact indicators for each (e.g., poverty alleviation vs reduced migration vs decrease in forced labour).

LESSON: Labour migrants frequently come home with a myriad of health and other support needs, which are often neglected. While attention has clearly turned to prevention strategies, these initiatives should not distract donors and policy-makers from investing in post-migration support, as well. In fact, remigration and circular migration is common and many migrant workers will undertake multiple journeys for which they will benefit from support and recovery services at home.

ACTION: Future investments should be made in post-migration support services, which can address the health, financial and legal needs of returning migrants.

These services should form a referral network that includes, at a minimum, the health system, social support services and financial and legal aid.

LESSON: Women travelling to countries where labour migration is tied to work sponsorship programmes – such as the *kafala* system in the GCC countries – are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuses.

ACTION: Governments from these destination countries should be held accountable for abuses by sending countries, the private sector and the international community. Interventions will benefit from incentives in favour of legislation that eliminates the dependency of workers on a single employer or recruitment service.

LESSON: The development and assessments of policies and interventions will benefit from evidence on the magnitude, distribution, dynamics and potential causes of forced labour in each specific context. Findings from our evaluation have shown that some widely held assumptions about forced labour are not supported by data. Furthermore, the prevalence of migration and/or forced labour in some of the regions targeted by the project seemed relatively low when compared to others.

ACTION: Investment in formative research to inform the design of interventions on forced labour is necessary. We still know very little about how migration and labour exploitation occur in each context, and interventions that are not informed by locally-specific evidence may fall short of hitting meaningful targets.

LESSON: Interventions to prevent human trafficking and labour exploitation seek changes in complex causal pathways. Because of this complexity, it is often difficult to predict the effect of interventions amidst multiple interacting factors. Thus, the risk of unintended outcomes is substantial. For example, migration training may push women to migrate, who were otherwise seeking local livelihood choices.

ACTION: Monitoring systems are essential for documenting interventions' implementation processes and short-term effects. This information can provide immediate feedback to the intervention's design and prevent negative unintended outcomes, identify unplanned positive outcomes and suggest methods for remedies in cases where harm may have occurred.

Forced labour risks are driven by inequalities across countries and regions. These economic, social and gendered inequities fuel embedded power imbalances between migrant workers and the mechanisms that facilitate migration and underpin exploitative labour. Until strategies can shift the structures that grant supremacy to labour intermediaries, employers, corporations and the state, workers will remain at a fundamental disadvantage – no matter how much or what kind of information we provide to them. Until inequalities throughout the migration process can be reduced, they will continue to obstruct women's opportunities to choose and control the nature of their migration, their well-being and their personal safety. Ultimately, what change demands is for policy-makers and corporations, who are in a position to govern over these powerful forces, to step forward to be on the side of their workers to ensure they are in a position to negotiate decent work and fair wages.


SWIFT Evaluation

SWIFT RESEARCH BRIEFING NOTE

Asia Regional Briefing Note – No.1 May 2018

Human trafficking and modern slavery: New insights for policy and programmes

See: *SWiFT Asia Regional Briefing Note. No.1 May 2018*

SWiFT research briefing notes and reports

Bangladesh	
"One needs a boat to cross a river" Bangladeshi women's routes to overseas employment in the Middle East **Bangladesh Briefing Note No. 1, May 2017**	http://same.lshtm.ac.uk/files/2015/11/Bangladesh-briefing-note-1.pdf
Community-based pre-migration training in Bangladesh: learning from women for future participant-centred programming **Bangladesh Briefing Note No. 2, December 2018**	https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/files/swift-bangladesh-brief-no.2-learning-from-women-dec18.pdf
Bangladesh Research Report: From Risks to Rights	https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/files/swift-bangaldesh-evaluation-report-2018.pdf
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Gender and internal labour migration from Odisha, India **India Briefing Note No. 1, October 2016**	http://same.lshtm.ac.uk/files/2015/11/India-briefing-note-01.pdf
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