



Case Stories

## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

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বাদাবন সংঘ  
Badaban Sangho  
(A Women's Rights Organisation)



Case Stories

## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

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## Acknowledgement

Badabon Sangho is a women's rights group that has been working to promote women's rights to land, water-bodies, employment and migration since its formation in 2016. To this period, it has been engaged in Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) programme, advocating and supporting in the key areas of migration governance along with the government, workers groups and other relevant stakeholders. The migration experience for many is far from complacent due to the lack of pre-departure information and necessary assistance. Women migrant workers are often subjected to fraudulent, exploitation, cheating and deception at various stages of the migration process. Being devoid of negotiating power, and the fact that close friends or relatives mostly create more obstacles, leaves the unfortunate victims with little to no scope for redress.

In 2020, with assistance from the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) undertook a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) programme with the objectives of- Empowered Women Migrant Workers (WMWs) benefit from sustainable, inclusive and gender-sensitive labor migration processes and maximize the benefits of migration.

With the aim to aid the objectives, the data has been collected by interpersonal interactions with the women returnees and documenting their experiences.

We acknowledge the guidance and contribution of the Badabon Sangho's senior team and not to mention the contribution of the field level team as well as the volunteers for their invaluable support by arranging interviews. We are also grateful to everyone at the field level for their important inputs. Finally, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the FPAR participants.

We hereby declare that the identities of the participants have been treated with utmost care for safety and security purposes as well as the names we have used are the pseudonyms of the participants. And the information of the participants is not to be subjected for the use of any kind of monetary objectives.



## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

### Khadiza

I went Saudi Arabia to work in a household and after staying in the office for two days they sent me to work for a family. Then working there for three months, when I asked for my salary, they gave me only one month's worth salary and said that they will be sending me back without the rest of my payment. Then I was sent back to the office. I told the office staff that I wanted to stay and work, so shouldn't I be paid with my hard-earned money properly? Little did I know that for this they would beat me with a thick satellite wire! At one point it hit my head and it started bleeding from my nose and mouth. Till this day I face health issues for that physical abuse.

Later, they sent me to another household. There were 12 members in that family. One of the sons was after me. He tried to harass me but couldn't succeed as I shouted loud enough for the other maid to hear me, and I got to know from her that he had tried to harass other maids in the past too and that's why no maids stay there for a long time. So, after some time I contacted the office to ask if they could send me to some other places. But instead, they sent me back to Bangladesh.

I really wanted to work and earn money. Instead, I went through physical abuse, bad brain injury that I still suffer from and a lifelong trauma that I still carry with me.



## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

### Marium

Being barely fifteen years old, when I was told to take care of three babies and that I will be given fifteen thousand taka per month, I immediately took the opportunity and went off to Lebanon to work in a household with the hope of earning enough money to help my family. But as soon as I arrived there, I discovered that the reality was much more different. There were seven members in total and they had five children.

I had to take care of the children and also do all the housework. From morning till the middle of the night, I had to work my fingers to the bone. They even made me do the same work over and over again and still it wasn't enough. I had to move the big furniture all by myself to clean every corner of the house as well as taking care of the children. To monitor my work, they used to wipe the areas with white tissue papers to check if there were any dust left. I used to get barely a maximum of two to three hours of sleep after the bone-breaking hard work all day long. But no matter how much work I did, nothing was enough to please the madam. Whenever I used to ask for my hard-earned salary, she used to beat me. Not

only that, she even taught her 12-year-old boy to hit me with objects or push me at any given chance. Once, he pushed me so hard that I hit the wall and lost my senses. When I woke up, I found myself lying on a bed.

Even getting three meals a day was considered a luxury there. I was not allowed to prepare any food for myself or have any fruits. And during Ramadan, everything just got worse. I wasn't even allowed to say my prayers from time to time. Due to the lack of food, sleep and proper rest, I suffered from malnutrition and lost so much weight and the dark circles under my eyes became permanent. Only twice a month I used to get the chance to talk to my family and that too for only 10 minutes.

Although Sir never misbehaved with me, Madam's father tried his best to harass me whenever he got the chance. One day I was working in the kitchen, that old man touched my shoulder from behind pretending to have something to tell me. Despite not understanding their language correctly, it wasn't hard for me to get that his intentions weren't right. When I started shouting, both his daughter and he beat me saying I was overreacting and was trying to frame him. After three and a half

month I had to run away from there with only seven thousand taka which was all that they paid me for my months-long labor.

Even after running away, life didn't become easy but at least nobody used to beat me and make things difficult

for me unnecessarily. After some time, I managed to work as a part-time maid and slowly started saving money for my plane fare. Three and a half year later, I was able to come back home.



## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

### Momtaz

When I was 15 to 16 years old, I was offered a job in Saudi Arabia to work as a maid for twenty thousand taka per month. One of my cousins influenced me and managed the job. Her intentions were good as she could see living here was becoming difficult for me because of my ex-husband. I was married to that drug addict at the age of 14 and he used to abuse me almost every day. Therefore, after a certain time despite having a son with him, I went for a divorce. During those hard days getting a job opportunity felt like an escape at that moment as my ex-husband was making it difficult for me to live there by constantly trying to harass me for leaving him.

After arriving, I saw there are seven family members whereas I was told that I would be working for only two members. As I was already there so it was pointless to make any fuss about it. I started working and two months passed but they were not giving me any salary. Eventually, I started asking for money and they were not paying any attention to it. Then one day when I was constantly asking for it, the conversation got heated up and they began to beat me. And it's the sir who used to beat me while madam used to hold me. After a while I refused to stay there anymore because the workload was

too much for me to bear. I was just a teenager and I had to work all day long. They used to make me do the same job again and again just to keep me occupied all the time. I had to wash 10 bathrooms and 15 basins every single day along with other household chores. And I was allowed barely two hours of sleep. If I ever said that I am not feeling well enough to work, they would never listen to it.

One day while I was cleaning the tiled lawn, one of the kids pushed me from the back and I slipped and fell down. My shoulder was dislocated. After 3 days they brought me back from the hospital. Despite the doctor's strict order of taking full rest, I was forced to work with one hand. Then again when I said that I don't want to work anymore they started misbehaving and told me that I cannot leave before 2 years as they have bought my service at the amount of 4 lakh BDT. I was shaken to the core after hearing that they made a deal with the agent and I did not have any knowledge of it. Finally, my salary was settled to 16 thousand taka which I used to get after every 2/3 months. When six months was left to complete my two years contract (as per their claim), I decided that I couldn't do it anymore. So, I used my savings and returned to Bangladesh.





## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

### Rahima

About 5 or 6 years ago I went to Lebanon to work in a household as a maid for 100 dollar per month. I loaned around 40 thousand taka for visa and plane fare with a hope that I would be able to earn much more than my loan. After working there for 3 months, I started to ask for the money. But in return I received severe beating and they took me to the office and there I was beaten even more because I was not allowed to ask for my own hard-earned money. Then they sent me back with the madam again. After working for another 5/6 months, when I still didn't receive any money, I again asked for it. The outcome wasn't any different than before. And this time a female office staff tortured me. Shockingly enough, she was herself a Bangladeshi woman. This time they sent me to work for another family. Again, after working there for 3 months without any money, at one point I started to ask for it. Then they said they are shifting to Dubai and brought me back to the office without any single penny in my hand. Once again, I was sent to another household where after working for 4 months without any salary I was determined to not work anymore and asked them to send me back home. It was as if I was stuck in this vicious cycle again and again

and I couldn't take it anymore.

All these while I didn't receive a single penny for all the hardships I've been through. The last house that I have worked for, used to make me work till 2 a.m. and I had to be up by 5 a.m. I didn't get any proper sleep or food after the bone breaking hardship for all day long. They even made me work in their relatives' house. Neither money nor any slightest appreciation did I ever receive from them. They even used to throw shoes at me if they were not pleased enough with my work. One day while I was up on a ladder, madam dragged me down all of a sudden because I couldn't hear her calling me. And I hit the floor so hard that it broke few of my fingers. Till this day I cannot properly move those fingers. Finally, when my family was able to manage money for my return ticket, only then I was able to come back. After coming back, it took me quite a few years and extreme hard work to pay back all the loans. Even if I have to die starving here, I am willing to do that rather than going abroad in the hope of earning some money for a better life. Because that's a myth spread by the local fraud agents to manipulate the unfortunates like us.

## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

### Ranu

One Day she slapped me so hard that I peed in my clothes. My fault was, I asked for my salary and refused to work for them anymore.

Three years ago, I went to Lebanon to work in a household for 10 thousand taka per month. I took a loan of eighty thousand taka to manage my plane fare and other expenses. All of this was just to get a chance to have a better life. But when I reached there, I found that they took me to work for someone else's house.

I had to work all day long and was allowed little time to sleep. They didn't even used to give me proper meals. After two months when it became too unbearable, I asked them to send me back. In reply to that all I received was this excessive beating. Then after some time they gave me two months' salary and took me to the office saying that they are going to send me back. I don't know why my gut feelings told me to hide the money, they gave me.

After taking me there, madam handed me over to the office staff and started acting as if she will be going

back to her home. Then, out of nowhere the female office staff started hitting me. She checked all of my belongings and when she couldn't find the money, she undressed me and took the little bit of my money that I had with me. Then they called my employer and sent me back with her asking me to stay there for another nineteen days and told me that they will send me back to Bangladesh.

Nineteen days later they did send me back but for the plane fare took thirty thousand taka from my family. My hope to earn a better livelihood has cost me too many loans that I eventually couldn't fully pay off till this day.







বাদাবন সংঘ  
Badabon Sangha  
(All Women's Rights Committee)

International Women's Day-2021

আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবস-২০২১

আমাদের 'বিশ্ব ফেরত নারী শ্রমিক হবিংকার' কর্মসূচি  
কেন্দ্রীয়পত্র, ঢাকা

নারী  
শ্রমিক  
হবিংকার  
আমরা

নারী শ্রমিক  
হবিংকার  
কখনো  
পারেনা

নারী শ্রমিক  
হবিংকার  
আমরা  
পারেনা



## Returnee Women Migrant Workers

### Sabina

At first, I went to Lebanon and worked there for 3 years. As the working experience was good so far, so when I got another working opportunity in Jordan, I gladly took it. There were 8 members in the family. At first everything was going quite well, although the workload was too much. After some time when sir used to leave home as he had another wife and family, the problems slowly began. Initially it started with more workload. Then madam was depriving me of food and sleep. Most of the time they used to order food or just go out and come back after having their meal. Meanwhile they did not bother if I am getting anything to eat or not. And I was not allowed to cook for myself. Sometimes I was offered their left-out food.

I was allowed only four hours of sleep in a day, no matter if I am feeling good or not. Sometimes I had to wake up around three in the morning and prepare tiffin and get all the 6 children ready for their school. I was doing all my jobs but I wasn't getting paid regularly. So, when I started asking for money from the madam, she used to get furious and tortured me several times regarding this issue. As I had quite a bit of efficiency in the Arabic language, I contacted to the office. Then madam took me

there and refused to take me back. The office staffs were good people. Especially the office head who listened and believed me. Then I showed him all the scratch marks that madam gave me when she was abusing me physically because I asked for my money.

I went there with a two years contract. But could not stay more than sixteen months. After fourteen months I came back to the office and the sir asked me to stay there and offered me to do the interpreter's job. He could not send me back as the contract wasn't over yet and the office would be held liable for breaking the contract. The sir there was very generous and helpful. As soon as the previous employee withdrew the contract, he instantly managed everything and sent me back so that I wouldn't become an illegal resident in that country.

From the previous employee I only received seven months' salary. Only that and the two months I worked as an interpreter in that office, this much I could earn. I didn't mind the hard work since I did want to work and earn money. But as minimum respect and recognition was not being paid off, I did not see any point of staying there anymore.

## Our Vision

To establish a society based on freedom of expression, in which all people particularly women and girls have full and effective participation in the social and economic development process.

## Our Mission

The mission of the group is to build up the capacity of the disadvantaged, vulnerable and socially excluded women and girls, towards improving their livelihoods and movement building, in order to challenge the social structural process that deny women's rights.

To make it happen, firstly, Badabon Sangho continued to build up the capacity of the group members and their leaders and federation members in organizing, planning and public speaking. Hence, they can lead their movement for land, water-bodies, racial justice, climate justice and labor rights and violence against women and girls. Secondly, we aim to be a renowned organization of women's rights groups, exhibiting women's equal rights to land and water-bodies regardless caste and religion.



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