

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: BGD31606
Country: Bangladesh
Date: 11 May 2007

Keywords: Bangladesh – Internal relocation – Freedom of movement – State of Emergency

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. Is relocation to Dhaka an option for people who fear harassment or violence in their local community? What social or other impediments might there be to relocating from rural to urban areas?**
- 2. Is relocating from one rural area to another rural area an option? What social or other impediments might there be to such a move?**
- 3. Under the current emergency situation, have there been restrictions or otherwise on freedom of movement within Bangladesh? Is this likely to change in the near future?**

RESPONSE

On 30 March 2007 a request was sent to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for information in regards to the above questions. (RRT Country Research 2007, Email to DFAT: 'Country Information Request BGD31606', 30 March – Attachment 1).

A reply was received on 11 May 2007. DFAT advised that they had consulted with several authoritative sources including the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, University of Dhaka, the Centre for Population Health (otherwise known as ICDDR,B), and the International Organization for Migration. DFAT's response to each question is included in full below (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report 641: RRT Information Request BGD31606*, 11 May – Attachment 2).

- 1. Is relocation to Dhaka an option for people who fear harassment or violence in their local community? What social or other impediments might there be to relocating from rural to urban areas?**

While individual circumstances may provide some impediment to relocating from a rural to urban area, there is ample evidence to indicate there is a large and sustained movement of people from rural into urban areas. The current rate of growth of the urban areas within the six major metropolitan areas of Bangladesh is around 3.5 percent per annum. Given that the natural rate of population increase in Bangladesh is estimated to be 1.3 percent per annum, the difference (ie 2.2 percent per annum) can be attributed to rural-urban migration. The growth

rate for the Dhaka urban area indicates that in absolute terms the population of the Dhaka metropolitan area is growing at around 320,000 people per annum.

On the basis of our discussions in Dhaka we are not aware of any legislative or official impediment for a person moving from a rural to urban area.

2. Is relocating from one rural area to another rural area an option? What social or other impediments might there be to such a move?

Relocating from one rural area to another could not be ruled out as an option. According to a 2002 UN report, rural-rural migration between 1982 and 1996 accounted for approximately 10 percent of all migration movements in Bangladesh (cf 24 percent for international, and 63 percent for rural-urban). However, to undertake such a move successfully would most likely require the person to have some social connection to the receiving rural area. For example, some rural-rural movements can be attributed to women relocating for the purpose of marriage.

There are no official impediments for a person moving from a rural to rural area.

3. Under the current emergency situation, have there been restrictions or otherwise on freedom of movement within Bangladesh? Is this likely to change in the near future?

There are no restrictions to movements within Bangladesh under the current State of Emergency. We would not expect this arrangement to change in the near future, and although the political situation remains fluid, the imposition of further restrictions appears unlikely. We would note that at the commencement of the State of Emergency a curfew was enacted, but was lifted within 24 hours. The curfew did not restrict internal movement, but rather required people to be off the streets after a certain time.

DFAT also provided the following additional comments:

Internal migration in Bangladesh should also be seen in the context of its demographic profile, being one of the most densely populated countries in the world with strong population growth. The population is overwhelmingly Muslim with minorities of Hindus (10.5 percent), Buddhists (0.6 percent), Christians (0.3 percent) and other religions (0.3 percent). The Buddhists are largely concentrated in the Chittagong area while the other religious communities are spread across the country. There are 27 indigenous groups, accounting for 1.13 percent of the population concentrated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and northern areas of Bangladesh. With a strong feeling of homogenous Bengali nationalism among the people, mixed societies are very common.

Religious and ethnic minorities are easily accepted in a social community, with the exception of the "Ahmadiya" community, also referred to as the "Kadianis". The Ahmadiya community, an Islamic sect numbering 100,000 in Bangladesh has been subject to intimidation campaigns and attacks in recent years. To a greater extent than other minorities, the Ahmadiya people or families live in community clusters. This potentially makes it more difficult for them to relocate as they are less likely to be accepted by a receiving majority Muslim community, particularly in rural areas (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report 641: RRT Information Request BGD31606*, 11 May – Attachment 2).

List of Sources Consulted

External: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

List of Attachments

1. RRT Country Research 2007, Email to DFAT: 'Country Information Request BGD31606', 30 March.
2. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2007, *DFAT Report 641: RRT Information Request BGD31606*, 11 May.