



COMMUNITY-LED OUTREACH ON SAFE MIGRATION IN 12 DISTRICTS OF BANGLADESH

SUMMARY

Within Bangladesh, a large pool of potential irregular migrants seeks employment, or a better life abroad. With limited awareness of safe migration practices or the dangers of irregular migration, many attempt to travel to many regions, including Europe. Awareness-raising programs encourage migrants to travel safely, but materials and methods are often developed internally and could benefit from wider stakeholder engagement and multiple channels for dissemination.

IOM will work with the Government of Bangladesh, civil society and communities across 12 districts to contribute to a reduction in irregular migration through building community support for safe migration and engaging the wider community in awareness campaign planning. IOM will evaluate previous campaigns and materials, facilitate community led processes for the development of awareness-raising materials and approaches and prepare a comprehensive and inclusive awareness-raising campaign across the target districts. Additionally, IOM will focus heavily on establishing a strong evidence base on the effectiveness of migration related awareness-raising.

RATIONALE

The dangers of irregular maritime migration have attracted significant media attention in recent months as a result of the movement of migrants into Europe spurred by the crisis in Syria. Likewise, in 2015, the Andaman Crisis highlighted the fatal outcomes of the existence of an organised people smuggling route through the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea to South East Asia.

With large numbers of irregular migrants reported to be living in European Union Member States, questions of respect for and integrity of member states immigration systems and safety of the migrants themselves require consideration. Increasing numbers of irregular migrants continue to arrive in Europe, moving through Libya and other transit countries to get there. Irregular migrants landing in Italy, self-declaring as 'Bangladeshi', showed an increase from nearly 300 in 2013 to over 5000 in 2015. The vast majority were men, with less than 10 percent being classified as 'minors'. 641 irregular migrants from Bangladesh arrived in Greece from January to March of 2016 alone. In accordance with EU law, irregular migrants who do not have the authorisation to stay, will be subject to return.

Within Bangladesh, a large pool of potential irregular migrants remains, seeking employment, or a better life abroad. There are about 1.8 million new labour market entries per year, whilst the labour market can only provide about 200,000 new formal sector jobs. In 2015 the regular labour migration route was able to provide employment for additional 500,000 individuals, which left roughly a million individuals looking for employment wherever they could find it. This large labour market gap has resulted in the establishment of organised channels looking to take prospective migrants abroad through other means, profiting from the desperation of the people. The risks of irregular migration are significant. One IOM study found that 76 percent of almost 1,400 migrants and refugees interviewed in Italy from 24th of June to 3rd August 2016 – and who travelled along the Central Mediterranean Route connecting North Africa to Europe – have responded positively to at least one indicator of the presence of human trafficking and other exploitative practices on the route. IOM also found many of the migrants that left Bangladesh through irregular channels were subjected to violence and abuse, and in some cases, the forms of exploitation associated with human trafficking.



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Almost all who returned home in 2015, returned with significant levels of debt and no obvious means of repayment.

Circulating migration success stories, financial constraints, lack of accurate information and vision for the future, and hasty decision making are contributing to migrants choosing to trust smugglers, traffickers and informal migration brokers. Data collected by IOM from crisis-affected and returned migrants further reveal that up to 25% of returning migrants may seek to re-migrate even after having experienced poor outcomes.

Key gaps identified in efforts to address irregular migration to Europe are a lack of understanding of the dangers of irregular migration among potential migrants, their families and communities and limited awareness of the processes for accessing regular migration routes. Interviews with returned migrants show their lack of familiarity with the risks of migrating irregularly. Even those who are aware of the dangers are willing to experience risk for the hope of benefit abroad. Further, crippling debt, lack of employment and referrals from trusted community sources and networks means that simple advertising or information dissemination is insufficient to change irregular migration behaviour. In addition to contextualized and community based awareness-raising, viable alternatives to irregular migration and localised, better coordinated services and support from Government, private sector and civil society are needed at national and local level.

Proposed response

Under the EURCAP Facility, IOM proposes to complement the activities proposed under the foreseen EU-funded migration governance and reintegration project with an intervention focused on raising awareness of the benefits of safe migration.

Over 14 months, the intervention would seek to build awareness around key themes on safe migration in 12 districts:

- The resilience and success of regular Bangladeshi migrants
- The risks of, and alternatives to, irregular migration to Europe
- How to access regular mechanisms for migration.

The intervention will aim to:

- 1. Assess potential Bangladeshi migrant's information needs, preferred channels and current local materials.** A thorough assessment of target groups, communication channels and existing awareness-raising materials and methods will provide a strong evidence base to complement existing institutional awareness within IOM Dhaka. This stage would include:
 - A desk review and report on existing data, including previous 'safe migration' awareness campaigns.
 - A catalogue and evaluation of existing awareness-raising materials through focus group testing to provide basic and practical criterion for design of effective materials.
 - An assessment of available communication channels and the reach of those channels in target districts. This includes sources and channels used by migrants to seek information on irregular migration and channels and methods that could be used to reach potential migrants in the target areas.



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- An assessment of the size and geolocation and socio-economic characteristics of target population of the campaign, i.e. considering irregular migration to the EU. This would be based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from returnees from Europe by IOM Dhaka and IOM sources in Europe.
 - An assessment of the causes of irregular migration from selected districts towards Europe, profile of potential irregular migrants; age group, gender, the causes and routes of irregular migration.
- 2. Develop a community led, consultative, contextualised media outreach on ‘safe migration’.** This process would engage returned migrants, potential migrants, civil society and government in the strategic planning of awareness-raising. IOM would build on learning gained through previous actions in Bangladesh and the implementation of IOM’s regional IOM X strategy. Synergies would be built with IOM projects to raise awareness, due to be implemented during 2016. The intervention would include:
- Community led planning of the campaign in key ‘representative’ districts.
 - Highly participatory content development process, which will include consultations with the campaign’s target audiences to test media campaign materials during development, for comprehension, likeability and relevance. This process will ensure the campaign activities achieve the desired behaviour change impact according to best C4D practice.
 - Media sensitisation on the campaign
 - District level showcase events. These events are an opportunity to ‘showcase’ the work of participants involved in the community planning processes and could take different forms depending on the outcome of the planning process.
 - A high level publicity event in Dhaka to raise awareness of the campaign and enhance impact.
- 3. Plan and implement a comprehensive ‘safe migration’ awareness-raising program** across 12 districts facing high levels of irregular out-migration to European Union member states. Engaging the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), representative bodies such as the Bangladesh Migration Development Forum (BMDF) and key civil society actors, IOM Dhaka would facilitate the collaborative planning of the campaign implementation through;
- A consultative workshop with key Government of Bangladesh representatives from the MoEWOE, MoFA and MoHA, EU Delegation and EU representative from Brussels, IOM representatives and Civil Society contributors will review key issues and provide input for the planning process.
 - A facilitated implementation planning process, supported by key actors utilising the outputs from the media outreach development.
 - The implementation of a joint campaign, in partnership with the GoB and civil society actors, through agreed channels may include (but not be limited to); public miking , community radio, pot songs , interactive theatre, workshops with community and religious leaders, migration events at schools, video showings and migration fairs.



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- Strengthening of existing migration support groups to provide referral to government services and public and private Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), providing reliable information and support to potential migrants in their home communities.
 - IOM will specifically engage Religious leaders, Union Parishad members and school teachers in delivering safe migration messaging to their communities
- 4. Development of a mass media Migration Outreach tool on ‘migration and mobility’.** The production of a video or short series of video segments would chronicle the challenges and risks and costs related to irregular migration to the EU, both journey and irregular stay in a destination country as well as successes of regular migration by Bangladeshis, including information on legal channels of migration to Europe (eg. information on work and student visas, Erasmus). As part of a ‘balanced narrative’, the content would illustrate and educate audiences on what was needed for a successful regular migration and the sorts of risks, challenges and barriers faced by regular and irregular migrants, providing a gamut of experiences of those attempting migration to a variety of worldwide locations. The tool would be disseminated via mass media to a wide population. The final selection of the tool and channel of dissemination would be based on the consultative planning process to ensure the tool meets the needs of stakeholders.
- 5. Measure the impact of awareness raising activities** to provide strong evidence for the efficacy of different awareness-raising tools and approaches. In addition to monitoring efforts, extensive evaluation of awareness-raising activities through KAP surveys would measure the impact of the activities and the efficacy of different tools and methods employed to guide the development of future efforts. A final review workshop would discuss lessons learned and inform the preparation of the final report.