CASE STUDIES OF INTERVENTION EFFECTIVENESS

A 'First Look' into Supporting Safer Overseas Migration in Bangladesh using SafeStep, a Responsible Recruitment Platform for Safe Migration

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"I wish I had SafeStep back then," said Mr. Kafil Ahmed* (name changed), a worker who has returned to Gazipur and is working as a sub-agent. Kafil went to Saudi Arabia in 2006 as a restaurant worker. His passport and akama (permit) were seized immediately by his employer. For 11 months consecutively, he was not paid a single penny. The employer provided workers with food and lodging but refused to pay them any money. He had spent 1,75,000 BDT (USD >3,000)[1] to go to Saudi Arabia at the time but could not send any money back home. Kafil could not even go to the police because without his documents, he would have been treated as an illegal immigrant. He did not know where to go for any help. Now, he thinks if he had had access to something such as the planned SafeStep Document Library feature, maybe he would not have had to suffer that much. (Source: one-to-one interview conducted on 9 December 2020)

<div align="center">Acronyms</div>

BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BFA	Better Fit Approach
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
DCAP	Data Collection and Analysis Partner
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FD	Foreign Donations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GFEMS	Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
ID	Identity Document
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RMMRU	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit
SCF	System Change Framework

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tables_of_historical_exchange_rates_to_the_United_States_dollar

SDC	The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
ToC	Theory of Change
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer (Upazila Executive Officer)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollars

Abstract

A significant number of Bangladeshi migrant workers deal with multifaceted problems due to lack of knowledge and information about the overseas migration process. The workers face exploitation and abuse while overseas and are often unaware of easily accessible support systems. ELEVATE, a leading business risk and sustainability solutions provider, is developing 'SafeStep', a mobile application designed to work as a 'Responsible Recruitment Platform for Safe Migration in Bangladesh'.

In this context, this report is the first in a two-part learning exercise designed to critically review the ELEVATE intervention and generate lessons and insights that are of practical utility for a wider audience. The 'First Look' case study acts as a snapshot of the current status of the project and seeks to understand the extent to which the project is in line with its articulated theory of change. It also documents the progress made, if any, at the preliminary stages of the project. Findings suggest that progress is on track for the first phase of the project, despite COVID-19 related delays and modifications to the project plan. Given that it is still early in the project execution phase, the bulk of evidence will be assessed in the 'Second Look' case study which will offer a deeper, more comprehensive overview of the intervention and its impact.

Introduction

Context

In Bangladesh, international labour migration has been an integral part of economic and social development since the 1980s. It creates employment, ensures stability to foreign exchange reserve, and in the context of the seventh five-year plan of the country, offers additional revenue to the government to achieve its long-term developmental goals.[2] Every year, nearly two million people join the working-age population, while only 200,000 jobs are created locally.[3]

Bangladeshi workers are motivated to migrate for many factors including peer influence, expectations of a higher income, and the perceived social status attached to living abroad. While labour migration creates employment and contributes to the economy of the country, the workers who migrate deal with problems that include high fees charged by recruitment agencies, especially for low-skilled jobs; low wages; and lack of information around migration opportunities and risks. These migrants also face discrimination, exploitation, and abuse while overseas and there is a lack of sufficient services to protect the rights of these workers.[4] Altogether, these issues drive a significant number of migrant workers to work under conditions of modern-day slavery.

The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) is a transformational multi-donor fund that works to forge public-private partnerships and catalyse a comprehensive global strategy to end modern slavery. GFEMS, in an agreement with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), has funded projects in three target areas – Ethical Recruitment, Apparel, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation. GFEMS selected the consortium of *Athena Infonomics* and *Itad (henceforth, Athena-Itad)* to support its review and learning activities for this set of projects.

Scope of study

GFEMS is funding ELEVATE to develop a 'Responsible Recruitment Platform for Safe Migration in Bangladesh'. GFEMS has partnered with *Athena-Itad* to review the intervention in context of the project's broader Theory of Change (ToC), with the objective of measuring progress towards a sustainable model for reduction of prevalence of modern slavery, and using learning from the projects to offer feedback for how to scale and increase effectiveness over time.

For this review, the *Athena-Itad* consortium follows a case study approach that provides a longitudinal perspective across earmarked components in each project. This approach allows for continuous tracking of changes in the goals and achievements of the project. As these case studies cannot formally be considered to constitute a traditional baseline-endline longitudinal approach, the terms 'First Look' and 'Second Look' case studies have been introduced. Apart from desk reviews, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with the implementing partners in different roles to understand and assess the progress of the project and related issues. Based on these discussions, for the First and the Second Look, the projects will be assessed against the Better Fit Approach (BFA) and the Systems Change Framework (SCF) to ascertain the

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[2] Siddiqui, T. (2016) 'Protecting migrants' welfare', *The Daily Star*, 5 February.

[3] Bangladesh's Largest Job Site, UN Migration Agency Partner to Combat Unethical Recruitment Practices: https://bangladesh.iom.int/news/

[4] Labour migration in Bangladesh: Retrieved from: <https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>

a) quality of the innovation against a diverse set of factors, described below, and

b) nature of the improvement to the status quo of the system.

Project overview

ELEVATE has partnered with Winrock and Diginex Solutions to design and develop a mobile application called SafeStep to ensure transparent and accountable overseas migration for Bangladeshi workers looking to migrate to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Middle East countries for work.

The app is designed to provide pre-decision and pre-departure migration information for workers aspiring and/or planning to go abroad. GFEMS is funding the development of this app to produce a viable product by the end of the current project period (June 2021).

The app offers five main features to its users:

1. **User Profile:** The User Profile is easily created by registering with an email address, mobile phone number or Facebook account. Each user will have a profile strength indicator to indicate profile completeness. Migrant workers who already have prior work experience can highlight this information and increase potential employability by adding this information to the profile. Users can also add in various professional skills which can match to potential employers who are seeking workers with particular skill sets.

2. **E-Learning:** Once the prospective migrant workers register in the system, they have access to practical digital educational information about how to reduce their risks of vulnerability and labour exploitation and ensure safer migration. They will also get to know their basic rights and the appropriate channels and institutions to inform if treated unfairly and/or subject to violence. E-Learning content is divided into two main categories: pre-decision and pre-departure.

3. **Migration Checklist and Document Library:** The app includes an interactive Migration Checklist to show workers, in an easy-to-understand manner, the process and documents required for migration. A progress bar helps workers to understand how far along they are in their migration journey and to easily identify next steps. The feature also offers the option to workers to upload and store all their documents digitally for future reference. These include all important documents such as passport, visa, work permit, contract, any receipts, etc. The workers can also ask for review of their documents, as the workers can be connected to each other over the app. These documents can be immensely helpful in case the physical documents are lost or seized – e.g., the workers often recall challenges such as losing access to these documents once they are abroad. The app deploys blockchain technology to ensure security, immutability, and confidentiality of the sensitive information.

4. **Budget Calculator:** The Budget Calculator helps workers understand the "true" cost of migration and assess costs relative to benefits to help workers make informed financial decisions. This includes identifying what fees should be covered and/or reimbursed by an employer based on the ILO's definition of recruitment fees and related costs and guidance on how to maintain receipts for reimbursement.

5. **Help Centre:** If workers have a query, they can access information through an interactive chatbot, powered by artificial intelligence (AI), which can provide initial responses. If more intensive or additional services are required, they can then directly access help centre FAQ sections, and ultimately live personnel. This system can link them to the right channels, such as government authorities or other appropriate services.

In terms of roles and responsibilities, ELEVATE is the coordination and management partner, while Diginex acts as the technology development partner. Winrock, with Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), is responsible for coordinating user trials of the platform, engaging with users to gather the evidence base for the app's viability and impact, and also in creating a sound foundation for potential scaling efforts in Bangladesh.

The basic Theory of Change (ToC) is that:	
If	an app can be developed and launched to support a safe end-to-end migration platform to a) give the workers access to awareness/educational content about safe migration b) support the traceability of worker documentation, and c) provide a trusted digital worker accountability loop to raise grievances;
then	workers will be aware of safe migration practices, and/or digitise their key documents (national ID, passport, contract, etc.), and/ or report migration abnormalities;
resulting in	choosing safer migration channels, and/or reductions in contract substitution, and/or effective feedback to workers' questions and grievances
leading to	reduced individual vulnerabilities that enable forced labour.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

- App development was not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic because the major groundwork and initial stakeholder engagement was done before the lockdown. Consultations to solicit user feedback on the app were affected initially, but the project successfully adjusted by conducting consultations virtually. Hong Kong-based technology development partner, Diginex, could not visit the field (Dhaka) after their initial March 2020 visit, but continued to collect regular feedback through the local partners Winrock and RMMRU.
- The project is arranging national-level stakeholder engagement events virtually because of the pandemic. The consortium will arrange local-level orientation and demonstration events in person while maintaining social distancing and proper health measures.
- The consortium was delayed in receiving FD-6 approvals because the authority was only processing emergency response (pandemic related) approvals for a time. The approval was required to start field activities with local partners RMMRU.
- Transportation costs have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic: Partners have been maintaining safety protocols – e.g. staff no longer use public transport.
- The COVID-19 pandemic impacts have also generated some positive by-products that may benefit the app: people more broadly have become familiar and more comfortable with technology-based services.
- In May 2020, Winrock met with the Bangladesh Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (BMEWOE) where the secretary assigned a joint secretary as the focal point for this project. However, the ministry was occupied with an increased workload due to the COVID-19 pandemic and could not respond to Winrock at that time. Winrock now continues to engage in the partnership as the initial emergency period is past; government engagement and support for the app remains on track.
- 10 out of 18 workers interviewed during the data collection process for this review mentioned that their travel to destination countries has been postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, one worker lost his job in Singapore due to COVID-19 pandemic and was forced to return to Bangladesh. Another worker, who used to work in Saudi Arabia, mentioned that they became concerned regarding the treatment of potentially infected workers and decided to return. The reduced number of workers going abroad during the project period will affect the number of test users the consortium is expecting to onboard during the project's time-frame.

Status (First Look, December 2020): The development of the SafeStep app is ongoing; ELEVATE and its consortium partners released version 2.0 of the app on 6 December, 2020. As planned, three out of the five main features have been made live for feedback and comments. The consortium partners – Winrock and Diginex – are working on stakeholder engagement, training, testing, and other in-person consultation. Engagement with other key stakeholders such as recruitment agencies and government officials is also ongoing. This 18-month project was designed to fund the development and piloting of the app. Accordingly, the project remains in the start-up phase: app development is underway, with a preliminary launch complete, and incorporation of user feedback and stakeholder engagement are ongoing.

Methodology

Research design

Each 'First Look' case study focuses on

a) understanding the project theory of change as articulated by implementing partners, which may or may not be written down

b) some evidence on specific standards for the services provided by the implementing partners

c) providing contextual information of the current situation before[5] or during an early stage of implementation.

The 'Second Look' case studies will focus on assessing evidence of change, different pathways to change, and other determining contributing and contextual factors. Enquiries into the 'Second Look' case studies will seek to unpack observed behavioural change of stakeholders at the target community and system levels. However, given the timeline of the First and Second Look (six months), the bulk of evidence is likely to be at the output and immediate outcome level, rather than the longer-term outcome and impact level.

The main learning questions for this case study are:

1. What is the effect of SafeStep on prospective migrants' capabilities and vulnerabilities? Is this sufficient to inform their decisions and/or change their behaviors regarding migration? Are they being employed and/or are they able to find ethical and responsible recruiters or employers via SafeStep?
    i. How is their migration experience different from other workers who are not using the app? Can we see early indications of effects related to reductions in vulnerabilities associated with forced labour?
    ii. How are workers' capabilities and vulnerabilities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How does the SafeStep approach to build a worker-centric platform (rather than a recruitment or employer-focused app) impact the sustainability and/or long-term uptake and scalability of this innovation? What is the potential of the platform to achieve scale in the future (number of users of key types) and is this large enough to contribute to a reduction in the prevalence of forced labour?
3. Do all stakeholders (migrants, recruiters, employers) have the willingness and ability to adopt and effectively use tech solutions related to labour migration?
4. How do the user profiles compare to the general migrant labour population? Are the most vulnerable migrants such as women and socio-culturally excluded communities using it?

Desk review, KIIs, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) will set out to answer these questions.

Evaluation framework

The *Athena-Itad* case study has taken the project ToC as the main entry point into discussions and will look at which change pathways are working well, which change pathways are potentially challenging, or lack up-to-date programming evidence. This **theory-based approach** was followed to design a case

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[5] The 'before implementation' information is often problematic in reality, as typically, the intervention will build on some previous work that has been done by the subrecipient, or work that has already begun. In either case, the 'First Look' still provides a point in time against which to assess change in the 'Second Look'.

study that aims to test, with evidence, the assumed causal chain of results with what is observed to have happened, checking each link and assumption in the process to verify the foregrounding theory.

The theory-based approach is accompanied by **contribution analysis**, which provides a systematic way to arrive at credible causal claims about a programme's contribution to change. By verifying the respective ToCs and taking into consideration other factors that may have influenced outcomes, contribution analysis provides evidence about where and how the grantees did (or did not) make effective programme objectives.

The observations in this report showcase the expectations from the project based on the information available during the 'First Look' stage, and not the status of the project at the 'First Look' stage. It is important to note that with further progress in the project and with better availability of information (completion of development, tool implementation and feedback from M&E system), the goal is to develop an accurate as-is picture during the 'Second Look' stage.

Better Fit Approach

The case-study framework integrates the Better-fit Approach (BFA) methodology to help determine the degree to which an initiative design is 'innovative' and locally responsive. BFA seeks to either apply a new solution to a given problem, or innovatively adapt a solution from a different context to fit another, locally. It usually involves doing something differently from how it is currently being done and should seek to make the outcome or experience better, particularly in a complex and/or rapidly changing programming environment. BFA is not necessarily evaluative insofar as it may be too early to conduct interventions during the planning stages, or early trial stages of an intervention. The elements of the BFA pathway are presented in Annexure 1. In principle, BFA provides an 'innovation design audit' to understand the following aspects of the implementation process:

- Transformative: How, and to what extent, is the programme flexible to offer intended services more effectively
- Inclusive: How, and to what extent, is the programme trying to serve the excluded groups
- Adaptive: How, and to what extent, is the programme collecting and using results for decision-making
- Economically viable: How, and to what extent, has the programme maintained cost-effectiveness and shaped itself as acceptable and scalable.

Systems Change Framework

Wherever applicable, a theory-based approach will assess how the interventions help improve system-level capacities and connections that aim to bring forth changes at an individual level. The Systems Change Framework (SCF) will appraise the challenges of achieving pathway effectiveness, including structural barriers, and strategies employed for improving structures. The SCF scale is presented in Annexure 2. The assessment of SCF expectations for the project was accomplished through a detailed review of the project theory of change and/or logframes, as well as through KIIs with key stakeholders to assess:

- The capacities of:
  - The project to adopt global ethical standards, and identify and address risks at the production level in the RMG factories.
  - The participating service providers, recruitment agencies, sub-agents, and employers identify and address risks and implement remedial actions through the adoption of the tool.

- Connections and coordination with other similar service providers, employers, recruitment agencies, and sub-agents in providing holistic services, and in identifying and addressing the risk of exploitative migration practices.

While BFA focuses on the design aspects of the project, allowing it to achieve its identified primary and secondary targets, SCF aims to understand how well the project impacts or influences the existing systems and their services and capacities. To assess these capacities of the stakeholders, we explore:

- Capability (ability to provide intended services): How well does the project deliver its services and how do the system and other actors respond to it? How scalable are the activities to other services and target groups, with quality measured and maintained?
- Incentive model (ability to serve interests of a diverse group of stakeholders from demand as well as supply side): How well-designed is the project to ensure incentives for the associated stakeholders of both the demand and the supply side to continue? How well does the project identify and address mismatches between the services intended and the services received by the target audience?
- Sustainability (evidence or indications of buy-in for offering intended services): How convinced are the partners to continue the service model? What evidence or indications do we have to prove stakeholders' willingness to replicate the model or continue post-project period?
- External Linkages (linkages with government or apex bodies): Is the project connected to or aligned with programmes or schemes in the sector and locality that will help ensure long-term success and viability of the project?

Sample of Stakeholders

The 'First Look' exercise started with extensive desk review of the project documents, including project proposal, ToC, Logframe, and project reporting documents. Primary data collection was conducted in the first half of December 2020. For the 'First Look', two group interviews were conducted with the main coordination partner: ELEVATE's programme team and the programme and development team of Diginex. Two Key Informant Interviews were conducted with the focal persons of the local partners, Winrock and RMMRU. Three one-on-one interviews and two FGDs were conducted with targeted migrant worker community groups such as aspiring workers, returnee workers, existing migrant workers in the country on leave, and sub-agents. Two sub-agents and eighteen aspiring, returnee, and existing migrant workers took part in these discussions. No women workers took part in the FGDs this time, but it will be ensured that they are included in the Second Look. Semi-structured questionnaires and checklists were used for collecting information and the findings were analysed and compared against the updates reported by the project. Similar questions were asked to different stakeholders for triangulation and to explore perspectives.

Key Results/Findings

Summary of results against key learning questions
(Findings as of mid-December 2020)

1. Effect on workers' capabilities and vulnerabilities in using the platform: The project remains in its embryonic stage and there are currently insufficient outputs and outcomes through which to evaluate the effect on workers' capabilities and vulnerabilities in using the platform and the other associated questions. The app has not been launched with all features as yet, although development is ongoing.

The project is collecting feedback on the appropriateness and usability of the features of the app from a variety of potential users, including potential and returnee migrant workers, sub-agents, government departments, and international organisations. The project also continues to consider future scale-up options and is continuing discussions on this with different types of stakeholders at both the local (such as returnee workers, potential migrant workers, sub-agents, Upazila Nirbahi Officer UNO/Upazila Executive Officer, local representatives, etc.) and the national level (Bangladesh Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (BMEWOE), Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), UN bodies, international NGOs, national NGOs). Activities will continue in this area. In December 2020, the consortium was planning to arrange six small demonstrations with 30 workers on the current version (version 2.0) of the app, and another demonstration in Gazipur with the sub-agents. Finally, one national level demonstration will also be arranged in Dhaka. After the release of the final version (version 3) of the app in February, the consortium will arrange a launch event targeting all stakeholders.

1.i. Difference in migration experience from other workers who are not using the app: The migration experience is not yet comparable given that the final version of the app has not been released yet – and because migration during the development period of the app has been significantly reduced as a result of COVID-19. However, the app has been designed to make the user interaction experience more efficient and effective as users will receive faster, more up-to-date, and tailored information from the educational contents of the app. The app will also provide an online document storage space, to secure retain migration documents and ensure they are available for future reference. It also provides features that outline potential financial costs and likely debt burden to workers before travel, providing potential migrants with more accurate information about the cost of migration. These benefits to users will be explored in the Second Look.

1.ii. Exacerbation of workers' capabilities and vulnerabilities by the COVID-19 pandemic: During the FGDs, the participants confirmed that additional challenges emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above most workers planning to go abroad for work were informed that labour supply chains have been stalled. One respondent, who was working in Singapore as a gardener, lost their job due to the pandemic, and returned home. Another respondent, who was working in a grill workshop in Malaysia for the last 16 years, came to Bangladesh on holiday but could not go back because of travel restrictions. Another respondent who had been working in Saudi Arabia since 2007 noticed co-workers and employers were not utilising appropriate health services after testing positive for COVID-19, and that any associated mortalities could not be dealt with appropriately (bodies were not able to be extradited). As a result of these concerns, the worker immediately returned to Bangladesh.

2. Impact on sustainability and/or long-term uptake and scalability of the innovation: Although the app has not been launched yet, the implementing partners are developing an outreach/marketing strategy to ensure update of the app. The consortium predicts that the workers will start using the app for migration purposes. The consortium is also actively meeting with recruiters and relevant government and non-government bodies to demonstrate the value of the tool and to receive their feedback. Through this process, the app will eventually attract the attention of the recruiters and relevant government and non-government bodies. Should the project continue beyond the current period, additional features and interfaces for recruiters will be developed to maximise the value for them (efficiency, transparency and helping to ensure their clients that they are using responsible practices). These planned features will attract ethical recruiters to the platform whilst also increasing accountability for their actions, through increased transparency. As per the Theory of Change, the consortium thereby assumes that user-driven demands for services will escalate i.e., recruiters will

start recruitment through the app while government and non-government bodies will offer the services to the workers who seek help using the app.

3. Willingness and ability of the stakeholders (migrants, recruiters, employers) to adopt and effectively use tech solutions related to labour migration: During the FGDs, different types of migrant workers (aspiring, returnee, or existing) showed their interest in using the app. One recruiting agency has already expressed their interest formally by submitting a demand letter to recruit 10,000 workers using the platform. Sub-agents participating in the FGDs also showed their interest in using the app because they want to present a clean image to their targeted communities, which is expected to be helpful for their business. The Winrock representative, during the KII, expressed their hope for an improved scenario as the world is gradually moving towards ethical recruitment. The government is taking this sector very seriously and taking necessary action to support the growth of the sector i.e., Government of Bangladesh is establishing technical training centres in all 64 districts[6]. The implementing partners are hopeful of receiving required support from the government in their effort to support migrant workers.

4. How do the user profiles compare to the general labour migrant population? Are the most vulnerable migrants using it? The project has not reached the stage to understand this aspect. Once the app goes live in February (as planned) and workers start using it, our intention is for the 'Second Look' to shed some light on the early indications of user profiles and demographics.

Framework-based Findings
Better Fit Approach

As this was the 'First Look' assessment, the main focus was on the design aspects of the interventions, seeking to understand their intended potential impact across the standards of Transformation, Inclusivity, Adaptability, and Economic Viability. The learnings from here will dovetail into the larger-picture view provided by the Systems Change Framework.

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[6]https://imed.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/imed.portal.gov.bd/page/e773d5bf_182e_4fc5_a856_dfd3c8d05ced/IMED_ETTC_Final%20Report.pdf

Image 1: Better Fit Approach – Design innovations in SafeStep to promote safe migration
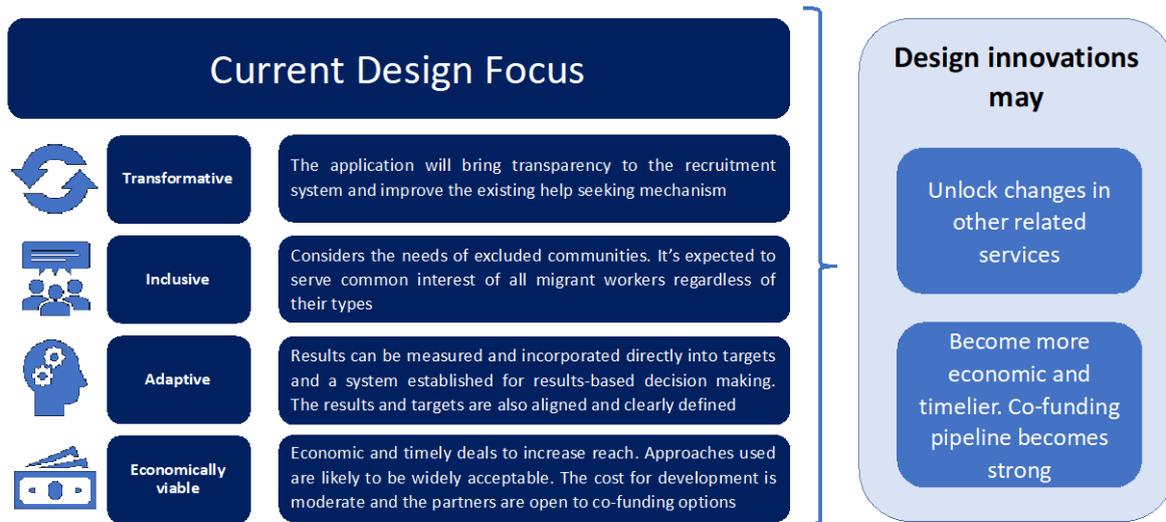
Transformative: Project documents and key informant feedback indicate that the app is designed to serve multiple worker needs – primarily employment information and references, document storage, budget estimation, and support via the help center. At the same time, the system will also ensure the interests of sub-agents by documenting the process since risks that emerge in the labour chain also expose sub-agents to risk of financial and reputational losses.

The consortium also plans to include an option for agents to recruit using the platform in the future. This will provide an opportunity to gather data on recruitment agencies and the processes that they use to on-board workers. This potential database will act as both an accountability mechanism between employees and recruiters (as all conversations will be documented) and as an opportunity for learning which engagement processes are most effective.

Inclusive: The app has been designed to serve common interests of all kinds of communities, including communities that are historically marginalised e.g., it features video e-learning modules for those who have low literacy and women domestic workers. The app's current features also support workers in destination countries – including providing access to information and support via the Help Centre and the Document Library for safe storage of contracts and other personal documents. These features provide support so that users are not given a 'one-sided' service which focuses only on the country of origin. Finally, diverse kinds of users are engaged during the design and feedback phase such as prospective migrant workers, returnee workers, recruiting agents, and sub-agents to reflect their needs and perspectives in the design.

Adaptive: The project is collecting regular updates on the activities and communicating feedback from the stakeholders to the technology service provider every 15 days. For example, the app includes additional features i.e., the Budget Calculator, which was not in the initial plan, but raised by the workers during the co-design workshop. In the future, the consortium will endeavor to collect user feedback in the app through a new function to be introduced in version 3. In addition, the AI chatbot will be instrumental in generating feedback by analysing the help-seeking requests and the follow-up processes. At the end of the current project timeline, the consortium plans to further evaluate the app through 6 FGDs and 100 short surveys with test users. The implementing partners will update the app to incorporate user feedback.

Economically viable: The app has been designed to address migration-related common issues which the stakeholders are dealing with and plans to connect with the existing government and other

established support services through the help centre. If they receive more funding, they have a plan to develop additional features for other target groups such as labour recruiters or employers. If successful, the consortium partners have planned to customise the app to make it applicable for other source countries for migrant workers. The team is talking to other donors so they can go forward with the tool. So far the response is very positive, and the consortium is creating a pipeline for potential funders – including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and USAID in Bangladesh. They are also considering a business model by charging the recruiters and employers for using the platform so that the app can be sustainably resourced, maintained, and stay relevant.
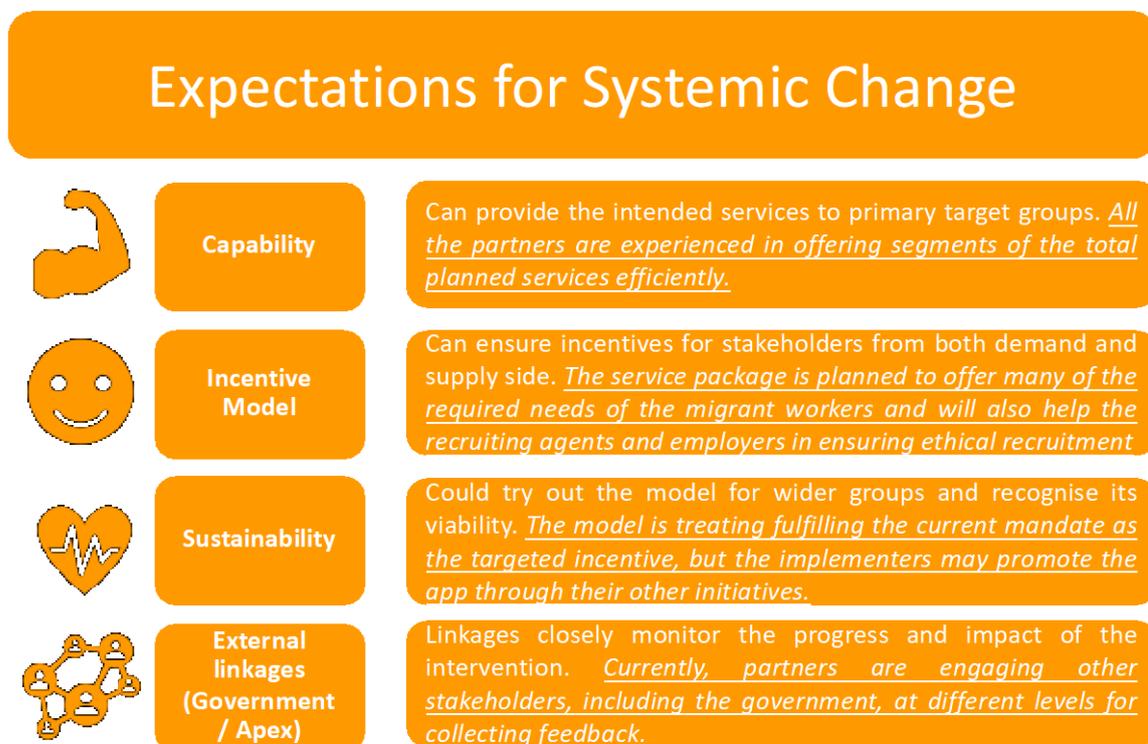
Systems Change Framework

The SCF explores elements of the intervention for sustained long-term impact and improvements in the existing systems that govern the industry or space targeted by the intervention. This framework identifies the ability of the intervention to affect system-wide change and how advanced the project is in the pathway-model described in Annexure 2.

Systems Change Framework indicator table:

Since the project is still at an early phase, the SCF analysis only identifies the expectations or indicate the projected state of the intervention beyond the life of the project period once effective components are identified for scale.

Image 2: Systems Change Framework – Expectations of SafeStep to influence the recruitment sector

Expectations for Systemic Change

	Capability	Can provide the intended services to primary target groups. *All the partners are experienced in offering segments of the total planned services efficiently.*
	Incentive Model	Can ensure incentives for stakeholders from both demand and supply side. *The service package is planned to offer many of the required needs of the migrant workers and will also help the recruiting agents and employers in ensuring ethical recruitment*
	Sustainability	Could try out the model for wider groups and recognise its viability. *The model is treating fulfilling the current mandate as the targeted incentive, but the implementers may promote the app through their other initiatives.*
	External linkages (Government / Apex)	Linkages closely monitor the progress and impact of the intervention. *Currently, partners are engaging other stakeholders, including the government, at different levels for collecting feedback.*

Capability: Until now, only the minimum viable features of the app could be offered actively for feedback, but the consortium partners are vastly experienced in offering services to migrant workers: both RMMRU and Winrock have a long track record for effectively supporting workers. Both these organisations are recognised as key role players in this sector. ELEVATE is also internationally

recognised for providing worker voice tools in similar communities. Diginex is also well-grounded in the ethical recruitment space, having built three other migrant worker-centric platforms for the United Nations and international NGOs.

Incentive model: The app is planned to serve diverse needs of the demand side (workers) and the supply side actors (sub-agents/recruiters/employers). The planned incentives for the workers are outlined above under the BFA analysis. The app will also help the recruiters and employers in ensuring ethical recruitment. The project is also considering featuring the recruitment notices and government circulars in the app so the workers can communicate well, and stay connected and updated.

Sustainability: In this pilot phase, the model is not currently using a business model where the app can self-sustain by generating revenue from offering services. The implementers are considering the introduction of a pricing model in future for recruiters and employers using the app. The implementers may also promote the app through their other initiatives.

External linkages: The app is still not fully live but the government and other stakeholders, including relevant UN bodies, and other donors have been engaged to shape the tool as per their suggestion. At the local level, the project has created migrant workers' protection committees including union chairmen, members, members of the counter-trafficking committee, etc. The project also consulted other platforms which are offering services to migrant workers such as BdeshJaatra developed by IOM. The consortium orchestrated a multi-stakeholder mapping workshop to understand the existence of and gaps in current platforms. Employers and recruiters are not yet officially on-boarded to the platform, but Winrock is in discussion with a few recruiters and is collecting their feedback. Winrock is also in the process of engaging the government and other stakeholders in providing feedback, promoting the app, and also connecting them to provide support services to workers seeking help through the app.

Implications & Recommendations

Success stories

The project has demonstrated effective outreach, engagement, and feedback from a variety of key stakeholders in both the design and the feedback phase, including a consultation workshop with prospective migrant workers, returnee workers, and community recruiting agents. As a result, workers raised the need to observe the potential cost of the migration process given that this area is where worker exploitation is common and widespread. The consortium thereby decided to include a budget calculator feature, which was not part of the initial design.

Enabling factors (Strengths)

- All the consortium partners have excelled in their own fields. ELEVATE is very experienced in social compliance and grievance management. Diginex is internationally renowned for their innovative tech solutions that focus on driving transparency into the labour recruitment space. Winrock has a wide and effective network, and acceptability among the targeted stakeholders, including the government. RMMRU is one of the most recognised actors in this sector in Bangladesh for their diverse services targeting safe migration.

- The app shows potential to bring about positive impact to the migration experience for workers. The returnee and experienced workers expressed their high hopes regarding the usefulness of the tool. All the consortium partners confirm that the collaboration offers positive potential and that continuation beyond project mandate is currently desirable.
- The app has the potential to make support services accessible through one platform if the relevant government and non-government support service providers can be convinced and connected.

- The app plans to serve the workers free of cost which is expected to help the app reach the maximum outreach if an effective promotion plan can be deployed.

Challenges

- The consortium had to bring some changes in the implementation design due to budget reductions and COVID-19 pandemic, both of which have limited the scope of the initial plan. For example, tailoring the app for labour recruiters may not be addressed in the current timeframe.
- A low smartphone penetration rate in Bangladesh[7] presents a challenge to user uptake. One step taken to mitigate this challenge has been through collaborations with Technical Training Centers (TTCs) and Union Digital Centers (UDCs) where workers can use the appropriate technology.
- Under this 'Proof of concept' project, the app promotion plan is limited to community outreach and a multi-stakeholder launch workshop. However, the consortium plans to use posters at the community level, and has planned to use budget savings within the project to conduct mass promotion through social media channels, including Facebook ads.
- The project is also trying to find ways to better target the needs of women domestic workers while focusing on the scale of the app, since overseas migrants are majority men, and women migrant workers have a lower rate of smartphone access than men[8].

Key Lessons and Recommendations

- Engaging relevant government departments and other stakeholders i.e., BMET, IOM etc. with the app will be critical in making it effective and widespread in future scale up of the project because they are the service providers who have the access and authority to intervene in these contexts. This is especially crucial in providing support to workers seeking help through the app because not many bodies have access and authority to offer such services. Incorporating the app into the migrant worker support system run by the government and other mechanisms is particularly important in making it effective.
- Although the project has different plans for community engagement, beyond this 'Proof of concept' phase, wider outreach is a necessity to make the app popular and accepted among the migrant workers, which will require a significant resource investment, new technical capacity, and scaled-up planning.
- Given that many workers are not familiar with smart phones features, they can be targeted through family members, friends, or through their colleagues. The broader promotion plan should consider how workers can access the services offered by the app through smartphones of their family members/friends/colleagues. For example, an FGD participant from Kaliakoir would like to use the app to help his brother who is working in Singapore. The future promotion plan should explore these alternate dynamics as well for effective penetration.

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[7] https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/bangladesh-lags-behind-asia-pacific-peers-telecom-services-gsma-1927249
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_smartphone_penetration

[8] https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/telecom/bangladeshs-gender-gap-using-mobile-internet-widest-54367

Annexure 1:

Detailed Observations: Expectations based on the Better Fit Approach Scale

Transformative	Maintains status quo	Would improve an existing service	Would create a new service, or substantially improve an existing service *(The service has not been started yet, but once it starts, it's expected to ease the process, bring transparency to the system and improve the existing help seeking mechanism)*	Would radically improve a service or create a new service – and could unlock change in other services
Inclusive	Serves one group within the community	Considers the needs of excluded communities *(The service has not been started yet, but once it starts, it's expected to serve common interest of all migrant workers regardless of their types)*	Creates a clear role for excluded groups	Creates a role for excluded groups in leadership, planning and accountability
Adaptive	Does not offer effective measures of change monitoring	Offers some opportunity to measure and monitor change	Offers an opportunity to measure change, and takes these measurements into account for decision making	Results can be measured and incorporated directly into targets and a system established for results-based decision making *(The service has not been started yet, but the project has started tracking progress of the activities. The results and targets are also aligned and clearly defined)*
Economically viable	Identifies potential resources and sources only to circumstances in one community or locality.	Explores alternative resources and sources to make implementation more economic and may apply in some other communities. Co-funding is promising	Negotiates effectively to make the deals economic and timely to make it widespread and uses approaches which are likely to be widely acceptable. High likelihood of co-funding	Has been implemented in an economic and timely manner. Co-funding pipeline is strong

	Costs for further development are prohibitive		*(The cost for development is moderate and the partners are open to co-funding options)*	

Annexure 2:

Detailed Observations: Expectations based on the System Change Framework Scale

Capability	Can provide the intended services to primary target groups *(The services have not been started yet but all the partners are experienced in offering segments of the total planned services efficiently)*	**Can offer additional services related to the intended services** with quality**/** Can o**ffer the intended services beyond the primary target groups** with quality	Offers additional related services with quality/ beyond the primary target groups with quality. **Other competitors/ similar service providers are showing interest/ gaining ability in offering the intended services**	**Other competitors/ similar service providers are offering similar services**
Incentive model	Able to ensure incentives for stakeholders from both demand and supply side *(The service package is planned to offer many of the required needs of the migrant workers and will also help the recruiting agents in ensuring ethical recruitment)*	Additional gaps in service delivery for the targeted groups are minimised to ensure more incentive for both demand and supply side	Other competitors/ similar service providers are showing interest in ensuring both demand and supply side incentives	Other competitors/ similar service providers are ensuring both demand and supply side incentives
Sustainability	Try out the model for wider groups and recognises the model as a comparatively viable one *(The model is still treating fulfilling mandate as the targeted incentive)*	Make the model their mainstream practice	Other competitors/ similar service providers are recognizing incentive from the new model	Other competitors/ similar service providers are making the model their mainstream practice
External linkages (Government/ Apex)	Linkages closely monitor the progress and impact of the intervention *(Till now, the partners are engaging other stakeholders including government at different levels for collecting feedback mostly)*	Linkages provide well defined support and incentives to ensure programme/ intervention success	Linkages encourage similar programmes/ interventions or linkages with other similar programmes/ interventions	Linkages have made the intervention model a system norm