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Gender dimensions of labour migration in Dhaka city's formal manufacturing sector

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I. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed an increasing awareness of women's productive roles, mobility and contributions to development. Nevertheless, the processes of women's migration and entry into the labour market, and their coping strategies within the urban labour market and society, have received little attention in policy discourse. Such neglect is regrettable, not only because female migration is occurring on a scale comparable to that of men in most regions of Asia, but also because there are interrelations between female migration, the functioning of the urban labour market and society, and women's roles and status.

The existing literature suggests that migrant women differ markedly from migrant men in a number of ways: in both their underemployment and unemployment; in their prospects for occupational mobility; in the incomes they earn; in the occupations they perform; in their participation in the informal sector; and in their tendency to send remittances home (Anker and Hein, 1986; Chant, 1992; Findley and Williams, 1991; Lopez, Izazola and Gomez de Leon, 1993). Some of these studies (Findley and Williams, 1991; Lopez, Izazola and Gomez de Leon, 1993) also note differences in the characteristics between migrant and non-migrant women workers in the labour market. For example, they observed higher levels of

education and labour force participation by migrant than non-migrant women workers at areas of destination. However, it is argued that these differences need to be documented systematically and analysed in terms of the processes leading to them (Hugo, 1993:65). Moreover, none of these studies attempt to combine the interactions between women's economic roles and their social situation in urban society.

Historical evidence suggests that the expansion of the manufacturing sector is one of the key elements in the urbanization and migration processes of developed and developing countries. In Bangladesh, the sudden and rapid boom of the ready-made garment industry (RMG) in the 1980s generated considerable female employment in the formal export-based manufacturing sector. Bangladesh is a classical case of female-led industrialization. Here the degree of female intensity in manufacturing industries is very high, far above the norm for other developing countries. The share of women in the total labour force in manufacturing industries was 64 per cent in 1994, compared to 35 per cent in some other developing countries (e.g. Morocco and Jamaica), which experienced a steady rise in manufacturing output. In Bangladesh export-oriented manufacturing contributes two thirds of the country's total foreign exchange. Export earnings from garments rose from US\$ 976.98 million in 1991 to US\$ 2,488.50 in 1995 (BGMEA, 1996). The country's dependence on clothing is evident from the fact that in 1992, it alone accounted for 72 per cent of the total merchandise exports compared to 37 per cent in 1988 and 0.4 per cent in 1980-1981 (Rahman, 1992).

The garment industry alone absorbed nearly a fifth of the women employed in the manufacturing sector and two thirds of those employed in medium and large-scale enterprises (Zohir and Majumdar, 1996). According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Employers' Association's (BGMEA) statistics, garment factories alone absorb 1.2 million workers of which 1.08 million or 90 percent are women (BGMEA, 1996). Figures differ in some other surveys (Zohir and Majumdar, 1996; Afsar, 1998b) which found that these factories are composed of nearly two thirds women and one third men workers.

Given the composition of the labour force, it is important to understand the mode of entry of female migrant workers in the formal manufacturing sector of Bangladesh, and their position in the labour market and urban society, compared to men and non-migrant co-workers. This study explores the ways in which migrant women enter and cope with the demands of the urban labour market and society,

compared to male migrants and non-migrant workers of either sex. More specifically, it addresses the following questions:

- Is there any difference in the socioeconomic characteristics of migrant men and women who enter into the urban labour market and do these characteristics differ remarkably from those of non-migrant workers;
- Is there any difference in motivations for and processes through which migrant men and women enter the labour market;
- Do men and women migrants receive differential treatment in the labour market and in the urban community (e.g. living conditions); and
- Do men and women migrants adopt different strategies to deal with and improve their living and working conditions.

The study is primarily based on a small-scale sample survey of the migrant labourers in five garment factories in Dhaka. Comparison was also made with a small sample of male and female workers of other manufacturing factories, namely electronics, pharmaceuticals and food processing. Although not as female-dominated as the RMG sector, these factories also absorb a large number of women workers.

Using a quota sampling technique, 213 workers were drawn from a list of 530 workers from five garment and three other manufacturing industries (pharmaceuticals, electronics and food processing) in Dhaka city. Table 1 presents the sample workers selected for the study by gender, category of work and factory type. The numbers of male and female workers were 107 and 106, respectively, selected to facilitate comparison and to identify appropriate policy measures. Because the RMG industry has generated considerable female employment since the 1980s, a larger sample of 153 was drawn from garment factories, compared to 60 workers from other manufacturing factories. The workers were interviewed in both their workplace and home. The sample garment factories were established between 1984 and 1994 and excepting the pharmaceutical industry (CIBA Geigy Ltd.) which was founded in 1984, the remaining two (food processing and electronics) were established in the 1960s. The size of the sample factories varied between 250 and 2,500 employees. The other sample manufacturing units have nearly 100 employees. However, the food processing industry employs 530 workers. The share of women workers is almost double that of men in the sample garment factories, while in the other manufacturing industries, excepting pharmaceuticals (in which men are over-represented), there is almost equal representation of male and female workers.

The broader sample of workers drawn through quota sampling revealed that more than 90 per cent of workers in garment factories are migrants. By contrast, migrants constitute nearly half of the total respondents in other manufacturing industries. Almost no divergence is found along gender lines in this regard. It should be noted that migration is defined using both geographic and temporal criteria. A person who was not born in Dhaka and migrated there between 1980 and 1996 is defined as a migrant. Further, those who migrated between 1991 and 1996 are defined as "recent migrants", whereas those who migrated between 1980 and 1990 are "long-term migrants". It is assumed that 15 years is sufficient to adjust to the urban environment. Hence, those who came before 1980 were treated as non-migrants. Consequently, around 37 per cent were classified as recent migrants and 46 per cent as long-term migrants, yielding a total sample of 83 per cent migrants and 17 per cent non-migrants, among the sample respondents finally studied (Table 2).

As indicated above, the spread of RMG in the mid-1980s and early 1990s generated greater employment opportunities for women than men. During the sampling stage, it was observed that women workers predominated in unskilled and skilled categories in both RMG and other manufacturing industries, while men predominated at the managerial level. According to the employers, women are preferred over men as both unskilled and skilled operators mainly because:

- female labour is cheaper than male labour;
- women workers are more docile, loyal and law-abiding in nature than men;
- women workers are also more hard-working and sincere than their male counterparts; and
- women workers have less contacts, exposure and bargaining power than male workers.

The perception of the employers reveals that women workers are preferred not exclusively as a cost-cutting measure. Their performance, sincerity and law-abiding nature are also valued by employers. However, this suggests that women workers are likely to be in a disadvantageous position compared to their male counterparts. Male migration is an established phenomenon in South Asia, in general, and Bangladesh, in particular, and mechanisms have evolved to facilitate their migration over the years. Independent female migration is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is important, therefore, to explore the mechanisms which facilitate female migration and settlement in urban areas.

Table 1: Total number of male and female workers of the sample factories and the sample drawn for the present study

Name of the industry	Total no.of workers*			Samples listed using quota sampling method			Final samples derived		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Garment									
Applique Fashion Wear Ltd.	115	164	279	27	25	52	15	15	30
Bari Apparels Ltd.	235	340	575	33	50	83	16	17	33
Florate (Pvt.) Ltd.	80	170	250	30	43	73	15	15	30
Jeacon Garment Ltd.	300	1200	1500	33	45	78	15	15	30
Sparrow Apparels Ltd.	1100	1400	2500	35	53	88	15	15	30
All Garment	1830	3274	5104	158	216	374	76	77	153
Other manufacturing									
CIBA Geigy Ltd.	43	28	73	18	20	38	10	10	20
Haque Brothers Ltd.	250	300	550	28	44	72	10	10	20
Mehar Industries Ltd.	67	55	122	25	21	46	10	10	20
All other manufacturing industries	360	383	743	71	85	156	30	30	60

* Statistics provided by the employers of the sample factories

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 2: Types of samples selected for the present study by skill categories and migration status

Types of workers	Garment				Other manufacturing			
	%		Numbers		%		Numbers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Helper/unskilled production worker	35.5	36.4	27	28	33.3	36.7	10	11
Operator/skilled production worker	32.9	36.4	25	28	10.0	10.0	3	3
Supervisor/technical/managerial category	31.6	27.3	24	21	56.7	53.4	17	16
All	100.0	100.0	76	77	100.0	100.0	30	30
Non-migrants	3.9	6.4	3	5	43.3	53.3	13	16
Long-term migrant	46.0	48.0	38	37	40.0	46.7	12	14
Recent migrant	50.0	45.5	35	35	16.7	-	5	-

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

II. The growth of the RMG sector and women's independent migration

As noted above, the growth of export-oriented manufacturing has led to the expansion of employment opportunities for unskilled women in metropolitan cities of Southeast Asia, and Bangladesh is no exception. The expansion of employment opportunities for unskilled women in the 1990s can be substantiated by micro-level case studies. In 1991-92, using a randomly selected survey of slums in four wards of Dhaka city, the proportion of women involved in RMG industries was found to be well below 10 per cent (Afsar, 1995). However, a more recent slum census in 1996, indicates that about one fifth of women of active age are involved in garment factories (Afsar, 1997). Moreover, in some *thanas* such as Mirpur and Mohammadpur (where there is a concentration of RMG factories), the proportions of women garment workers increases to a quarter (in Mirpur) and one third (in Mohammadpur). These findings point to the expansion of female employment in RMG industries, particularly among poorer women.

Another significant finding of such micro-level studies concerns the increasing proportion of migrant workers. In their study on garment factory workers in 1990, Zohir and Majumdar (1996) found that migrants constituted three quarters of the total workers, with a greater proportion of male migrant workers (83 per cent) than female (69 per cent). In the present study, the proportion of migrant workers in garment factories represents 90 per cent of the sample, although no gender-based differential is found. Similarly, the results of the author's recent survey of 14 garment factories in Dhaka (Afsar, 1998b) show that migrants constituted 90 per cent of the total workers. It also reveals that the proportion of migrant workers who came in recent years (between 1991 and 1996), has more than doubled the figures for 1981-90 (from 31 per cent to 60 per cent for males and from 28 per cent to 64 per cent for females). This indicates greater labour migration in recent years, particularly of young women workers.

The sex ratio of Dhaka city dwellers over the years is becoming more balanced from 150 (males to 100 females) in 1961 to 105 in 1993-94. This trend can be linked to the increase in women's independent migration for employment in export-oriented labour intensive manufacturing, particularly in the RMG sector (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996:44; Thwin et al., 1996). The slum census mentioned above revealed an even more balanced sex ratio (96) in 1996 (Afsar, 1997). However, existing evidence suggests that the overall sex ratio of the slum and squatter settlements is generally balanced (e.g. Majumdar et al., 1995; Thwin, 1996). What is significant, however, is that the sex ratio is becoming more feminine for the 15 to 34 year age group. In 1991, the sex ratio obtained for that group was 103 (males to 100 females), which dropped to 79 in 1993 and to 65 in 1996 (Afsar, 1995, 1997; Thwin et al., 1996).

1. Reasons for female migration

In order to examine factors which facilitate or constrain female labour migration, the present study used "reason for migration" as only one indicator.¹ The findings were supplemented by relevant characteristics of migrants and conditions of their households at the time of migration, which often mediate the process of migration decision-making significantly. Factors include age, level of education, occupation, and size of cultivable land at the time of migration.

Like their male counterparts in garment and other manufacturing units, female workers in garment factories came predominantly in search of employment. Nearly three quarters of

women and men came for work-related reasons (Table 3). Although 43 per cent of women migrants from other manufacturing industries came for economic reasons, 29 per cent were associational migrants (marriage/family migration) who accompanied their husbands to Dhaka. It is instructive to compare these findings to the global review on reasons for women's migration by the United Nations Secretariat (1993), which indicates that:

- a significant proportion of women migrate for economic reasons (including migration for education, which leads to seeking better employment opportunities later);
- worldwide, more women migrate for family than economic reasons, including to accompany other family members or spouse and to get married.

While the present study departs significantly from the above pattern, it is consistent with the findings from Bangkok metropolis (Phongpaichit, 1993). In Bangkok, female migration occurred as a direct response to the demand for cheap labour for the export-oriented manufacturing industries. This can be substantiated in the present study by the finding that nearly two out of every five garment factory workers, irrespective of gender, came directly for the present job. Those who migrated directly for the present job constituted 35 per cent of the male workers and 14 per cent of the female workers from other manufacturing units. Although employment-related reasons always dominate in the case of male migration, this increased significantly in the 1990s (90 per cent) compared to the 1980s (68 per cent) (Afsar, 1998b). Afsar (1998b) also indicates that 76 per cent of recent female migrants, as opposed to 36 per cent of the long-term female migrants, came for employment-related reasons. These findings confirm the importance of greater employment opportunities in Dhaka city as a "pull" factor to explain recent migration patterns, particularly for women.

Cross-classifications by marital status and age at migration provide a useful tool to confirm results of subjective data on "reasons for migration". Nearly 75 per cent of women respondents from the garment factories migrated for work-related reasons, whether married or unmarried. Divorced and widowed workers came exclusively for this purpose. Excepting married women, none of the sample workers from the garment factories were associational migrants. Further, among female garment factory workers, those who migrated for education-related reasons were substantially higher (2.5 times) for unmarried than other marital categories. Although nearly 43 per cent of the women respondents from the other manufacturing industries

migrated for work-related reasons, the number increases substantially (two thirds) for unmarried workers. Those who migrated in search of a job falls to two fifths in the case of married migrants from other manufacturing units. A third of married women migrated for associational reasons and a quarter for higher studies.

The response pattern on the reasons for migration by female workers from other manufacturing units appears to be logical. An unmarried woman worker from those units is younger (27 years old) and better educated (4.7 years schooling), than a married woman worker who is 33 years old and had 3.6 years of schooling on average. In the case of female garment factory workers, while the unmarried women are younger than married female colleagues by eight years, the latter had slightly more education (3.0 years of schooling) as opposed to 2.3 years of the former (Table 4). If education is taken as a rough indicator of the level of aspiration, no marked divergence is found in the response patterns of workers of garment factories on reasons for migration by marital status than the simple frequency distribution on the reason for migration.

A large percentage of the migrants found in RMG factories come from central and southeastern districts of Dhaka, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Barisal and Comilla. Over the years, it has been observed that migrants in Dhaka slum and squatter settlements are also from those districts (Afsar, 1997, 2000; Majumdar et al., 1989; CUS, 1990).² The districts from which these workers migrate in greatest numbers are characterized by highly disproportionate land-population ratios. Four out of every five female workers from the garment factories and two out of every three female workers from the other manufacturing industries were functionally landless. Nearly half of male workers, irrespective of type of industry, were functionally landless. Although women workers in general are landless, female garment factory workers are more disadvantaged in this regard. On average they had 1.3 acres of land as opposed to 2.0 acres for their male counterparts in the same factory and 2.3 acres for female counterparts from other manufacturing units.³

It is important to note that the level of education of female garment factory workers is higher than either their age cohort in rural areas or their counterparts in slum and squatter settlements. In Bangladesh, education is positively correlated with household income. Seven out of 10 female workers from landless households either had no education or incomplete primary education. By contrast, nearly three out of every five female workers from other industries had secondary education or above. They belonged to small and large

landholding families.

Studies conducted in poorer urban agglomerations found that women have less than one year of schooling (Afsar, 1991; 1995). By contrast, female workers in the garment industry had 2.5 years of schooling prior to migration while the figure was 3.3 for female workers from other manufacturing factories. The corresponding figures for their male counterparts were 3.0 and 3.9 years respectively. Similarly, the median years of schooling of a female garment factory worker is four, compared to zero years in the case of their age cohort in rural areas (Afsar, 1998b). These findings suggest that work opportunities in garment factories provide incentives for female education as women with primary education had greater access than their illiterate counterparts.

2. Importance of information and the role of social networks in the process of labour migration

The role of information and social networks as important determinants of migration and settlement is amply demonstrated in a number of studies in Bangladesh (Afsar, 2000b; Majumdar et al., 1995) and elsewhere (Lansing and Mueller, 1967; Caldwell, 1969; Gore, 1971; Hugo, 1978, 1981; Ritchey, 1976; Skeldon, 1990). A large majority of respondents in the present study had acquaintances in Dhaka prior to migration, who helped them in the process of migration and settlement. The study suggested that 90 per cent of female garment factory workers, compared to 80 per cent of their male colleagues in the same industry or female counterparts of other manufacturing industries, had family members and relatives in Dhaka city prior to migration. Friends and neighbours, as well as employers and their agents, are the other acquaintances the migrant labourers had prior to migration. They assisted in providing shelter and job-related information.

Similarly, a large majority of respondents (59 per cent of men and 73 per cent of women) received shelter from their relatives and acquaintances after migration. Responses recorded on this account do not vary much either by duration of migration or by types of factories. The other major types of support they received at the urban end relate to procurement of employment and job-related information. Variations in this connection are observed along gender lines, duration of migration and types of factories. In the case of garment factories, the level of support to both male and female respondents increased substantially over the years (Table 5). More respondents (both male

and female) from the other manufacturing industries received such help, suggesting that social networks might be advantageous in securing better employment opportunities. Job-related assistance, described above, facilitates more independent migration by women. More generally, patterns of such support reflect the expansion of job opportunities for garment factory workers over the last five years.

Independent migration in Bangladesh is not a phenomenon occurring independent of family livelihood strategies. Instead, it should be seen as a family-based strategy for income maximization and poverty alleviation (Afsar, 1995). This point is supported by the findings of Kibria in this volume. Hence, in the Bangladeshi context, whether migration can be characterized as “independent” or “associational” is determined mainly by the motive for migration. If the purpose of migration is availing employment opportunities in the city (including transfer or change of job) maximizing income gains to reduce family poverty, and improving levels of education, it can be considered as independent migration. Alternatively, if a person migrates to stay with other family members and/or as a part of the migration of the entire family — in other words, where the individual members do not necessarily have any specific motivations for migration — then it can be classified as “associational” migration. In both cases, social networks play an important role in labour migration process.

Table 6 (from Afsar, 1998a) shows that less than 10 per cent of the migrants interviewed (28 per cent male and 3 per cent female) came alone to Dhaka city. All the remaining respondents, irrespective of gender, came to Dhaka city accompanied by immediate family members, by other relatives and, in a few cases, by spouses. The propensity to come to Dhaka with parents has declined substantially over the years and this is true for both male and female migrants. Whereas nearly half of the long-term migrant respondents were accompanied by their parents to Dhaka city, less than a quarter of recent migrants were. Female recent migrants demonstrated greater propensity to migrate with kin members and friends/neighbours, than long-term female migrants, who were more likely to come with their parents. Whether accompanied by parents, siblings, relatives or friends, female workers generally migrate with someone they know well and seldom do they migrate alone. The propensity to migrate alone has increased more among the recent male than long-term male labourers. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of migrants come to Dhaka with someone else, thus confirming the role played by social networks in urban migration.

Female migrants from the sample garment factories reported that they relied (in descending order) on friends and neighbours, employer's agent, own initiative and family members/relatives to help them secure a job (Table 7).⁴ Male migrants depended on the same sources, but a relatively higher proportion of them showed a greater tendency to rely on the employer and his agents. This was also true for the male workers of the other manufacturing industries. The greater mobility and work experience (average of two years) of men, compared to women (average of one year), observed at the country-wide level, might provide men with greater accessibility to employers or their agents, than their women counterparts. Conversely, women of other manufacturing industries depended more on family members and relatives, friends and neighbours, compared to their male colleagues. However, in those industries, 25 per cent of men and women relied on newspaper advertisements for securing their jobs. Those who depended on formal sources such as newspapers were much fewer (7 per cent) in garment factories. Table 7 suggests that women's entry into formal manufacturing industries, particularly garment factories, still remains largely dependent on informal sources of information and social networks.

A study of small garment workshops in low-rent district of Bangkok showed that virtually all workers were women under 20, mostly recruited among friends and relatives of the owner or from the owner's village. Such an informal system of recruitment ensures loyalty and docility in addition to cheap labour. This is also true for Bangladesh. The ex-president of the BGMEA stated that employers prefer rural migrants over local female labourers of Dhaka because the latter have greater aspirations, mobility and bargaining power, than the former. Such attitudes seem to be borne out by the tendency for direct recruitment from rural areas. Findings of the study reveal that nearly half of the migrant workers from garment, and two thirds from other, manufacturing units had contact with employers' agents prior to migration. It shows also that garment factory workers have blood connections with employers' agents; this tendency is greater for female workers and recent migrants (male and female). Similarly, the extent of recent migrant female workers from garment factories who knew the employers' agent prior to migration is much greater than long-term migrant females (63 per cent compared to 41 per cent). Thus more than half the garment factory workers are recruited from amongst the friends and relatives of the employers' agent; such types of recruitment appear to be increasing for female garment factory workers. Securing employment through known sources might be

considered safer for daughters by parents than unknown sources.

In many cases, respondents who migrated for the present job also had information about the nature of the work and wage. In this regard, non-migrants (those who were born in Dhaka or who migrated prior to 1980), had greater access to such information than migrants. Being in Dhaka for a long time, they could easily acquire such information through informal networks and more formal sources. The majority of women workers (53 per cent) from other manufacturing units belong to this category, thus suggesting that they have a better information base than other categories of workers (both male and female) in the sample. At the same time, there is a greater propensity of female recent migrants from the garment factories to have prior information about the nature of their present job than their long-term migrant colleagues (49 per cent compared to 35 per cent). This is consistent with Peterson et al.'s (1988) proposition that recent migrants have better information regarding job than long-term migrants. However, the percentage of male workers who had such information did not change by duration of period since migration. Increased access to information by female workers suggests wider and greater networking among recent migrant female workers from garment factories. More specifically, the role of social networks in supplying job-related information to migrant workers of the garment factory can be considered an important determinant of labour migration.

Of those workers from garment factories who reported migrating for employment, 38 per cent of the female workers and 34 per cent of the male workers came directly for the present job. Only 14 per cent of female workers from other manufacturing units came for the present job (Table 3). Thus the gap between migrating for an existing job and migrating for a prospective job is the most narrow in the case of female garment factory workers and largest for female workers of other manufacturing units.⁵ Other studies (Zohir and Majumader, 1996) suggest that the waiting period for getting a job in a garment factory is less than a week for the majority of workers (for 60 per cent of female and 50 per cent of male job seekers). And, with the exception of about 10 per cent, all the remaining job seekers, irrespective of sex, obtain employment within a month (Zohir and Majumdar, 1996). The conclusion that can be reached, therefore, is that the risk of migration in search of a job is minimized through effective information exchange, strong and reliable social networks available to migrant labourers, and greater job opportunities for migrants in Dhaka city.

Table 3: Distribution of sample migrant workers by reason for migration and some of the pre-migration characteristics

	Garment industries				Other manufacturing industries			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Reason for migration								
To avail the present job	25	34.2	27	37.5	6	35.3	2	14.3
Job search	31	42.5	27	37.5	8	47.1	4	28.6
Marriage/ family migration	-	-	5	6.9	-	-	4	28.6
Education	9	12.3	7	9.7	3	17.6	3	21.4
Others	8	11.0	6	8.3	-	-	1	7.1
All	73	100.0	72	100.0	17	100.0	14	100.0
Age-group								
<10	10	13.7	8	11.1	-	-	1	7.1
10-19	51	69.9	56	77.8	9	52.9	8	57.1
20-29	12	16.4	8	11.1	8	47.1	3	21.4
30-39	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	14.3
Average age (years)	-	15.1	-	13.2	-	20.4	-	18.3
Level of education								
No education	12	16.4	21	29.2	1	5.9	3	21.4
Primary	24	32.9	23	31.9	1	5.9	4	28.6
Secondary	13	17.8	10	13.9	1	5.9	-	-
High school +	24	32.9	18	25.0	14	82.3	7	50.0
Average education	-	3.0	-	2.5	-	3.9	-	3.3
Land holding								
No land	19	26.0	33	45.8	5	29.4	6	42.9
< 1 acre	20	27.4	24	33.3	4	23.5	3	21.4
1-2.5	20	27.4	13	18.1	3	17.6	2	14.3
2.51-5.00	10	13.7	1	1.4	3	17.6	1	7.1
>5.01	4	5.5	1	1.4	2	11.8	2	14.3

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by marital status, average age and education

Respondents	Male				Female			
	No.	(%)	Av. age	Av. education	No.	(%)	Av. age	Av. education
Garment								
Currently married	20	26.3	27.9	3.2	29	37.7	24.9	3.2
Currently unmarried	56	73.7	18.7	2.9	40	51.9	17.3	2.3
Divorced/separated	-	-	-	-	7	9.1	22.0	2.4
Widow	-	-	-	-	1	1.3	30.0	3.0
All	76	100.	21.9	2.9	77	100.0	20.7	2.6
Others								
Currently married	17	56.7	35.2	3.5	20	66.7	32.6	3.7
Currently unmarried	13	43.3	27.0	4.3	6	20.0	27.0	4.8
Divorced/separated	-	-	-	-	3	10.0	30.7	1.3
Widow	-	-	-	-	1	3.3	45.0	3.0
All	30	100.	31.8	3.8	30	100.0	31.7	3.6

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents and types of help received after migration from kin and acquaintances who lived in Dhaka

Respondents' category	Shelter	Help to get job	Job-related information	Monetary help	Job and shelter	Those who received help from acquaintances	
						(No.)	(%)
Garment							
Male	58.9	33.9	12.5	12.5	33.9	57	95.0
Female	72.7	20.0	16.4	7.3	21.8	55	91.7
Long-term migrant							
Male	72.0	20.0	8.0	4.0	20.0	25	96.1
Female	70.8	12.5	12.5	8.3	20.8	24	88.9
Recent migrant							
Male	56.0	45.2	16.1	19.3	45.2	31	93.9
Female	74.2	25.8	19.3	6.4	22.6	31	93.9
Non-garment*							
Migrant male	71.4	14.3	9.5	23.8	28.6	21	70.0
Migrant female	60.0	20.0	20.0	26.7	33.3	15	50.0

* As only five male respondents were classified as recent migrants, it was decided to present data from other manufacturing units as one category. Data presented here denote multiple responses.

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents by gender, migration status and people who accompanied them to Dhaka

Marital status prior to migration to Dhaka	Long-term migrant (%)		Recent migrant (%)		Total (No.)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Self (%)	12.0	1.7	36.1	4.0	20	13
Spouse (%)	8.0	12.7	-	18.4	2	65
Son (%)	52.0	-	-	0.7	-	2
Parents (%)	20.0	47.4	21.3	23.2	23	119
Siblings (%)	4.0	20.3	21.3	20.6	15	80
Kin (%)	-	15.3	10.7	28.0	6	94
Inlaw (%)	-	2.6	2.1	4.0	2	14
Servant (%)	-	-	2.1	-	1	-
Friend (%)	4.0	-	6.4	-	3	-
Neighbour (%)	-	-	-	1.1	-	3
All (No.)	25	118	47	272	72	390

Source: Afsar, 1998b.

Table 7: Distribution of sample respondents by sources of help to secure/seek the present job

Sources	Garment industries				Other manufacturing industries			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Family members/ relatives	14	19.2	13	18.1	2	11.8	4	28.6
Neighbours/ friends	14	19.2	16	22.2	1	5.90	3	21.4
Employers/ employers agent	23	31.5	14	19.4	5	29.4	3	21.4
Newspaper/ Other								
Advertisement	4	5.5	6	8.3	5	29.4	3	21.4
Self	18	24.7	23	31.9	4	23.5	1	7.1
All	73	100.0	72	100	17	100.	14	100

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

III. Profiles of the sample workers and some important consequences of factory work

1. Demographic and social characteristics

One major change in rural-urban migration over the past decade has been the increasing proportion of young women with low levels of educational attainment originating from rural areas. The increasing importance of RMG industries in absorbing young and literate or semi-literate women can be observed from the present study. Almost all the women (96 per cent) in the sample from the garment factories migrated between 1980 and 1996 (with the proportion evenly divided between the migration periods 1980-90 and 1991-96). In contrast, none of the women in the sample from other manufacturing units migrated between 1990 and 1996 (Table 2). The proportion of those who migrated between 1980 and 1990 was 47 per cent for females and 40 per cent for males. The sample confirms the observed tendency for RMG industries to attract women with little education: a migrant female worker in the garment factories is least educated compared to her male or female counterparts from the same or other manufacturing industries (Table 3), although, as noted above, she is likely to have more education than women who remain in rural areas. Regarding age at migration, a woman worker was on average at least two years

younger than her male counterparts. The average age of a female worker in garments was 13 years, while for other manufacturing industries the average was 18 years, compared to averages of 15 and 20 years, respectively, for their male counterparts (Table 3). A wider gap did not appear in present age between male and female workers in the sample since they were drawn by matching age. Nevertheless, cross-classification of age by year of migration shows that a female recent migrant from a garment factory is, on average, 17 years old, as opposed to 19 years for her male colleagues (Table 8). Although the average present age of a migrant woman in other manufacturing industries is 29 years, she is two years younger than a male migrant in those industries.

2. Delayed marriage and fertility reduction

The above discussion confirms that garment factories are generating employment for younger women. It is also interesting to examine whether entry into formal manufacturing leads to delayed marriage. Delayed marriage itself is considered to be an important step in controlling population growth. The majority of women workers (52 per cent) from the sample garment factories are currently unmarried, compared to nearly 74 per cent of male workers from the same and 20 per cent of female workers from other manufacturing industries (Table 4). Nearly a tenth of the women workers from the garment factories and the other manufacturing industries were reported to be divorced/separated or widowed. None of the male workers were either divorced/separated or widowed, irrespective of the type of industry. Apart from the figures of the divorced/widowed category, the marital status of both the female and male workers was almost the reverse of the urban pattern (see Table 9).⁶ During field work, it was observed that women workers often tried to hide the incidence of divorce/desertion, due to cultural inhibition. Male workers too are not immune from such inhibition, and no man admitted to being either divorced or widowed. It is also interesting to note that, unlike those of their counterparts from garment factories, the marital status of the respondents of other manufacturing industries shows a striking similarity with the urban patterns (Table 9). However, the predominance of non-migrant and long-term migrant women among respondents from other manufacturing units might explain the congruence with figures for urban women.

According to the survey, 38 per cent of currently unmarried garment factory workers wanted to defer their marriage until they

save enough money. However one can observe a marked gender gap in this regard. The majority of men (53 per cent) compared to 12 per cent of women workers from garment factories wanted to defer their marriage for that reason. The bulk of the female garment factory workers (77 per cent), on the contrary, were waiting for their parents to find a suitable groom for them. The corresponding figures for their male counterparts were 38 per cent from garment and 15 per cent from the other manufacturing industries. The response pattern of female workers from other manufacturing industries is quite similar to that of their counterparts in garment industries.

The relevant issue at this stage of the first generational migration is not whether women defer marriage to generate savings or whether they surrender to their parents' choice of suitable marriage partner. Rather, the income-earning capacity of young women, with low levels of education from largely landless families, becomes a bargaining tool in arranging marriages. In rural areas, a girl from a poorer household is often considered to be a burden and is married off as soon as possible. The employment opportunities afforded by urban manufacturing industries change this picture. The average age of female garment factory worker is 17 years. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey data (1994) reveal that about 60 per cent of Bangladeshi women were married by the time they were age 15. It also shows that urban women marry later than their rural counterparts (15.4 versus 14.3 respectively), with an overall difference of more than one year in the median age at marriage among women between 20 and 49 (Mitra et al., 1994:74-75). Had they not been employed, they might have been married off earlier, and without much consideration for the suitable groom (Afsar, 2000a). Hence, the employment opportunities generated by the RMG sector for the young migrant rural women appear not only to improve their chances of making a suitable marriage, but may also have a potential impact on fertility reduction since marriage is delayed.

In order to examine whether work opportunities in garment factories leads to fertility reduction of the young women workers, comparisons were made with Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) data (Mitra et al., 1994) and other studies on female garment factory workers (Zohir and Majumdar, 1996). Table 10a shows that whereas "ever married" women of reproductive age have on average 2.4 children (BDHS data), based on sample surveys of garment factory workers, the average number of children is significantly lower for garment factory workers, varying between 1.2 and 0.8 (Zohir and Majumdar, 1996 and Afsar, 1998b). Similarly, the proportion of ever-

married women of childbearing age who do not have children is 23 per cent (BHDS data), while for garment factory workers the figure is between 39 per cent and 52 per cent. At the peak of childbearing age (20-29), when the great majority of ever-married women in Bangladesh have on average two living children, more than half of female garment factory workers do not have any children. Currently married women of reproductive age in garment factories have a lower number of children (1.7) and incidence of child bearing (40 per cent) than Bangladeshi women in general (2.8 children and 90 per cent, respectively) (Table 10b).

The data presented in Tables 10a and 10b suggest, therefore, that married garment factory workers are controlling their fertility more effectively than Bangladeshi women in general. In her recent study (Afsar 1998), the author found that the use of contraception is widespread among the married garment factory workers and even unmarried workers of those factories (90 and 60 per cent of the male and female respondents) are familiar with condom. The former category claim to use contraceptives out of fear of pay cuts or termination of employment if they become pregnant. By and large, garment factory workers neither enjoy paid maternity leave, nor do they have necessary institutional infrastructure to look after their children. Nearly three quarters of married garment factory workers depend on kinship networks for childcare activities, while the remaining one-quarter manage themselves. Given the fact that they face intense difficulties in meeting their own basic needs as well as those of the family, and the pressure of the workload in a competitive market, it is natural that they try to defer pregnancy until they achieve a more comfortable position in the family. Based on existing data, it is projected that delayed marriage and effective control of fertility by the garment factory workers would help in reaching the goal of replacement level fertility by the year 2005 set by the government (GB, 1994:6).⁷

3. Gender differentials in income and income-earning opportunities

The sample female workers of garment factories earn 77 per cent of the income of their male counterparts, while the figure is 90 per cent for other manufacturing industries (Table 8). The gender differentials in average wage of the female garment factory workers is comparable with the income ratio in urban areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996). In the present study, the highest gender

disparity in income is found at supervisory/technical/managerial level, which is consistent with Rahman's (1993:103) findings on wages in export processing zones.⁸ At the managerial level, often the total number of workers is included in the sample owing to the availability of only a small number of women in this category. Hence it was not always possible to draw gender-disaggregated samples by matching age. As a result, the gender gap is higher in this group as demonstrated by lower male-female earning ratios for both garment (0.73) and non-garment (0.83) than either skilled (0.87 and 1.02 respectively) or unskilled (0.82 and 1.02 respectively) workers levels (Table 8).

The above discussion suggests the importance of age in determining income. However, it also reveals that a sample female worker earns on average 10 to 25 per cent less than her male counterpart even after controlling for age. Hence, there are other socioeconomic factors that can help explain this gap. Both number of years of schooling and experience from other factories are important variables influencing income. On average, a male garment factory worker had 3 years of schooling and about 1.5 years of experience as opposed 2.6 and 1.2 years respectively for his female counterparts. While the average education of male and female workers in the other manufacturing industries is almost equal (3.8 and 3.6 years respectively), men have on average 1.6 more years of experience than female workers. It should be noted that given the extremely limited opportunities for on-the-job training, workers often learn skills from their fellow workers informally in the garment industry. Once they learn machine operation they apply directly for positions as operators or skilled production workers in another factory.⁹ Consequently, the turnover rate is very high, as revealed through interviews with the employers of the garment factories and confirmed in other studies (Chaudhury and Majumdar, 1993). Even at the managerial level, where men and women have almost equal levels of education, experience matters a lot, especially in other manufacturing industries where the gender gap with regard to experience is widest (14.4 years for men and 0.6 years for women). The opportunities for informal training in management are not so readily available as is the case with skilled operators.

Results of a multivariate regression analysis run by Zohir and Majumdar (1996:51-52) on determinants of income of garment factory workers show that education beyond primary level, skills and experience are the most important factors affecting gender difference in earnings. They also found that even after controlling for all relevant variables, the income difference between male and female workers

remains at a quarter. Significant positive impact of the length of stay in Dhaka city on income was also revealed through their regression analysis.

Given the size and purposive nature of the data drawn for the present study, it is difficult to isolate the importance of migration in influencing income from other socioeconomic variables. Table 8 shows that the gender-based wage differential is the highest in the case of recent migrants and lowest for non-migrants. This suggests a positive impact on income of longer duration of residency in Dhaka, which may be related to the corresponding opportunities for informal training (Table 8).¹⁰ The data suggest that men have greater opportunities to bargain and acquire more skills with longer stay in Dhaka city, as opposed to their female colleagues. In the absence of similar or more rewarding job opportunities in the city and limited scope to upgrade their skills and educational level, migrant women need more time than their male colleagues to supersede their non-migrant counterparts. Women tend to face greater burdens of poor and inadequate living and environmental conditions, compared to male garment factory workers.

Migration has provided an opportunity for young women from rural backgrounds to secure employment and to earn a wage for the first time. Although nearly 40 per cent of the total male and female garment factory workers earn less than the prescribed minimum wage, which was set at Tk 900 per month in 1993, it must be pointed out that from almost no cash income, 60 per cent of female garment factory workers were earning more than poverty level income if fixed at one dollar a day as poverty line (1985 purchasing power parity terms).

A comparison with the employment situation in rural areas is instructive. In rural areas, 83 per cent of employed women aged 15 plus years, compared to 15 per cent of men, are engaged as unpaid family helpers. With the exception of the 4 per cent who work as employees, the remaining 13 per cent are either self-employed (7 per cent) or day labourers (5.6 per cent) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996:48). Not only do rural women have highly limited options for paid employment, the wage/salary they receive is far below the urban average. The latest labour force survey data reveal that 62 per cent of rural women as opposed to 44 per cent of urban women in salaried service get less than Tk 250 per week which can be considered below poverty level income (see above). Those who make more than Tk 500 per week constitute 26 per cent of urban women and 15 per cent of rural women. Similarly, the average wage rate for a female day

labourer in urban areas is Tk 36 per day, which is higher by Tk 11 than a rural woman's daily wage (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1995). Existing micro studies indicate that female workers in the rural and informal sectors earn between a third and half of male wages. The situation in the urban formal sector appears to be much better, with the ratio of female to male wages ranging between 72 per cent and 97 per cent, depending on skills level (World Bank, 1996).

Conversely, had these women migrated and been engaged as domestic servants, they would have earned only Tk 690 (ADB, 1996) per month, which is half of their present average wage (Tk 1,389). Clearly, migration and the absorption in garment factories opened up better earning avenues for younger women from landless households with low level of education, compared to rural wage labourers or those migrants who worked as housemaids.

4. Savings and remittances

Both the proportion of workers who save and the proportion of income saved is greater for female than for male workers. Whereas women workers in the garment industry save on average 8 per cent of their income, the figure for male workers is 6 per cent (Table 12). The respective figures for other manufacturing industries are 14 per cent for women and 10 per cent for men. Male and female migrant workers in the garment factories save on average six to eight times more of their income than non-migrants. Similarly, in other manufacturing industries, a migrant worker saves a proportionately greater amount than a non-migrant worker.

Propensity to save appears to increase with age. Thus workers belonging to the 30-39 year age group save nearly 20 per cent of their urban income, as opposed to nearly 3 per cent of their youngest counterparts (10-19 years) in garment factories. This holds equally for both male and female workers (Table 13). It should be noted that the monetary wage of garment factory workers also appears to increase with age, though this is not the case in the other manufacturing industries.

Nearly two fifths of migrant workers are able to send remittances to their families of origin. An analysis of remittances shows that the average size of the remittances as a proportion of monthly income is higher for garment factory workers than for workers in other manufacturing industries. On average, migrant male and female garment factory workers send 39 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, of their income per month (Table 13). The corresponding figures for

their counterparts in other manufacturing industries were 35 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. The proportion of remitters out of the total workers from garment factories (38 per cent) is higher than those of other manufacturing industries (32 per cent). In both cases, men remitters outnumber their women counterparts. While 26 per cent of women migrants from the garment factories sent remittances regularly to their families, the figure is 44 per cent for male workers. Nearly a quarter of female respondents from the RMG factories reported to have either single parents or siblings whom they need to support.

These findings do not follow patterns found elsewhere. A study of female labour migration in Bangkok metropolis in 1988 found that more women (56 per cent) than men (38 per cent) were sending remittances back to their village (Phongpaichit, 1993:189). In Thailand, like some other Southeast Asian countries, often eldest daughters bear the responsibility of bringing up the other siblings, which provides a further push factor for migration in response to demand for workers in export-oriented industries. By contrast, in Bangladesh, men are often considered the principal breadwinners and they have retained their supremacy in the overall rural-urban migration flows. Men continue to migrate and send remittances for survival and betterment of their families. Three quarters of men as opposed to half of women from garment factories are still single. This may help to explain why male workers are more likely to send remittances to their families of origin. The survey indicated that the figures for those who remitted among currently unmarried workers in garment factories are nearly 60 per cent for men and 40 per cent for women. Further, younger migrants from garment factories (10-19 years) are found to remit much higher proportions (45 per cent) of their urban income than their older counterparts (25 per cent). Thus, unlike savings, which appear to be influenced by level of income, the size of remittance appears to relate also to the intensity of social ties and responsibilities respondents bear vis-à-vis their sending families. This finding confirms patterns found elsewhere. Based on a review of five empirical studies, Rempel and Lobdell (1978:333) concluded that the size of remittances varied directly with the strength of social and economic ties to rural areas and inversely with how well migrants are established in urban areas.¹¹

Women's ability to send remittances is also influenced by gender differences in urban expenditure patterns. Women garment factory workers spent 52 per cent of their income on housing, compared to their male colleagues, who spent about a 34 per cent of their monthly income for such purposes. In addition, they spent about 13 per cent

of their income for their own treatment in cases of illness as well as that of other family members. Moreover, spending on clothing, sandals, cosmetics, transport and tiffin amounts to about 10 per cent of their total expenditures. Hence, women often find they have to borrow from their co-workers, relatives and friends in order to meet their overall expenditures. The irregularity and, in some cases, non-payment of wages exacerbates the problems of indebtedness. Women workers of garment factories are in a more disadvantaged position in this regard than are male workers, who have greater opportunities to augment their income through acquiring higher skills or part-time jobs because of their greater scope for mobility and lesser burden of household chores.

The study also provided some insight into how remittances form part of the family livelihood strategy. The majority of remitters (more than 90 per cent) sent money for both family maintenance and education of siblings (Table 14). This finding is consistent with studies from other countries which demonstrate that consumption expenditure alone constitutes between 80 and 90 percent of poorer migrants' remittances (Afsar, 1995:260; Connell et al., 1976:98; Prakash, 1978:110; Hugo, 1978:273). In a country like Bangladesh, where half of rural households fall below the poverty line, the priority placed on consumption expenditure can be viewed as consonant with the "basic needs" approach to development without which the families of migrants would have been worse off (1995: 260). Remittances sent by sample respondents for both family maintenance and education can be seen as making a positive contribution to achieving sustainable development through investment in human resources. It suggests that labour migration is not only adopted as a strategy for individual income maximization, but also to strengthen the human resource base of the sending families.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents by monthly wages, skills category, migration status and some more socio-demographic characteristics

Categories of workers	Number		Average wage/month (in Tk)		Average work hours/day		Average experience (yrs.)		Average age (yrs)		Average education (yrs.)	
	G*	O**	G*	O**	G*	O**	G*	O**	G*	O**	G*	O**
Unskilled production												
Male	28	11	709.0	1,524.0	10.9	6.9	0.8	1.7	16.6	28.9	2.4	3.1
Female	28	12	580.4 (0.82)	1,547.4 (1.02)	10.3	4.8	0.6	3.6	16.6	32.4	1.8	2.7
Skilled production												
Male	25	10	1,570.0	3,539.3	11.1	4.4	2.6	8.9	21.1	33.3	2.6	4.2
Female	28	9	1,370.2 (0.87)	3,612.2 (1.02)	10.8	4.1	2.1	8.7	21.3	34.7	2.4	4.2
Supervisor/ technical/ managers												
Male	23	9	3,421.7	5,369.0	6.2	8.2	2.9	14.4	26.6	33.1	4.0	4.3
Female	21	9	2,493.2 (0.73)	4,468.2 (0.83)	8.6	5.5	2.0	0.6	25.5	27.7	3.9	4.3
All												
Male	76	30	1,813.2	3349.2	9.6	6.5	1.5	2.8	21.1	31.6	3.0	3.8
Female	77	30	1,389.3 (0.77)	3043.1 (0.91)	10.0	4.8	1.2	1.4	20.7	31.6	2.6	3.6
Non-migrant												
Male	3	13	1,700.0	3,474.6	7.8	4.8	3.0	6.3	19.3	35.3	3.0	3.7
Female	5	16	2,380.0 (1.4)	3,428.1 (0.99)	8.4	3.8	2.9	3.5	23.6	33.9	3.4	4.0
Long-term												
Male migrant	35	12	2,522.9	4,030.4	8.1	6.0	2.7	5.3	23.8	30.6	3.1	4.2
Female migrant	37	14	1,838.6 (0.73)	2,603.1 (0.65)	9.5	5.9	1.9	7.1	23.4	29.1	2.8	3.3
Recent												
Male migrant	38	5	1,168.4	1,388.2	11.0	11.8	1.6	1.1	18.8	24.6	2.8	3.4
Female migrant	35	-	772.8 (0.66)	- (0.66)	10.8	-	0.9	-	17.4	-	2.3	-

*Sample garment industries ** Other manufacturing industries.

Note: Figures in parentheses are the ratio of female earnings to male earnings: (Female earnings/Male earnings).

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 9: Distribution of the sample respondents by age and marital status and a comparison with urban Bangladesh

Age group	Currently married		Sample respondents Currently unmarried		Divorced/ widowed		All (No.)		Urban Bangladesh***		
	G*	O**	G*	O**	G*	O**	G*	O**	Currently married	Never married	Divorced/ widowed
10-14											
Male	-	-	100.0	-	-	-	6	-	0.5	99.5	0.0
Female	-	-	100.0	-	-	-	10	-	2.1	97.8	0.1
15-19											
Male	-	-	100.0	-	-	-	27	-	3.6	96.4	0.0
Female	17.4	50.0	78.3	-	4.3	50.0	23.0	2	37.9	60.9	1.2
20-24											
Male	17.4	-	82.6	100.0	-	-	23.0	2	37.9	60.9	1.2
Female	34.8	-	43.5	-	21.7	-	23	-	79.4	18.0	2.6
25-49											
Male	80.0	60.0	20.0	39.3	-	-	20	28	85.0	14.7	0.3
Female	81.0	67.9	9.5	21.4	9.5	10.7	21	28	90.6	2.1	7.3
50+											
Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	96.5	0.9	2.6
Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55.8	0.9	43.3
All											
Male	34.2	56.7	65.8	43.3	-	-	76	30	54.0	45.5	0.5
Female	37.7	66.7	51.9	20.0	10.4	13.3	77	30	61.0	30.6	8.4

* Sample garment industries

** Other manufacturing industries.

*** Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996:9 (data do not provide absolute population size)

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 10a: Child bearing by ever-married women workers and Bangladeshi women in general

Age group	Average number of children/ worker/women			% of women/workers with no children		
	BDHS data Mitra et al., 1994	Zohir and Majumdar, 1996	Afsar, 1998b	Mitra et al., 1994	Zohir and Majumdar, 1996	Afsar, 1988b
< 15	-	0.0	0.0	0	100.0	100.0
15-19	0.3	0.2	0.1	72.6	77.4	90.0
20-24	1.4	0.9	0.6	22.3	41.7	57.0
25-29	2.5	1.7	1.2	6.0	11.4	32.0
30-34	3.3	1.3	1.3	3.8	27.3	19.2
>35	4.7	2.7	2.2	1.9	14.3	12.5
All Ages	2.4	1.2	0.8	23.4	38.8	51.9

Source: Mitra et al., 1994; Chaudhury and Majumdar, 1993, 1996; and Afsar, 1998b.

Table 10b: Number of living children of currently married women workers and Bangladeshi women in general

Age group	Mean number of children of currently married women/worker		% of women with no children	
	Bangladesh data (Mitra et al., 1994)	Garment factory worker (Afsar, 1998b)	Bangladesh data (Mitra et al., 1994)	Garment factory worker (Afsar, 1998b)
15-19	0.6	1.0	44.5	90.2
20-24	1.6	1.3	10.5	60.0
25-29	2.6	1.7	3.5	35.9
30-34	3.5	1.8	2.7	25.0
35-39	4.3	2.7	1.7	25.0
40-44	5.2	2.5	0.7	0.0
All Ages	2.8	1.7	9.9	57.8

Source: Mitra et al.; 1994, and Afsar, 1998b.

Table 11: Percentage distribution of respondents by wage group in 1996 and 1993

Respondent*	Up to Tk 500		501-900		901-1,300		1,301-1,500		>1,501		All (No.)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Garment	6.6	26.0	28.9	11.7	18.4	23.4	3.9	13.0	42.1	26.0	76	77
Other industries	-	-	-	6.7	16.7	13.4	-	10.0	83.3	70.0	30	30
Respondent**	3.6	15.7	8.6	27.1	24.3	28.5	10.7	4.8	52.9	23.9	140	376

M=male; F=female

* Respondents refer to the sample workers of the present study

** Chaudhury and Majumdar, 1993

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996; and Chaudhury and Majumdar, 1993.

Table 12: Average savings of respondents by migration status and age

Respondents*	Average savings out of total income (Tk)		Savings as a proportion of income (%)		All respondents (No.)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Garment						
Non-migrant	66.7	20.0	1.4	0.4	3	5
Long- term migrant	261.4	144.1	8.6	6.2	35	37
Recent migrant	43.4	46.9	2.7	4.1	38	35
All	144.7	145.1	6.4	8.0	76	77
10-19	27.3	32.6	2.2	2.9	33	33
20-29	145.7	136.7	5.2	6.7	35	38
30-39	625.0	816.7	14.6	20.7	8	6
Others						
Non-migrant	584.6	493.8	6.0	5.6	13	16
Long-term migrant	383.3	550.0	7.9	15.8	12	14
Recent migrant	-	-	-	-	5	-
All	406.7	520.0	9.9	14.2	30	30
10-19	-	-	-	-	-	2
20-29	321.4	800.0	7.1	16.6	14	12
30-39	616.7	280.0	14.9	8.8	12	10
40+	75.0	533.3	3.2	17.8	4	6

* Income here refers to average monthly wage and overtime. As recent male and female migrant respondents belonging to 10-19 age group in other industries reported no savings, respective rows are blank.

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 13: Average remittances of respondents by migration status and age

	Average remittances (Tk)		Remitters (%)		Remittances as (%) of income*		All respondents (No.)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Garment								
Long-term migrant	1,033.3	600.0	51.4	33.4	34.1	25.8	35	37
Recent migrant	625.0	457.1	36.8	20.0	39.3	39.6	38	35
All	874.2	535.0	43.8	26.4	38.5	29.6	73	72
10-19	462.5	525.0	12.9	12.5	38.6	45.4	31	32
20-29	880.0	507.1	73.5	40.0	31.4	24.7	34	35
30-39	1,250.0	750.0	50.0	40.0	29.3	21.1	8	5
Others								
Long-term migrant	1,450.0	300.0	83.3	35.7	29.9	8.6	12	14
Recent migrant	1,200.0	-	40.0	-	-	-	5	-
All	1,411.1	466.7	70.6	35.7	34.6	12.7	17	14
20-29	1,450.0	250.0	54.5	28.6	32.1	5.4	11	7
30-39	1,466.7	600.0	150.0	83.3	46.5	23.8	6	6
40+	1,166.7	350.0	-	-	-	-	-	-

* Income here refers to average monthly wage and overtime

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 14: Percentage distribution of the sample workers by purpose of sending remittances to families of origin

Respondent's category	Family maintenance only	Education of siblings only	Treatment medication only	Religious ceremonies	Family maintenance education	Others	All remitters (No)
Garment factory							
All migrant							
Male	37.5	10.0	-	10.0	35.0	2.5	40
Female	40.0	40.0	5.0	5.0	25.0	-	20
Long-term migrant							
Male	36.4	9.1	-	4.5	40.9	-	22
Female	30.8	23.1	7.7	7.7	30.8	-	13
Recent migrant							
Male	38.9	11.1	-	16.7	27.8	5.6	18
Female	57.1	14.3	-	-	14.3	14.3	7
Other industries*							
Migrant male	16.7	8.3	-	-	75.0	-	12
Migrant female	42.9	14.3	-	28.6	14.3	-	7

* As only five male respondents were classified as recent migrants, it was decided to present data from other manufacturing units as one category. Data presented here denote multiple responses.

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

IV. Coping mechanisms of migrant workers in the urban labour market and society

Women factory workers are perceived by the employers surveyed as docile, hard working and ready to work long hours, in addition to having less exposure to and contacts within the urban labour market and less bargaining power than their male colleagues. The findings of the present study also point to women's lower wages and mobility, compared to male workers, particularly in the RMG industries. It is therefore useful to examine whether there is any evidence suggesting that women workers try to improve their working conditions.

1. Demand for paid leave, higher wages and change in night duty

Of the sample women workers of garment factories, 51 per cent demanded paid leave and 56 per cent bargained for higher wages (Table 15). The proportion of men who made similar demands, is slightly higher than women (63 per cent and 62 per cent respectively). Women, by comparison, outnumber their male counterparts only marginally (30 per cent versus 28 per cent) in their demand to change night duty, an area that received considerably less attention from workers of both sexes. On average women work as long as their male counterparts (11 hours per day including overtime) and also work at night without any transportation facilities, a problem discussed in more detail below.

Women workers from other manufacturing units mainly asked for paid leave, and here they outnumbered their male counterparts. It should be noted that, unlike garment factories, which remain open even on weekly and public holidays for longer hours, other manufacturing industries do not differ as much from normal working hours. Workers in these manufacturing industries are less likely to bargain for higher wages because they are generally recruited on a regular basis and have contracts with the terms of employment clearly specified. Consequently, very few (3 per cent male and 7 per cent female) workers of other manufacturing industries demanded higher wages and only just over 10 per cent of the sample workers, irrespective of gender, bargained to change their night duty. Conversely, a large number of workers in garment factories are hired on a casual basis, mostly without contracts, which forces them to bargain for higher wages and better conditions. Although very few

of the sample workers bargained for overtime, here too the share of women workers from garment factories is much higher (13 per cent) than their male colleagues (8 per cent) or women in other manufacturing units (3 per cent). The low wages of female garment workers and greater assignment of night duty might have prompted such demands.

Although gaps between male and female garment factory workers who bargained for higher wages, paid leave and change in night shift are narrow, they nonetheless demand some explanation. Education is often considered a means to raise the level of workers' consciousness. Although the average male worker has a higher level of education than a woman, the latter has a longer length of service in the same factory than the former (Table 15). Hence longer length of service of female workers might have encouraged them to demand better terms and conditions almost at par with their male colleagues. More than 90 per cent of the sample workers, irrespective of gender and type of factory, applied for better terms and conditions with the help of supervisors. They did not involve unions or other influential sources such as employers' agents in making their demands. As garment factories operate by the private entrepreneurs purely with a profit motive, lack of discipline on the part of workers is not tolerated. Given the heavy competition for wage employment, the workers generally abide by existing rules and regulations of the factory (see Kahn, this volume).

2. Results of bargaining

As regards outcome, excepting their lower wages, women are in a slightly better position in comparison to their male counterparts. For example, paid leave was granted to 80 per cent of female and 73 per cent of male workers in the garment factories (Table 15). The corresponding figures for other manufacturing units are 96 and 87 per cent respectively. Similarly, one fifth of the women workers who demanded overtime were granted it, whereas none of their male counterparts received a positive outcome in this regard. Conversely, more women were denied higher wages (70 per cent) than their male colleagues (64 per cent). However, on the whole, the difference between men and women workers with regard to outcome is marginal. It would be difficult to explain the employer's justification for conceding or rejecting demands without a case by case examination, although clearly questions of profit margin and the dictates of buyer's schedule come into play. However, even once a demand is acceded

to, enforcement remains a problem.

This is especially pertinent in the area of paid leave. For example, nearly one third of respondents experienced a salary cut for taking a leave of absence, mainly due to sickness. The burden in this regard falls more heavily on women (34 per cent) compared to their male counterparts (20 per cent). Women workers are more susceptible to sickness and fatigue arising from their double burden of domestic responsibilities and paid employment. There is also some evidence to suggest higher incidence of morbidity as a function of the systematic deprivation in food entitlements in childhood. In another survey (Afsar, 1998b) the author found that women take significantly greater amounts of time for sick leave, partly for their own illness but also to care for sick family members. Women were more likely to take sick leave for the care of other family members than men. This points to the importance of entitlements to paid sick leave for workers and, because of their double burden, particularly for women workers.

The discussion above raises questions of unionization and worker-management relations which are examined in the chapter by Khan (this volume). Here it is sufficient to note that the merits of each demand are examined informally and unilaterally by employers; hence the interests of the workers may not necessarily be protected. The present study revealed some encouraging trends, nonetheless. A large number of women bargained for better work conditions at par with their male counterparts and the outcome did not differ much along gender lines. However, women still suffer a higher incidence of salary cuts due to a greater propensity to take sick leave. Research on the types of diseases suffered by women and their children should also be undertaken in order to develop appropriate policy measures.

3. Living arrangements of migrant women in urban society¹²

Apart from a few exceptions, female garment factory workers do not get lodging from their factory. Living with family members and relatives is still most common among migrant female workers in garment factories (Table 16). Three quarters of them live either in their own nuclear units or as a member of the extended family nexus. The remaining one quarter of those workers either live in sub-let arrangements (16 per cent) or in mess (9 per cent). Those who live in sub-let arrangements either live with siblings and cousins (42 per cent) or co-workers (42 per cent). A few also live with single parents. In

total, only seven female garment workers from the sample live in mess or boarding house with co-workers. They are mainly divorced or separated, though a few are currently unmarried, and almost all migrated between 1991 and 1996. None of the female workers from other manufacturing units live in mess or boarding house and only three out of a total of 30 respondents live in sub-let arrangement. While nearly a quarter of garment factory workers live with co-workers, be it relatives or friends, this type of living arrangement is almost non-existent among female workers of other manufacturing units.

The type of living arrangement utilized usually relates to other socio-demographic characteristics of workers. As opposed to a large number of female workers from garment factories who are young and currently unmarried, their counterparts from other manufacturing industries are predominantly married (two thirds) and live in family units, either nuclear (60 per cent) or joint extended (40 per cent). It should be recalled that garment factory workers often are the first generation settlers in Dhaka city, whereas women workers from other manufacturing industries are either non-migrant or long-term migrants. Hence, they (the latter) are already entrenched in the existing family unit and do not need to create new ways to sustain themselves in urban society.

Unlike the family-based living arrangements of female garment factory workers, living in mess or boarding house is much more common among male workers in garment factories. One in three of these male workers lives in mess or boarding house mostly with co-workers; the majority, nearly three quarters, are also the recent migrants. Living in mess units or boarding houses is an age-old practice, which was in vogue in this sub-continent with the introduction of English education and subsequent city-based employment generated for men.

The pattern of living arrangements described above suggests that female workers, in particular, depend largely on family members to cope with the urban environment. To overcome the existing negative attitudes about independent female labourers, and lack of low-cost housing or hostel facilities in Dhaka city, women workers live with members of the immediate or extended family. Family-based living arrangements give them protection from theft and other untoward incidences. In addition, the family can provide necessary services, such as childcare. In the absence of any institutional support, the role of family members in providing childcare facilitates female employment outside the home. Of those female workers from garment factories who had children under 5, almost 90 per cent get familial

support, as opposed to approximately 60 per cent of their counterparts in other manufacturing units. A large number of the latter group (nearly two fifths) depend on domestic maids to look after their children. Male workers, on the contrary, depend overwhelmingly on family members for childcare. The lack of childcare facilities in many of the emerging mega cities poses a big problem for women's employment outside the home and for their occupational mobility. It cannot be assumed that families will continue to provide such services. Regarding the problem of theft, which is a major concern in urban Bangladesh, nearly 10 per cent of female garment factory workers, as opposed to 20 per cent of their male counterparts experienced theft in their place of residence while out for work. Incidence of theft is even higher in the case of male workers of other manufacturing units than their female counterparts. In the absence of responsible family members and relatives, who can look after the house during working hours, male workers who live in mess are more susceptible to theft than female workers.

In meeting their day to day needs and those of their families, female garment factory workers face intense competition. A large number of helpers (unskilled workers) and operators (skilled workers) live in low rental accommodations, where they have to share latrines and bathrooms with 16 to 22 boarders on average and cooking gas burners or heaters with 10 to 15 families. In the city proper (Karailar Math in Mahakhali and Kalapani area in Mirpur) they live in high room crowding with an area of nearly 3 square metres for each person in a semi-durable type of structure at the cost of Tk 600 per month, which constitutes nearly a half and the total salary of the operators and helpers respectively (Afsar, 1998a). Here they share two or three latrines and five or six gas burners or heaters with 10-15 families. These arrangements make them vulnerable to pay cuts as they are often 10-15 minutes late in arriving for work. They generally lack cemented bathrooms or a covered space and running water facilities for bathing.¹³ Not only do workers have to pay for collecting water from the few tubewells that are found in the area, but time travelling to these wells further increases women's existing workloads.

As the first generation of workers in a metropolis that is poorly planned and equipped with cost-effective amenities to meet the needs of the poor, female garment factory workers would appear to pay a higher price to surmount the odds in the settlement process than do their male counterparts. Nonetheless, they seem to be surviving relatively well in the highly competitive formal sector and have achieved the status of independent earners. This was unthinkable for

most illiterate or semi-literate and unskilled rural women from landless households prior to the 1980s.¹⁴

4. Safety and odd working hours¹⁵

In the absence of cheap and safe public or factory operated transportation systems, young migrant women are generally protected against violence, physical or sexual assault on their way to and from the factory by their co-workers and family members. Nine out of 10 female garment factory workers live in the same ward as the factory, or nearby, and therefore walk to their workplace. The remaining 10 per cent of the female workers travel either by tempo¹⁶ or rickshaw. However, whether they walk or ride on a rickshaw, they are always accompanied by co-workers and or family members (Table 17). Seldom do they go to the factory alone, particularly at night. Their strong group identity on the road works as a protective shield in the otherwise unprotected lonely dark roads and lanes. Only a fraction of female garment workers (3 per cent) reported being teased while returning from the office at night. However, the survey technique is not often useful to capture sensitive areas like sexual abuse/harassment, since women often are inhibited about sharing their personal experience. Both men and women unanimously considered *mastaans* (muscle men), whether from their own communities or neighbouring ones, as the main threat, indicating that the problem requires serious attention by the authorities.

Community-based focus group discussions (Afsar, 1998b) revealed many instances of threat of *mastaans* and other forms of sexual abuse/harassment faced by female garment factory workers. "Eve teasing" on the road and kidnapping of the female garment factory workers are not rare.¹⁷ Within the factory, there is evidence of sexual harassment. Some women complained that their male co-workers treat them as "garments" to be used for some time and then thrown away. Taking advantage of women's weaker economic position and bargaining power, male co-workers, technical, and even managerial staff make false promises of promotion or marriage. Once sexual relations are established, the women workers are often abandoned by their male colleagues. There are also cases reported where women do use relations with technical or even managerial staff to improve their position and end up leaving their own husbands. It is also worth noting that in the less-protected living and working environments found in urban settings, both male and female workers are susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (Afsar, 1998b)¹⁸, particularly

Table 15: Proportions and profiles of workers who demanded better working conditions

Percentage and profile	Paid leave		Higher wages		Change in night duty		More overtime	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Garment								
Percentage	63.2	50.6	61.8	55.8	27.6	29.9	7.9	13.0
Average education (years)	2	2.9	2.9	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.0	2.0
Length of service (years)	2.9	4.4	2.7	3.4	1.9	3.7	5.0	3.5
Percentage whose demand sanctioned	72.9	79.5	36.2	30.2	42.9	43.5	0.0	2.6
Other industries								
Percentage	76.7	90.0	3.3	6.7	13.3	10.0	3.3	3.0
Average education (years)	3.7	3.7	2.0	4.0	2.7	3.0	4.0	4.0
Length of service (years)	6.9	8.5	12.0	12.0	3.0	11.3	6.0	9.0
Percentage whose demand sanctioned	86.9	96.3	100.0	50.0	50.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 16: Percentage distribution of respondents by types of living arrangement in the place of destination and migration status

Respondents	Family unit		Mess/boarding house		Sublet		Others*		All	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Garment										
Non-migrant	66.7	80.0	33.3	-	-	-	-	20.0	3	5
Long-term migrant	65.7	75.7	17.1	2.7	8.6	16.2	8.6	5.4	35	37
Recent migrant	36.8	65.7	44.7	17.1	7.7	17.1	-	-	38	35
All	52.6	70.0	31.6	9.1	7.9	15.6	9.2	-	76	77
Others										
Non-migrant	61.5	75.0	7.7	-	15.4	-	15.4	25.0	13	16
Long-term migrant	16.7	78.6	25.0	-	8.3	21.4	50.0	-	12	14
Recent migrant	40.0	-	60.0	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
All	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
All (garment & others)	87	123	5	4	14	12	7	10	34	15

* Others include employer's land and squatting government/public land.

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

Table 17: Source of transport, and accompaniment, when travelling to work at night, by migration status

Respondents	With male/ female worker (%)		Male neighbours (%)		Rickshaw (%)		Office transport (%)		Others*		All (No.)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Garment												
Non-migrant	33.3	40.0	-	-	33.3	20.0	-	-	33.3	40.0	3	5
Long-term migrant	42.9	70.3	-	-	11.4	16.2	-	-	45.7	13.5	35	37
Recent migrant	65.8	82.9	5.3	-	2.6	5.7	-	-	26.3	11.4	38	35
All	53.9	74.0	2.6	-	7.9	11.7	-	-	35.5	14.3	76	77
Other industries												
Non-migrant	23.1	25.0	7.7	18.8	30.8	-	15.4	37.5	23.1	18.8	13	16
Long-term migrant	16.7	35.7	16.7	7.1	16.7	21.4	41.7	28.6	8.3	7.1	12	14
Recent migrant	-	-	-	-	40.0	-	-	-	60.0	-	5	-
All	16.7	30.0	10.0	13.3	26.7	10.0	23.3	33.3	23.3	13.3	30	30
All (garment & others)												
	87	123	5	4	14	12	7	10	34	15	106	107

* Others include family members for female workers at large and no companion for male workers.

Source: Sample survey of migrant workers of Dhaka's formal manufacturing sector, 1996.

in the absence of public education campaigns on the spread and prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS.

V. Policy implications

The above discussion on migrant women workers' coping mechanisms in the urban labour market and society suggests some important areas for policy interventions. One area is housing and shelter, including the efficient delivery of basic amenities. Public sector housing so far has provided only 1 per cent of the urban housing needs. Hence, the informal private sector provides the bulk of housing needs, while the formal private sector is confined to upper-middle and high-income housing. There is only one hostel for working women run by the Department of Women's Affairs for the middle-class working women of Dhaka city. At a very limited scale, Nari Uddyog Kendra (NUK) started hostel schemes for low-income female garment factory workers. It has two rented structures accommodating a total of 200 women with facilities of food, education, skills development and recreation. However, as it charges Tk 700 (Tk 300 for food and Tk 400 for room rent), it is not often affordable by helpers or unskilled production workers in garment factories who earn Tk 500 per month, on average. During field work it was observed that helpers are the most transient category, and are often denied accommodation by their relatives, on account of inadequate monetary contribution. Hence, they have to move from one relative to the other in search of a house or look for a steady co-worker or single working cousin to live in sub-let arrangements. Thus, while there is a general need for low-income housing in urban areas, low-cost hostel facilities for working women, particularly unskilled garment factory workers, demand urgent policy intervention.

Often planners and policy makers are hesitant to develop low-cost housing, fearing that this might "pull" more migrants from rural to urban areas. Hence, many governments in developing countries (e.g. Bangladesh) try to discourage migration by adopting resettlement policy in urban areas and diverting investment for rural development. Such policies do not necessarily prevent rural-urban migration. For example, in India out-migration is higher from those districts that have better agricultural performance. Similarly in Ecuador, efforts to improve living conditions through integrated rural development have been successful, but fail to reduce rural-urban migration significantly. Values generated by modernization and increased aspirations cannot

be counterbalanced by the socioeconomic changes brought by rural development (Billsborrow, 1993). In countries such as Bangladesh and Thailand, where rapid growth takes place in the capital city, migration occurs to avail economic opportunities generated by those cities. In particular, women's independent migration occurs as a direct response to the demand generated by the export-oriented manufacturing industries in those metropolises. Hence, along with policies directed to slowing migration, the government must undertake migration-responsive policies. Migration-responsive policies in this case cover a broad range and include access to housing, basic amenities, health care and consciousness-raising on diseases such as STD and AIDS/HIV, education and training, transport and childcare services. Any policy that facilitates the provision of adequate housing and other services to female migrants will accelerate economic growth by facilitating female mobility in response to economic incentives. Some of the recommendations made by proceedings of the United Nations expert meeting on the "Feminization of Internal Migration" (1993) can also be emphasized for the present study.

- Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should provide adequate support services to first time migrants in urban areas, including job placement services and accommodation for migrant women.

- There should be more low-cost but technologically appropriate public housing projects and housing credit schemes for women. Government should also ensure that existing legislation and administrative practices shall grant equal ownership and tenancy rights to women as to men.

The findings of the present study also draw attention to the need for cheap and safe public transportation. It showed a heavy concentration of women in those wards where garment factories are located. Elsewhere, the author (Afsar, 1997) argued that due to lack of horizontal mobility, women often compete for same type of job and as a result of a "crowding effect", wages paid to women are generally lower than men. Private sector actors, preferably NGOs, can start city shuttle services for female workers of garment and other manufacturing industries in the peak hours in the morning, evening and night to enable women perform their normal and overtime work. Employers can also use their vans to pick up and drop off women workers during odd hours of morning and/or evening and can charge for the petrol cost.

Elsewhere the author has also argued that the government should invest more to improve roads and transportation facilities

between rural and urban areas, which will encourage more temporary rather than permanent migration. This proposition was derived from one pertinent finding which shows that temporary migrants came from those villages which are better connected with Dhaka city than those of permanent migrants (Afsar, 1995).

The present study confirms that women are underrepresented in technically skilled jobs and in senior grades in industry, a universally common pattern. It also shows that the wage gap between men and women workers at this level is the highest compared to the skilled and unskilled production workers' level.¹⁹ These findings call for a gender-equitable spread of students at secondary and tertiary levels of education and a revision of curriculum and teaching practices to achieve more scientific orientation and technological relevance. Demand-based vocational training, particularly for migrant women, should be organized by both government and non-government organizations. Women workers should also have opportunities for on-the-job training.

As the RMG industries are run largely by private entrepreneurs, it would be difficult to impose on-the-job training requirements through government directives. Employers may agree on paper but not in principle, or may implement training half-heartedly. Moreover, too many impositions may lead to closure of some of the factories and hence many women will be deprived of job opportunities. Therefore, some incentive and disincentive schemes along with education of employers and advocacy programs can be more effective. Incentives can take the forms of tax rebates or discounts and sales promotion. Donors can come forward with the funds for training for women workers. Those factories that organize such training on a regular basis can be made eligible such funds after thorough scrutiny and assessment by independent research bodies.

The study also reveals that women are not lagging behind men in making demands for better working conditions such as paid leave, higher wages and change in night duty. However, they are often more penalized through salary cuts for taking more sick leave than men. A women worker takes more sick leave because she is more vulnerable to sickness than her male colleagues, and because she must care for family members during their illnesses. Women workers bear the double burden of domestic chores in a situation where basic amenities are shared with 15-30 families. In addition, the lack of child care facilities or services for the urban working women, create constant conflict and tension. Hence, there is a need for better and more efficient delivery of water and sanitation facilities and protection of tenants'

rights. Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) can distribute those facilities adopting progressive ratings based on use rather than land ownership and fixed rate criteria. City Corporation, along with NGOs and both landowners and tenants should look after maintenance and care of water and sewer lines. Moreover, there should be some measures to protect the rights of the tenants so that the landlord cannot increase the house rent frequently at his own will.

Any policy that improves health and lowers fertility is likely to foster women's spatial mobility, economic opportunities and productivity. A health insurance scheme initiated by the NGO Nari Uddyog Kendra was adopted by employers of some garment factories. It ensures regular health check-ups for workers by medical practitioners. Similarly, immunization, reproductive and general health schemes provided in 93 garment factories in Dhaka by another NGO, Unity Through Population Services (UTPS), should be supported by the employers and the government. While these initiatives should be replicated on a larger scale both in the factories and communities, there should also be a set of basic safety standards to be followed by those factories. Here too the similar types of incentives outlined for on-the-job training can be adopted as cost-effective policy measures. Considering the threat of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS among the garment factory workers, there should be education and preventive health programmes.

Finally, recognizing that the formulation of policy requires an adequate data base, data gathered by both garment and other manufacturing factories should include gender-disaggregated data by age, education, length of service and migration status.

Endnotes

1. Often reason for migration is taken as a preliminary indicator of migration decision making. Although useful, it can be subjective and suffer from ex-post rationalization over time and hence has low response validity.
2. Elsewhere the author observed that nearly half of female and a third of male migrant labourers originated from Dhaka division and excepting Barisal, both female and male out-migration from coastal and hilly regions to Dhaka city is highly insignificant (Afsar, 1998b:10).
3. Greater incidence of landlessness among the garment factory workers was observed by the author in her recent study (Afsar, 2000a). A female garment factory worker had 0.51 acres whereas a male worker had 0.78 acres of cultivable land in the place of origin.
4. Elsewhere the author has also argued that location of a friend or relative at the place of destination is one of the pre-conditions for migration (Afsar, 1995), which equally holds in the case of labour migration, particularly women's independent migration to the RMG sector.
5. However, even those who came in search of job did not necessarily swell the ranks of the unemployed since, according to existing literature, unemployment is lower among migrants than non-migrants (Afsar, 1995).
6. It should be mentioned that, while Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data show the figures for the "never married" men and women, "unmarried" in the present study refers to currently unmarried workers. A currently unmarried person may not necessarily belong to never married category.
7. Following one projection, it is hoped that if the trend of fertility reduction among garment factory workers and other women of reproductive age continues at the same or at a steeper rate, the population of Bangladesh is likely to stabilize at 211 million by 2056.
8. Chaudhury and Majumdar (1993) found a much wider gap (0.66) between male and female earnings. They also found gender-based disparity across job categories. The smaller gap in the income ratio found in the present study compared to Chaudhury and Majumdar's (1993) study and the highest gender differentials at the supervisory level can be explained as follows: while they derived data from a random sample, the sample drawn for the present study was drawn from a quota of different categories of workers by matching age of the male and female workers. Hence, the gender differential caused by demographic characteristics and subsequent socioeconomic entitlements is minimized in the present study.
9. Elsewhere the author found that nearly seven out of every 10 respondents acquired informal training in this way and the bulk of them (85 and 75 percent respectively of female and male respondents) are currently working as operators (Afsar, 1998).
10. This finding is supported by author's recent survey data (Afsar, 1998).
11. Elsewhere the author found statistically significant correlation between the size of remittances, age and marital status of temporary migrants, which supports the above proposition (Afsar, 2000b:175).
12. This discussion is largely based on Afsar, 2000a.
13. In focus group discussions with respondents, relatives, family members and neighbours at their community of residence, it was reported that there is acute crisis of running water supplied by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority

(WASA) in those areas in the city proper.

14. The issues dealt with in this section as well as the following section are treated in greater detail in Afsar, 2000a.

15. This discussion is based on Afsar, 2000a.

16. Wide-bodied auto-rickshaw which can accommodate about 10 to 15 persons at a time. Although highly polluting, it is one of the cheapest and fastest modes of intra-city group transportation.

17. In Kalapani area, a young girl was kidnapped by the *mastaans* while coming home alone at around 10 o'clock at night. Next morning, they left her in the same place after raping her. She was badly injured and was under treatment for some time. After her recovery, she felt too embarrassed to work in the same garment factory and live in the same area. Hence, she left the factory and the area. They also cited another rape case in Madhya Badda, the eastern fringe of Dhaka city.

18. From her latest survey, the author found that one in every five garment factory workers, irrespective of gender, knew about a STD affected co-worker

19. This finding is consistent with Rahman's (1993:103) results.

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