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**Bangladeshi Women's Experiences and Vulnerabilities in Jordan's  
Garment Sector**

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## INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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## **Abstract**

Jordan's garment sector employs a large number of women migrants from South Asia who face various challenges and vulnerabilities in their work environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated some of these vulnerabilities, leading to income losses. However, little information is available about this migration corridor. This study implemented qualitative phone survey interviews with returnee women migrants in Bangladesh to identify interventions that the organizations, such as the International Labor Organization and other actors supporting women's safe migration could undertake to reduce women's vulnerabilities in migration. The study identified networks of discipline and power, the perception of appropriate behavior at work and beyond and racialization as key areas that mediate vulnerabilities of women. We recommend increasing awareness of conditions at Jordan's garment sector as part of pre-departure training, which is supported by the main recruitment practice of garment workers through BOESL in the country. Awareness raising includes information on the role of the Al Hassan Workers' Center as well as on the role of the embassy of Bangladesh in Jordan. A second recommendation is to translate contractual documents into Bengali so that women migrants can better understand work conditions, including salaries. The final recommendation focuses on the need to continue research on the uneven power dynamics in Jordan's garment sector to support dismantling networks of discrimination and power and racialization of the work environment.

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## Acronyms

American University Beirut	AUB
Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited	BOESL
Better Work Jordan	BWJ
Collective Bargaining Agreement	CBA
Gender Based Violence	GBV
International Finance Corporation	IFC
International Food Policy Research Institute	IFPRI
International Labor Organization / International Labor Office	ILO
International Trade Association	ITA
Ministry of Labor (Jordan)	MoL
Qualifying Industrial Zone	QIZ
Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making	ROAD
Standard Unified Contract	SUC
U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement	USIFTA
Work in Freedom phase 2	WiF-2

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Jordan's garment sector

The Jordanian garment sector was established following US Presidential Proclamation 6955, an amendment to the US-Israel Free Trade Agreement (USIFTA), in 1996, which set up qualifying industrial zones (QIZ) in Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (ITA 2023). This was later followed by a free trade agreement with the United States signed in 2010, which would jumpstart the industry and set in motion the creation of more than 10 additional zones. These zones, according to a US Congressional Report (CRS 2013, p. 2), are “primarily funded by Asian investment and predominately populated by guest workers from Asian countries.” In 2020, the International Labor Organization (ILO) reported, based on 2018 estimates, on the existence of 84 factories in Jordan, which collectively employ between 73,000 and 77,000 workers, the majority of whom are migrant workers. The successes of the industry played a critical role in Jordan's economy, with QIZ exports reaching US\$1.69 billion dollars in 2017.

Importantly, most workers in the garment industry in Jordan are migrant women, with Jordanian women filling around 20 percent of these jobs (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2013). Low women's labor force participation rates in Jordan, the locations of the factories far from urban centers; popular depictions of garment labor as “low status and low job satisfaction”, and potential company “preferences” for workers of certain nationalities are all, to various degrees, responsible for the low numbers of Jordanian women in the garment sector (Kolben 2019). Excessive work hours of up to 14 hours a day with overtime that would be difficult to maintain for Jordanian women with nearby families as well as substantially lower real cash wages of migrant workers compared to Jordanian workers are additional arguments that have contributed to most factories being staffed by migrants. According to ILO (2022), the real cash wages of migrant workers were only slightly more than half of real wages of Jordanian citizen's wages during 2013 to 2022 and real wages have been slightly declining. In 2020, the Ministry of Labor (MoL) of Jordan documented 220,000 registered migrant workers, the majority of whom were Bangladeshi workers.<sup>1</sup> Of these, approximately 62,000 migrant workers were registered as employed with the garment sector in 2021, with Bangladeshi workers accounting for the majority of workers. According to the ILO, at least 69 percent of all garment workers in Jordan are women, a reflection of the fact that “employers generally perceive women as causing fewer problems because they are less inclined to go on strike and file complaints” (ILO 2017, 7). Sewing is, moreover, a work activity traditionally associated with women and many women working in the sector in Jordan had prior work experience from Bangladesh's garment sector.

Beginning in the early 2000s, an increasing number of reports concerning worker exploitation and maltreatment within the garment industry emerged, most notably the Global Solidarity Center's 2005 report (American Center for International Labor Solidarity 2005). The report detailed highly exploitative practices, with employers confiscating workers' passports and national ID papers; withholding wages from foreign workers, who are legally banned from forming unions under Jordanian law; employer practices of threatening and physically abusing workers, with many women workers complaining about sexual assault and harassment, including rape; and the abuse of work hours, with workers reporting that “they're becoming mentally

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<sup>1</sup> While this number is considered a drop from previous years, it is largely attributed to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Better Work Jordan, “Annual Report 2022: An Industry and Compliance Review” (Geneva: International Labour Office; International Finance Corporation, 2022), <https://betterwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/English-BWJ-Annual-Report-2022.pdf>.

disoriented from starting [work] early and working late into the night, seven days a week, with only a few days off a month.” (NPR, 2006)<sup>2</sup> The Solidarity Center report also noted that beyond withholding of wages, many workers were not being paid the minimum wage at the time, which was reported to be \$135 a month even though they were forced to report that they were being paid that amount. Reports of child labor and labor trafficking were rampant, and eventually forced the US Government to place Jordan on its *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* in 2009. The status of worker abuses in the garment sector led to the creation of the Better Work Jordan (BWJ) program in 2009, in partnership with the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The program “aims to improve working conditions and respect of labor rights for workers” in the garment industry in Jordan and to “boost the competitiveness of apparel businesses” in the country (BWJ 2023). The outcomes of BWJ have been dramatic; by 2016, the country was removed from the US *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* and, according to the BWJ 2022 annual report, an independent assessment done by Tufts University produced strong evidence that BWJ programming is directly tied to the lower rates of labor trafficking in Jordan (BWJ 2022).

## 1.2 Status of Migrant Garment Workers in Jordan

Today, migrant garment workers are governed by law No. 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners’ Affairs, which codifies the *kafala*, or visa sponsorship system. Under the *kafala* system, workers’ residency and work permits are directly tied to their employer, an arrangement that can place workers at a significant disadvantage (ILO 2017). Workers are similarly restricted by laws that make it difficult, and in some cases nearly impossible for them to switch or leave their current jobs without receiving the approval of their current employers (Afrin 2019). Further, Jordanian work permits are only issued for one-year periods, while garment worker contracts are regularly signed for periods of at least three years or more, putting significant pressure on workers to ensure that their employers pay for and renew their work and residency permits on time (ILO 2017).

In Jordan, the use of private recruitment agencies to recruit garment sector migrant workers is prohibited by law. Thus, the recruitment of workers generally takes place through government and other recruitment agencies located in the country of origin. As BWJ has noted, the formalization of the recruitment process in Bangladesh has resulted in the fact that most Bangladeshi migrants working in Jordan today have gone through Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL), a state-run recruitment agency, which has helped to lower the prevalence of labor trafficking (BWJ 2022; Rashid and Watson 2017). Through BOESL, workers frequently sign contracts for a period of three years, which often include in-kind wage deductions for food and lodging, which is provided by the company, as many of the workers interviewed for this study confirmed. Thus, although the minimum wage for the garment industry in Jordan today is 220 Jordanian Dinars a month, salary deductions result in a monthly income of approximately 125 JD (equivalent to US\$176 on Dec 31/2022) or less (ILO 2022). The lowered salary total contributes to a largely predatory model of work hours and payment: Because workers receive low salaries, they are “incentivized” to work the overtime hours offered by companies. However, as many workers have noted, these overtime hours are not optional, especially if the worker has not met their daily production quotas (Afrin 2019; ILO 2022, 27). Intense workload demands and pressures have created an environment where rampant verbal

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<sup>2</sup> “Jordan Accused of Harboring Sweatshop Factories,” *National Public Radio*, June 26, 2006, <https://www.npr.org/2006/06/26/5510902/jordan-accused-of-harboring-sweatshop-factories>.

abuse of employees is commonplace. BWJ has also reported high instances of discrimination and gender discrimination, as well as the prevalence of sexual harassment of women workers (BWJ 2022; ILO 2022).

Migrant garment workers also have limited access to the array of social and labor protections that citizen workers have. The social security deductions that migrant workers pay are one critical example: Although 21.75 percent of their total wages are deducted under the Jordanian Social Security Act for social security, migrant workers' low salary contributions disqualify them from their entitlements at the end of their employment period.<sup>3</sup> Amidst these restrictions, the 2013 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) provided important advancements and protections for worker wages, work hours, overtime and bonus payments, and the equal treatment of all workers (Afrin 2019). The CBA would later lead to the creation of a standard unified contract (SUC) in 2015. However, workers' access to unions and other forms of collective bargaining remains limited and non-compliance on the part of employers is prevalent. For example, although migrants can gain union membership, unions can only be led by a Jordanian national. Migrant workers cannot compete in trade union elections, nor can they choose their representatives (ILO 2022). The creation of unions is also limited to one workers' union per sector, according to Jordanian Law (Article 98(d) of Law 8 of 1996). Further, as the ILO has recently noted, union activities in the sector and in Jordan more broadly are heavily centralized, and often "heavily borrow" from Jordanian labor law rather than "contradicting" or challenging it (ILO 2022, 42). Further, migrant workers' access to advocacy organizations such as the Al Hassan Workers' Center, a center located in the Al Hassan industrial zone, is often limited by the location of the factory and a lack of awareness (ILO 2022).

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Jordanian Social Security Act Article 70B, contributions of 120 JD or less from employees limits a worker's entitlement at the time of leaving to only 10 percent of the accumulated wage totals that they have contributed during their time in Jordan. As ILO (2022) notes, this means that "as most migrant garment workers are only employed on three-year contracts...the worker foregoes 11.75 percent, or 25.85 dinars [120 JD per month salary] each month of what is actually part of their earned wage."

## 2. Methodology

Under the “Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) to Support Work in Freedom Phase 2 (WiF-2),” the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), in collaboration with the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Center for Qualitative Research in Bangladesh, implemented a phone survey with women returnees from work in Jordan’s garment sector. The aim of the study was to understand key vulnerabilities experienced by short-term women migrants from Bangladesh who worked in Jordan’s garment industry. The study also focused on the vulnerabilities experienced by migrants as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of freedom of association organizations, such as the Al Hassan Workers’ Center supported by WiF-2, in reducing these vulnerabilities.

The phone survey built on an earlier phone survey conducted under the same overall project, which reached approximately 700 potential and current migrant workers, including around 80 returnees from Jordan’s garment sector who gave consent to be contacted for a second interview at a later date. Consequently, the recruitment for this study started with the list of phone numbers of those 80 participants who provided consent to be contacted a second time during that first survey. These 80 returnees were contacted in a random order; recruitment ended after 26 interviews had been conducted. All phone survey participants were compensated with 100 Taka, or approximately one dollar, which is the same amount that was provided during the previous phone survey. The study received ethical approval from the institutional review board of IFPRI. The identities of all interviewees have been anonymized to ensure their privacy. After completing data analyses, all personally identifying information was deleted.

All interviews were conducted by the Center for Qualitative Research in Bangladesh in Bengali between October and December 2022. Interviews lasted, on average, between 40 and 75 minutes and were scheduled according to the time preferences of the interviewee. Upon receiving interviewees’ consent, all interviews were recorded in Bengali, and later transcribed into English.

### 2.1 Limitations and Sample Representativeness

Several key restrictions to data collection made it difficult to speak with a larger number of Bangladeshi returnee migrants from the garment sector in Jordan. First, the broader culture of silence, as discussed in the findings and analysis section, discouraged workers from speaking with interviewees. This was especially true with respect to the workers targeted for this study, as they had already been interviewed by research staff, as mentioned above, during a previous round of interviews. Second, it is important to note that the study team did attempt to conduct focus group discussions with Bangladeshi workers at factories in Jordan. However, various issues ultimately made it difficult to speak with workers on site, including but not limited to worker fears of company reprisal, the impossibility of exclusion of workers with management responsibilities and workers’ extensive work hours, which often extended over all days of the week. These difficulties forced the study team to reevaluate their approach, which ultimately led to the decision to conduct phone interviews with returnee migrants in Bangladesh.

In spite of these difficulties, the team was able to conduct 26 in-depth phone interviews with returnee labor migrants in Bangladesh. These 26 migrants were selected randomly from a larger pool of returnee migrants based on data collected during an earlier phone survey. While a larger number of interviews might be expected in order to claim that the data are representative, it is important to note that the study team identified that data saturation had been reached relative

to the interviews conducted. Data saturation, according to Saunders et al. (2017) references the point at which “no new codes occur in the data,” and the same patterns and codes continue to emerge (p. 1895). The data collected for this study consistently produced the same codes, as the majority of workers responded similarly to the questions posed by interviewees. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that more interviews would necessarily yield different results because of larger population size. Data saturation was compounded by researchers’ concerns about the ethical principles of ‘Do No Harm’, especially considering that migrant women workers are considered a vulnerable and high-risk research population (Burgess-Proctor, 2015). Given that data saturation had already been reached, the desire to keep interviewing workers in the hopes of finding “new” data had to be balanced with the potential benefits that interviewing a larger number of workers might have produced (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005).

Data analysis was conducted through several rounds of coding. The first round of coding and data analysis was conducted by the Center for Qualitative Research in Bangladesh. The center developed a list of primary codes, and later identified emerging themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. A second round of independent analysis was done manually by the lead author as well as digitally using NVIVO qualitative software. The final questionnaire is provided in Annex A and the list of codes in Annex B.

Several important challenges and limitations affected this study, including the modality of the survey (over the phone). Phone interactions prevent researchers from examining behavioral and non-verbal cues during an interview, which are all beneficial for interviewers and later data analysis. Phone calls can be interpreted as banal or casual, which can in turn affect the ways that respondents react to certain questions posed by the interviewee and can detract from the overall quality of the discussion. Further, phone calls can seem distant or “far away,” causing workers to identify interviewers’ aims or goals as disingenuous. One worker was asked why she was seemingly “angry” with the interviewer; she responded that the last time she had spoken with someone as part of a phone survey, she felt that “nothing happened” or was produced by the discussion. In other words, the worker felt unsure about the benefits that she would receive from participating in another research project.

Moreover, phone conversations might be overheard by other household members and can be difficult for workers to receive in private, making it hard for interviewers and interviewees to discuss sensitive topics. As one interviewee noted during her interview, she “could not talk about these things,” in other words, issues of worker harassment or assault, because her family was nearby and would “get angry” if they heard her discussing these things. To identify challenges of potentially being overheard by other family members and lack of privacy, we added the speakerphone module proposed by Alvi et al. (2022) and identified the preferred time for the phone interview in a pre-call, as proposed by Gupta and Saini (2020). Other logistical problems arise from phone surveys, including background noise and activity near the worker that might distract them during the call or, in some instances, prevented them from finishing the interview. Poor phone connectivity frequently impacted the quality of the data and interrupted workers while they were responding to certain questions, which also disrupted the overall flow of the phone survey.

Finally, the overall culture of surveillance in the garment industry coupled with the highly exploitative nature of migrant work in this industry has created a culture of silence among workers. The fear of reprisal for speaking out about issues should not be dismissed, even after workers have returned state that things are fine in the factories where they worked. This is not to suggest that workers need someone to speak out “for” them or on their behalf; rather, this is a

reminder of the ways that workers are desperate to ensure that they are not seen as troublemakers, which might prevent them from gaining access to future work. This might explain why many workers reported only having “heard of” or witnessed workplace violations from afar, rather than witnessing or experiencing such issues first-hand.

The next section presents key findings, followed by an analysis of larger themes that emerged from the data. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations and a brief conclusion.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Participant demographics

All survey participants identified as Muslim women, with ages ranging from 18 to 52 years. Many workers reported having worked in the garment industry in Bangladesh before traveling abroad to Jordan, with one worker reporting that she had worked in Mauritius and several other countries before traveling to Jordan to work in the garment industry. While the range of time that participants had lived and worked in Jordan varied, most spent between less than one year to three years in Jordan, which aligns with the three-year contract period. A handful of workers reported having to return home to Bangladesh for myriad reasons related to COVID-19, which disrupted or prematurely ended their hopes of staying the duration of the three years.

Respondents had generally completed primary education (14 respondents). Of the remaining participants, six could only sign their names, five had finished secondary schooling, and one worker had completed higher secondary education. The majority of workers were currently or had been married; five workers reported being single. When asked about household dynamics, the majority of workers reported their husbands as the head of the household, or the person with the power to take final decisions. Interestingly, however, many workers reported themselves as the primary earners in the family. This was especially true for workers during their time abroad in Jordan.

#### 3.2 Reasons for Migrating

**“Everyone goes [to Jordan] to earn money, to stand on their own feet.”**

Reasons for migration largely centered on financial need, but also included pressure from family or household members, problematic family or household dynamics, and, in a handful of cases, personal incentives to better their own futures. Based on respondents’ answers, it was clear that working in the garment industry in Bangladesh made it very difficult for workers to save money for the future, which was a key issue driving women to work abroad. Several workers noted that it was “impossible” to save money in Bangladesh because companies do not allow overtime, whereas in Jordan, “overtime was required.” Further, as one worker put it, “in Jordan, I have no family, so I can do overtime. In Bangladesh, I have to go home and take care of family after work, you see?” Other workers identified the additional costs of living in Bangladesh as making it difficult to save money. As one worker pointed out, “after spending on my children’s education, home rent, and other costs, I could not [spend] anything.” Another worker noted something similar:

“I cannot keep the money [I make in Bangladesh], there are different expenses like medical expenses. On the contrary, in Jordan, if I get sick, the company looks after me. Overall, I can save money in Jordan, but I cannot save in Bangladesh.”

Another worker reported that, prior to migrating,

“Three or four of my neighbors, who work [in Jordan], told me about the process. They told me, “Why are you struggling here?” Come [to] Jordan. You can make more money. And you know, sister? It is hard to save money when working here in Bangladesh. But it is quite easy abroad.”

Family and household dynamics were also a key determinant in migrants' choices to go abroad for work. In the majority of cases, a family member's illness and subsequent need for medication and treatment forced workers to move abroad in order to afford these items. Others decided to leave to work abroad as a result of having taken out large loans to afford specialized medication and care for their family members. As one worker explained in detail:

“There were some problems in my family. My sister was ill. Our family's condition was so bad. My father needed regular medicine. My mother was also sick. To manage everything, I faced problems. That's why I decided to go abroad. After that, I treated my mother. I also [paid for] my father's treatment, but I could not save him [and] he died.”

In a handful of cases, issues of domestic abuse and violence surfaced as a reason for leaving the household to work abroad, although descriptions of these incidences were ambiguous, and workers generally felt uncomfortable discussing the subject.

A disruption in family income—either the main breadwinner lost their job, or the income of the breadwinner decreased—made it necessary for them to migrate. As one worker noted, her husband's income alone was no longer enough to support them and their new baby daughter. Another worker noted that her husband's earnings were “no longer enough for our children's education” costs, making it necessary for her to go abroad for work. Similarly, one respondent noted that:

“Yes, sister. After my father's death, we had no earning male members in the family. My brother is too young to work. And he is not even that able to work. So, after my father's death, I had to go. Before his death, he was the breadwinner.”

Relatedly, several workers reported wanting to migrate to Jordan for work to save money for future investments, including their children's education as well as buying a home for their families. One worker reported that she wanted to “explore what [she] could do” in Jordan for their family: “I told [my husband] we have a future, and it could be better if I went abroad.” She knew that going abroad would give her the jump start that she and her husband needed to provide a better life for their daughter and any other future children they might decide to have.

Many respondents noted that saving money was also possible in Jordan because of the higher salaries and the ability to work overtime. “Salary is high there [Jordan], salary is low here [Bangladesh]” reported one respondent, while another worker verified that not only were salaries low in Bangladesh, but there was no chance for a salary increase. Another worker noted:

“Actually, I couldn't make enough money in Bangladesh, but I had the potential to make money in Jordan. I could make up to 15-20 [thousand Taka]; it depended on overtime. If I couldn't work overtime, I used to make 15,000 per month, but if I could work overtime, I used to make 20,000 monthly.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As of February 26, 2023, 1 Bangladeshi Taka was equivalent to 0.0066 Jordanian Dinar. According to this respondent, she was able to make approximately 99.47JD a month without overtime, and 132.62JD with overtime.

### 3.3 Community and family reactions to migration

Family and community reactions to women's migration for work varied. While some respondents generalized reactions to women's migration for work, one important distinction emerged between responses from "villagers," or non-urban communities, and those in the cities. As one respondent noted, "most girls in our area go abroad," so negative reactions "don't happen here." She continued, saying that "villagers do not like a girl who comes from abroad. Don't you understand what a village girl going abroad means to them?" Instead, in the city, "everyone knows we [women] work." One respondent explained that "public perception of migrant workers is very negative" and that "people [in Bangladesh] do not like migrant workers." She also pointed to the differences in peoples' reactions in the villages and in urban areas, noting that "in the village, people refuse to accept any girl as a sister-in-law if she works in garments," either in Dhaka or abroad. Another worker explained in detail that "many boys or men don't want to marry those migrant single girls. They say that 'this migrant girl has gone out of the country [so] this girl is bad; who will marry this girl?'"

In almost all cases, rhetoric surrounding "bad" migrant women and girls was linked to issues of gender and sexuality, and the gendered apprehensions that women would step outside of their socially acceptable roles. This might include, for example, spending time with men who are not from the woman's family, engaging in sexual activities, or simply being out in public alone. As one respondent noted, "people comment that girls live together with boys after going abroad," while another noted that "many people say that if girls go abroad, they get worse. They do contract marriage and other things...people make many bad comments [about them]." These gendered anxieties were present in workers' own responses, which articulated that the newfound "freedom" experienced by women and girls abroad—because, for example, their families and communities are not there to directly surveil them—leads to this "bad" behavior. Many of the women interviewed for this study, however, fought back against the idea that they themselves would become "bad" girls; they saw this "bad" behavior as a personal failure of the women and girls, rather than a constructed issue tied to gender norms. Most workers identified with the belief that if they behave well, then they will be treated well and vice versa. As one woman noted, "abroad is not bad. Those who say being abroad is terrible are [not good people]." Another worker noted that she "convinced" her family to allow her to travel abroad by arguing with them that she "could not judge if she did not go [to Jordan] first." "I believed in *Allah*, and I decided to go there," she continued, eventually with the support of her family. Other women convinced their families by appealing to their reason, noting that "security is better abroad than in Bangladesh [and that] there is no chaos abroad," and that, ultimately, working abroad would allow them to better their family's financial standing.

### 3.4 Recruitment

#### *Process*

Most workers reported that they were recruited via formal government channels, something that almost all respondents reported as a "better option" than private agencies or brokers, who often requested recruitment fees to make a profit. As one worker noted at length:

"Yes, if [women] communicated directly [with] the [BOESL] office, if they do not go to any broker, that's great. If you communicate with the office directly, there is no possibility of spending money uselessly. You do not need to spend extra money. Brokers run away along with workers' money, passport, and other things. These [things] happen.

If you go through the office, you can go without any tension. You have 100 percent surety. Nobody will ask for extra money in the office. Suppose you have submitted 30,000 TK in the office, you have a record of that money. There is no way to lose your money. I think it's best to follow the BOESL procedure.”

Other workers supported this claim, noting that BOESL “does everything” for the workers, which ensures that the worker does not make any mistakes during the recruitment process. Another worker stressed that, when asked about bettering the recruitment system for future workers, “I always say one thing. Most people make the mistake when they go to a broker. The brokers request a lot of money. Without going to the brokers, if you go to the office, and get your needs met, it is the best.” One worker even noted that she had heard that “there are a lot of problems in private [broker] procedures,” including “police harassment” of workers; knowing this, she “followed the government procedure” to avoid any possible issues. However, awareness about BOESL is not universal. As one returnee worker noted: “My neighbor suggested to go to the Jordan through a broker. They also went via a middleman. We didn't know that we could go without money. But now, we know that.”

Importantly, almost all respondents noted that they learned about garment factory work in Jordan, and the immigration process itself, through close friends and relatives, community members, and even co-workers at their previous jobs in Bangladesh. It was frequently through these personal connections that workers were able to start the immigration process, as many did not have any knowledge about the process prior to migrating. Most workers’ journeys began with BOESL, the government-owned and operated recruitment agency, as the Jordanian legal framework prohibits private recruitment agencies in Jordan. As a result of the overall slow formalization of the recruitment process for garment workers coming from Bangladesh to Jordan and beyond, Jordan now requires that workers have an authenticated certificate with them upon arrival that ensures that they were recruited by a licensed recruitment agency in the worker’s country of origin, among other stipulations (ILO 2017).

Most workers began their recruitment office by visiting the BOESL office for an interview; “after passing [the interview], we were sent to the technical,” noted one worker. “There, I had an interview for six days.” These interviews, or “technicals,” as many workers called them, included testing for sewing skills and teaching them additional sewing methods and other tasks that would be required of them in Jordan, as well as briefing them on the living arrangements and other important items that they would need to be aware of once they arrived in Jordan. Upon passing the interviews, workers waited a certain amount of time until their visas were issued, and they were cleared to travel. The duration of the recruitment process varied, with most workers noting that the process took approximately three months, while others mentioned waiting nearly six months before receiving their visas.

BOESL provides pre-departure training; several recommendations on improving such trainings have been provided in the past. Asis and Agunias (2012) find evidence of inconsistent or poor implementation of these trainings. Curricula have been criticized for being very general and not sector-, country- or gender-specific and for not providing enough information on support channels and migrants’ legal rights (Frantz 2014). Rashid and Watson (2017) suggest interactive sessions as well as systematizing BOESL’s information sessions to better address experiences, concerns and rights of migrant workers. They argue, moreover, that orientation materials need to include perspectives from ‘migrant-centered’ support networks, inclusive of trade unions and civil society organizations, and returnee migrant workers in both origin and destination countries.

Improved curricula and accessibility would improve interest in and ability to participate, avoiding that aspiring migrants pay off someone for avoiding attendance. Finally, Regmi et al. (2019) call for inclusion of mental health awareness as part of pre-departure training, particularly to aid with issues like isolation, work stress and potential employer abuse without support from the family.

### ***Fees and Debt Bondage***

On average, most workers reported spending between 40,000 and 60,000 Bangladeshi Takas (TK) (equivalent to US\$405 and US\$607, respectively, using the average December 2022 exchange rate) over the course of the recruitment process, with some workers reportedly spending around 80,000 TK (equivalent to US\$809, using December 2022 exchange rate). Workers were required to spend money on several items, including the costs to secure or renew their passports, costs of medical examinations and a urine test, finger printing at the BOESL offices, and the costs of shopping for personal items before leaving. Variations in recruitment fees were often linked to the type of recruitment process that the worker was using, in other words, whether they were using BOESL or if they were going through a private broker. Relative to the BOESL recruitment process, many workers noted that much of the recruitment costs they spent were deposited into a bank account and later returned to them.<sup>5</sup> Workers were also largely aware that more recently, in 2022, the government of Bangladesh had significantly lowered the fees necessary to travel abroad for work, from around 80,000 TK to 30,000 TK.<sup>6</sup>

These costs often pushed workers into debt prior to leaving Bangladesh. Workers are then obligated to stay and work until they can pay off their loans, in a system known as debt bondage (see also Toppa, 2017). Under debt bondage, workers do not have the opportunity to opt out of contractual obligations and in many cases, are forced to work longer than originally stated in their work contracts under fear of retribution for these debts once they return home. Loans taken out from brokers themselves were the most problematic, with one worker noting, “[the broker] sent me with his money. He helped me a lot [but] I will not be able to pay his debt in my whole life.” Other workers took out loans and paid in installments through remittances sent back during their time in Jordan. However, interest payments on these loans were often high, with some workers reporting interest rates as high as 100TK a day. These rates often kept workers in debt for longer periods of time, and in some cases forced workers to depend on other sources of financial support. As one worker noted, she was forced to seek support from several different sources, after which she still had to take out a small loan in order to cover the entire recruitment cost:

“I sold my necklace and two pairs of earrings. Yes, two chains and two pairs of earrings, I sold them. Then I took help from someone—I paid [BOESL] the money for my passport. Then when I was ready to go [to Jordan], I did some shopping [but] I did not have any money, so I borrowed from my mother 40,000 TK. Then I went to Jordan.”

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<sup>5</sup> This fee is referred to as a “bank draft,” which workers must deposit into a new account, where their salaries will eventually be transferred. These costs were refunded once the worker had been abroad for a certain period of time, generally one to three months (ILO 2018). ILO, “Recruitment Experiences of South Asian Migrant Workers in Jordan’s Garment Industry,” *Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FUNDAMENTALS)* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2018), [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---ipecc/documents/publication/wcms\\_638703.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipecc/documents/publication/wcms_638703.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> See also: Arab Times Online, “Bangladesh Cuts Labor Fees for Migrant Workers,” December 4, 2022, <https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/bangladesh-cuts-labor-fees-for-migrant-workers/>.

Another worker complained that “some lenders charge 200 TK [of interest] per thousand” Taka [that is 20 percent], which forced her to supplement her remittances with money earned from selling “gold ornaments” from her family.

### 3.4 Salary and Overtime

As mentioned previously, the promise of higher salaries for garment workers in Jordan drew the majority of respondents to the country for work. Additionally, the higher salaries “justified” the high recruitment costs, as workers felt confident that they would be able to pay back recruitment and any other loans they might have during their time abroad. Interestingly, several workers confirmed that the salaries promised to them by BOESL and in the contractual documents they signed before leaving Bangladesh were often higher than the actual salaries that they finally received in Jordan. Workers reported that they were told during BOESL trainings that they would receive between JD 125 and JD 150, when in reality they received between JD 99 and JD 130 (approx. TK 15,000–20,000). The differences between actual and promised salaries varied according to company, with one worker reporting that her company was known by all workers in garment factories in Jordan as a company that paid significantly lower salaries than others. Other workers reported that the “lower” salaries were not really low, but were a reflection of a salary without overtime pay. “When we [workers] questioned them about it,” noted one worker about the lower salaries, “they [management] said that we would get it when we worked overtime.” Another worker provided more details:

“I got less than what they said to me [before leaving]. I got 115 JD; but what this means is that with overtime, the amount [could be] 35 JD more than the 115 JD that they said. So, it was possible to make more.”

On average, although their contracts under Jordanian law stipulate that workers can work a maximum of eight hours a day, most workers reported working 11 to 12-hour days, beginning as early as 7:00 A.M. Workers were then allotted half-hour breaks for lunch, with a short 15-minute break in the morning and in the afternoon for breakfast and tea. With overtime added on, workers often found themselves working more than 14 hours per day. One worker reported the following:

“[Schedules] depend on the working system [and day]. Suppose today is the delivery [day] for work. We would work until 8:00 or 9:00 P.M., even 10 P.M.”

Another interviewee noted that she had heard from friends that in other companies, workers might even work until 12:00 A.M. if they had not met their production quotas.

However, overtime wages were not an option for many workers, as they felt obligated to work in order to increase the low base salaries. Other workers confirmed this, with one woman explaining that the company promised them that “when you start to work overtime, you will get 20,000 TK. And from the [second] month, we got to work overtime.” Some workers, however, were not as lucky: “With overtime, we received about 16,000–17,000 TK,” noted one worker, while another worker reported making only 15,000–16,000 TK that could increase to 20,000 TK if she worked overtime. One respondent reported that “opportunities” for overtime were not always available in her company: “If I fulfilled the [production] targets, I would be able to earn a lot of money. We used to get [these] opportunities sometimes. We did not get it every month.”

It is also worth mentioning that some workers reported that a small amount of their monthly salary was deducted by the company as “social money,” which can loosely be translated to social security fees. In Jordan, Social Security Law No. 1 of 2014, which applies to all workers irrespective of nationality, is deducted from workers’ monthly salaries, to cover insurances “against work injuries, insurance against old-age, maternity insurance, insurance against unemployment, and health employment”(ILO 2017, p. 13). The monthly contribution to social security for a garment worker is approximately 6.25 percent of the worker’s total wages. While workers did not specify that “social money” was used to cover work-related insurances, many workers did report that this “social money” was sometimes returned to them once they left Jordan, while others reported that the deducted money went towards other company costs including airfare, which is paid by the company for first-time migrants.

Finally, some workers acknowledged that there were both monetary bonuses and days off provided by some companies. One worker reported the following: “If you attend [work] without absenting a single day in a month, you will get 500 TK as an attendance bonus.” Another worker similarly reported that “we would get [a] bonus if the production [was] good.” Additionally, workers reported receiving time off for holidays, in particular Eid. However, it was unclear whether this was paid time off.

### ***Language challenges***

Many interviewees noted that their lack of knowledge of other languages hindered them from communicating and understanding the work conditions. As one worker noted “

“As I cannot read and write what is written in the contract paper, we don’t know exactly what our salary will be, overtime, working hours, and leave issues and those should be written there, but I am confused about what I learned and experienced there (in Jordan).”

Another interviewee similarly noted:

“It was written in the agreement how much I would get for the overtime. But if we do 10 hours of overtime, they will be given 5 hours of takas. There was no option to talk about anything there. The agreement did not show to us. And even so, I don’t know how to read; I don’t know anything and did not notice so much. The agreement was written in English, and they did not read it to us later.”

Workers also noted that the language and literacy barriers affected their income. As one interviewee noted “I could not do overtime for one year because I could not understand their language.” It also affected their ability to relate problems they faced. As one worker noted:

“I didn’t know their language as most people speak Arabic there, sometimes English. So, it was very tough for me to communicate with my superior.”

Another interviewee noted: “I didn’t understand their languages like Sri Lankan, Arabic and Hindi. So, I never could share my problems to my supervisor”.

### 3.5 Workplace environment

#### *Work pressure*

All of the workers interviewed for this report cited that “work pressure is high” in Jordan, with one woman noting that “with a salary of thirty thousand Takas, there is no time to urinate.” Workers reported that there was pressure for each worker to meet a certain production target every day; if they did not meet this target, they were subject to “scolding” and “sometimes yelling” at the hands of the factory floor supervisor. Some workers reported that their daily schedules were contingent on completing these targets, as one worker noted:

“They tell us a sequence, such as you will complete this number to that number. After that, you can leave for the day. Suppose my duty time is 7.00 am to 6.00 pm, but I have completed at 3.00 pm; I can come back home at 3.00 pm.”

Another worker claimed that “if I failed to supply the production [targets] on time, they scolded us in their chambers. It sometimes happened.” Worker accounts of “punishment” on the factory floor varied, however. Some workers said that punishment “never happened” to them; some workers claimed that they had only heard about past events of punishment taking place; while some workers did report that punishment happened, especially if workers were unable to meet the daily assigned targets. Some workers noted that you were “not allowed to leave [if] the target was incomplete,” and one woman noted that “Many girls I have seen did not get time to take food to fulfill the target,” while others reported that “if you are bad at your work and [are] less producti[ve], they will take you to the General Manager’s room.” But, she stressed, you were not “punished” by the General Manager; rather, they explained to you what needed to change:

“They [General Manager] will ask you to increase your production. They will help you understand where you are doing making mistakes, how to produce more, etc. They will send you back [to the factory floor] after saying these things...No, there was not any punishment.”

She continued noting that:

“No, [they do not] scold. They used to talk a bit angrily at first. They will get angry when you make a mistake, which is normal because they are liable to the owner. They have to get the production done.”

Another worker reported that supervisors and managers would “shout” in their languages “which we [workers from Bangladesh] didn’t understand. Then we used to cry about that.” Other workers reported supervisors using more exploitative practices when work targets were not met:

“Yes, we were bound as there is no freedom [in Jordan] like in Bangladesh. They [managers] used to shout and so on. They threaten that they will [keep] us to work without pay or [will not] allow us to leave the workplace...which is also practiced in Bangladesh.”

Other workers noted that the pressure “was immense” and that managers “didn’t understand that everyone couldn’t take the same pressure.” “They would ask you to work at any cost,” noted one worker, “even if your relative dies.” Yet another study participant noted:

“We had a director who behaved badly with girls. Moreover, if any girl could not understand the task or deliver the target, he abused her verbally and threatened to send back her to Bangladesh. Moreover, he did not provide any task to them for 1 or 2 months, and without pay they had to live there.”

### ***Sick Leave***

However, workers consistently reported that companies covered the costs of medicines and seeing the doctor unless the problem escalated, and the worker needed to be treated off campus at a local hospital. Some workers noted that the companies they worked for were “helpful” if they were sick:

“No, they do not pressure [workers to return to work if sick]. If someone is sick, there are doctors; if the doctors see [that] someone [is] sick, they let her go home to rest.”

The worker continued, noting that:

“There are medical services in the company. If the treatment is available in the company’s medical facility, they used to provide that. If the treatment is not available in the company’s medical service, they used to send [the worker] outside [the campus] for the treatment. If someone used to have a personal problem, they took treatment from outside.”

Again, she notes that “mild ailments” were treated, and paid for by the company itself. Another worker reported that:

“The company used to bear the expense [of sick leave]. Suppose you got sick while working, the company looks after the matter. If the medical cost is in the range of the company, they bear the cost. If it is seen that [the worker] needs a lot of money, the company provides an amount of money, approximately 30,000 to 40,000 TK, and sends her [back] to Bangladesh.”

Any remaining costs would then be the responsibility of the worker upon her return to Bangladesh. Other workers verified this and claimed that companies would cover approximately 50 percent of the larger medical costs accrued by sick workers. Workers noted that the company’s medical team tried their best to “solve” all health issues on campus and would only send workers to off-campus clinics and hospitals in severe cases.

### ***After-work hours: Living arrangements and activities***

After finishing their workday, respondents noted that workers were required to return home to their dormitories. Once there, women showered, cleaned, and cooked, among other activities. Some went out shopping at the local markets in the city, where they picked up food items that were not available at the companies, who provided food to workers. Workers’

opinions about food were mixed, with some arguing that the “food arrangement was good. Two days a week, they used to serve chicken. Two days a week, they used to serve beef. They served eggs every day of the week.” Overall, companies were responsible for providing food to workers and a small kitchen on each dormitory floor for workers to cook their own food. However, the majority of respondents noted that “we couldn’t eat the food provided by the company [even though] they gave us food properly.” As one worker noted:

“Food was arranged by the company. One could cook independently if anyone is not eager to take the company’s food. Not everyone liked their food. My sister and I were there. My sister used to eat their food, but I didn’t. I only took their rice, cooked vegetables, and other items by myself.”

Many workers ultimately preferred to cook their own meals, using the stoves provided to them by the company.

"It would have been better for us if they gave us an extra 50/60 takas for the meal so that we would have cooked and eaten ourselves. It would be good for us and all those who will go to or stay in Jordan. Many girls know that they deducted money from their salary for food."

Two respondents relayed stories that companies apparently had mixed the food they provided with medicines to “reduce sexual desires”, and one worker reported to this to the “leader” but noted that she was not taken seriously.

“I only ate the company food,” one worker noted, “when I didn’t have any money. After getting a salary, I bought eggs, lentils, potatoes, oil, and onion.” As one worker noted, many workers visited local markets to stock up on food items that they preferred:

“There were roadside markets like Bangladesh, and I bought from there weekly. When I first went there, it was available once a week. After two years, it started to set up daily. Besides, there were grocery shops at our house, and everything was available there.”

The ability to cook their own food, however, was often dampened by the long lines that developed “everywhere; [there was a] queue for cooking, queue for bathing, there was nothing but queues,” noted one worker. Another worker noted that “everything abroad is [queue]-based. You will find [queues] everywhere.” Workers regularly found themselves waiting in line to get access to the stoves in order to cook their meals (one respondent noted there were approximately 26 stoves for 1000 workers), and would rush to get to the showers early in the morning “before there was a long line.” While it was unclear how many workers lived on each floor of the company’s dormitories, workers noted that on average, rooms accommodated up to 8–10 women, who each slept in single bunk beds. Each worker had a small locker available, where she was able to store some of her personal belongings. Women’s dormitories were separate from men’s, who were housed in a different building altogether. Entertainment options, like television, were unavailable in most workers’ rooms unless workers bought one themselves. Instead, one worker reported that her company provided “fans” and “quilts” for the rooms. Largely, workers relied on their mobile phones as a “source of recreation,” one worker noted; workers paid their

cell phone bills, as these were not covered by the companies. However, one worker did report that in her company, a “hall room” existed that functioned as a community gathering room:

“There was a hall room. It was a big room. People would walk from there. Where you could watch television, sound box...bat-ball, badminton, etc. Everyone used to go there on Fridays. It was a place for dancing and singing. These were for our entertainment. The facilities were so good.”

On holidays, companies frequently treated workers to special meals and time off. For example, one worker noted that “they used to serve special dishes on Friday. It is a must.” “During different festivals like Eid and Bengali New Year,” noted one worker, “[the company] used to provide special dishes for the workers.” “Yes,” another worker recalled, “we celebrated special occasions. They gave us good food on special occasions, such as *biriyani*. Also, they served us cakes.” Others reported companies setting up “arranged programs” or field trips on holidays, taking busloads of workers to see special sites and locations across Jordan. As one worker remembered:

“The company was arranging picnics on these days [holidays]. They decorated the picnic bus and took us to the Nile River, an apple farm, a shrine, and many other places. They will take you to picnics if you give money, just like Bangladeshi garments. They fill the whole bus with people and go for picnics.”

### **3.6 Working During COVID-19**

Several workers reported working in Jordan during COVID-19 and, in particular, during the first year of the pandemic and government-enforced lockdowns in Jordan. As one worker detailed:

“Suddenly, we started to hear the word “Corona” from everyone. But we had no idea what it was. One day, at five o’clock in the morning, our house leader, aunty, came and started knocking on the door. I opened the door, and after opening the door, she said, “None of you will go to the office until you get my further instructions.” Your office is closed. I asked her, “Why, aunty?” She said, “This was because of Corona.” You’ll start going to the office after my next instruction. The office was closed for almost 15 days.”

She continued on, recalling their return to work and the re-opening of the company:

“When the factory reopened after 15 days, they gave us masks and hand sanitizer after we went in line. We used to go to queues where we maintained a one-hand gap; it was the same in all companies then. Hand sanitizer was given every two hours so we wouldn’t get infected with the virus. Two masks were given; we wore one before lunch and the other after lunch.”

During this time, workers experienced many difficulties, some of which varied from company to company. Others noted that their families were “creating pressure” for them to return, especially in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic:

“Initially, I did not want to [return] due to my poverty. But my husband and daughters pressured me to return because I was afraid of Corona[virus]. My daughters said to me, “if you die, we will not be able to see you.” My husband started quarreling with me before that and told me to return. Then I resigned from my work.”

Workers’ reports of working in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic focused primarily on salaries and were varied: While some workers received their full salaries during lockdown periods when the company was closed, others were paid only half their salaries or, in the worst instances, were not paid any salary at all.

One worker reported that workers organized, herself included, to protest her company’s withholding of three months of salary from workers on account of the pandemic and their inability to work at full capacity.

“For example, our salary has been withheld for three months due to the coronavirus. So, we had to send our salary to our hometown. For instance, we have parents; please give us our salary. So, some would stay in front of the office, some would remain in the street, and the police would come. They later asked what the problem was. People say they don’t give salaries. Later they would say that they would pay the compensation, then provide a date, then pay the wages within that date.”

In all cases, however, most workers noted that the companies did continue to provide for workers’ living arrangements and food. A few, however, noted that their companies did eventually withdraw money from their pre-COVID salaries to pay for food and lodging when the company was forced to stop its work due to government enforced lockdowns. Other workers reported that companies only paid half of their normal salaries.

Interviewees reported on the stresses of living in the dormitories during the pandemic, where movement was highly restricted in order to prevent workers from contracting the virus. Some workers even reported leaving as soon as it was possible, in other words, once the first government enforced lockdown in Jordan was lifted and travel was permitted once again. While many workers reported receiving the original COVID-19 vaccine,<sup>7</sup> they equally noted that many people they had known had contracted the virus while working in Jordan. Other workers reported that companies did provide COVID-19 testing and screening for workers. As one worker noted, “those who tested positive were taken to separate rooms and [were given] their treatment there.”

Meanwhile, the findings suggest that the levels of strictness in relation to COVID-19 protocols depended largely on the factory supervisors and administrators. As one woman noted:

[W]e couldn’t go to the market and [were] bound in the room. We [had to] keep a distance of four hands [between each other]. [The boss] was so strict that none could get in touch with anyone. We followed the rules and wore masks...They didn’t even allow me to go outside...Everyone had to stay in their bed and rooms. We followed the guidelines.”

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<sup>7</sup> Based on worker interview transcripts, it is unclear which vaccine workers received (e.g., Pfizer or Moderna vaccine) and how many doses of the vaccine they received.

Several workers also reported facing strict social distancing requirements during the first few months of the pandemic, while others noted that they were delayed while trying to return to Bangladesh because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **3.7 Returning to Bangladesh**

Workers reported myriad reasons for returning home to Bangladesh from Jordan; among these, family pressures and changes in household dynamics were predominant. Shifts in the care responsibilities also prompted workers to return home. In several instances, workers reported that their husbands and family members, who were tasked with caring for their children in their absence, were “creating pressure [for them] to come back” to take care of these children. For one worker, the death of her husband meant that her young son was now in the sole care of her mother, who told her “I’m alone and cannot take care of your son alone. I need you here.” This prompted the worker to sever her contractual obligations and return home. Several workers reported that their husbands, in particular, put pressure on them to return. In one case, a worker reported that her husband had threatened to marry a second woman if she did not return. Others reported familial pressures related to marriage, with two workers reporting that they returned home to get married under the pressure of their families. In another case, a returnee migrant reported that

“when I went to the cabin [of the superior] to give him the reports, Sir told me that he wanted to marry me. When I didn't accept his offer, he put me under a lot of work pressure. That is why I was forced to leave the job and return to Bangladesh.”

Many workers reported that upon returning to Bangladesh, they once again found themselves under financial strain. Although some managed to make important gains, like buying land or a house for their families, their unemployment in Bangladesh caused them to go through any savings they had earned while working in Jordan. As one worker reported: “Yes, all of it [savings] got spent. I had to bear my father’s medical and children’s educational expenses...I was able to buy land in Dhaka. I have nothing else.” Similarly, the workers who reported returning to Bangladesh due to illness also faced financial difficulties as they paid for their own medical treatments. As one worker reported, “I [would] not [have] come back” if it were not for her illness, “I was good [in Jordan].”

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Factory floor discipline

#### *Networks of discipline and power: Camp bosses, supervisors, and house leaders*

Discipline emerged across all of the completed interviews as an important issue, both on the factory floor and in the after-work hours spent at the women's dormitories. The notion of discipline has been a key focus of study in feminist research on women workers, in particular women workers in the Global South. In these studies, it is important to note that discipline does not emerge primarily through exceptional moments of violence—for example, a supervisor beating a worker—but, rather, through the more banal acts of everyday life in the factory. As noted by Ong (1987), Wright (2006) and Mezzadri (2016), the discursive and material practices through which workers are constructed—not only by their supervisors, but by their coworkers, their governments, their families, and their broader communities—all contribute to the very systems of power that control and discipline workers. From the responses gathered for this report, it is clear that discipline, including the self-discipline of workers, emerged in relation to the discursive positioning of “good” and “bad” workers. It was clear that being a “good” worker—which has both gendered and racialized dynamics, as will be discussed below—was key to being treated well by company superiors and, overall, experiencing a “good,” in other words a safe and productive, time abroad. In workers' minds, being “good” was an individual choice: “good” girls made “good” decisions to work hard, to respect their supervisors' wishes, and to maintain a “good” reputation while abroad. As one worker noted, supervisors and other company representatives were “good to you if you were good to them.” If workers met their production targets and behaved well during after-work hours, they would be able to do their work “without any problems,” as another worker noted.

But self-discipline, of course, did not evolve in a silo. Instead, while only a handful of workers reported direct instances of violence used as a disciplinary tactic—although, this might be attributed to a fear of retribution for speaking up—all of the workers who participated in this study reported several levels of supervisors, all company employees, who formed a constant source of surveillance over workers. Workers had various names for these employees, from “house leader” to on-site supervisors, including “line supervisors,” a “camp boss,” and others. Still others highlighted a “Sir,” most commonly a man from another country, on the factory floor, who was tasked with fielding workers' complaints and concerns, if they had any. Companies also reportedly housed their own doctors and medical staff, as well as a medical clinic, where workers would go to treat most illnesses unless they needed to go to a hospital to receive more serious treatment. House leaders lived with workers, and “took care of” the workers living in the dormitory. As one respondent noted, her female house leader “checked if [anything] needed changing, like a damaged light or fan.” The house leader also “took care [of us] if any of us got sick or were required to go to the hospital.”

The high volume of supervisors has several important effects on workers' self-disciplining. First, with so many supervisors attending to different aspects of workers' lives in Jordan—floor managers for factory floor problems, a house leader for issues with living arrangements, a doctor and a clinic for health issues, among others—workers are always under the “care” of different managers and supervisors. This effectively works to deflect and de-escalate workers' concerns, as they are constantly (re-)routed to a different manager each time they have a problem. In other words, workers do not have a formal, singular complaint

mechanism at work; instead, they are pushed around between different supervisors to lodge their complaints. As one worker noted:

“If we talk to the upper group, they say they will deal with it, and after some time, they make excuses and force us to go back to our work again. You will never get justice.”

The second effect that such a high volume of supervisors has on workers is that it presents the company as an omnipresent force: No matter where workers are, they are under the surveillance of a company representative. If workers were sick, they visited a company doctor; if workers had an issue on the factory floor, they spoke with the floor manager; and if workers had a problem with their living arrangements, they spoke to a house leader, another company representative who lived with the workers in their dormitories. As one worker noted,

“Suppose, I am facing a problem. I used to share my problem with the officer from Bangladesh that I am facing. The officer used to share the problem with the administration. They used to try their best to solve the problem... There is a “Sir” from Bangladesh who is educated. He can explain my problems [to] the administration and he can tell us the solution given by the company.”

This effect was reinforced by the fact that company representatives, as well as recruitment agencies in Bangladesh, frequently told workers that they should “focus on the work.” As one worker noted,

“They [managers] told [workers] that [Jordan] was not a place to roam but a place to work. They advised us that we had left our children in Bangladesh [and therefore] should focus only on work. As we get a seven-day holiday, we should do [only] housework, sleep and care for our health. They counsel us in this way.”

Managers and supervisors also “helped” workers in important ways to become more productive, as many interviewees reported. One woman relayed the following story, which happened after she had gotten in trouble for failing to meet her production quotas several days in a row after arriving in Jordan:

“Yes, I told that Bangladeshi [supervisor] who was there for our help. I told him that I needed time to learn [and that] once I get adjusted, my work speed will boost. And the Bangladeshi told them [factory managers]. Then, I was told that the office had reconsidered my issue and asked me to try to increase my work speed gradually.”

In this instance, the supervisor intervened on the worker’s behalf to protect the worker from possibly being sent back to Bangladesh or from being denied a day’s wages. However, this type of “help” must be nuanced by the fact that, as one interviewee noted, “they [supervisors] work here and face the same situation.” What this worker is highlighting is that supervisors are under similar pressures to meet performance indicators; when these indicators are not met, they similarly face certain types of punishment. Thus, to “help” a worker is in their best interests, insofar as better worker performance translates into better treatment for them as supervisors.

Supervisors did not have much power, this worker noted: “They [supervisors] can only ask if we had problems or if we’re not doing fine.”

This culture of surveillance also helped to discipline workers on the factory floor. All respondents reported feeling significant amounts of “pressure” to meet their work targets and to perform according to their supervisor’s wishes. In particular, workers were aware that if issues arose, they risked being sent home to their dormitories or worse, sent home to Bangladesh; in both cases, workers lost potential wages. For this reason, one worker noted, “nobody misbehaves here [because] if someone misbehaves, they [managers] tell her to stay at home.” One worker reported the following:

“I heard about a company that if any employee cannot deliver the target, the company cut[s] money from [their] overtime. In [relation to] this issue, the girls do not protest because they fear to be marked. If they get marked, the company searches her mistakes more.”

Being “marked” meant that you were a “bad” worker, and “bad” workers were at risk for being denied their daily wages or even sent home to Bangladesh. In this way, the use of the term “bad” discursively disciplined workers to behave while at work. “Bad” workers were “shamed,” according to one worker, who remembered a strategy employed by the factory floor supervisor that made workers who did not meet their targets remain standing while other workers were allowed to sit down. “Is [this] not a shame? It is a matter of [humiliating] any worker standing, because supervisors and other workers look at her. The reason is, she failed to submit work [on time].” Worse, “bad” work was used as an excuse by company supervisors and bosses to put certain workers under even higher levels of surveillance and scrutiny. In some cases, this might mean that “she [the worker] might be pressured to return” home, as one worker noted. While some workers recognized the unfair power dynamics at play in these incidences between workers and supervisors, others reinforced the “good” versus “bad” worker narrative through self-discipline. As one worker responded to questions about worker punishment on the factory floor, “If the failure is mine, I should be humble,” she noted, implying that any mistake made is her fault alone, and could not be blamed on structural issues or the pressures from the company to meet high targets each day.

The fears of losing wages or being sent back to Bangladesh ultimately helped to perpetuate a culture of silence among workers, who were unwilling to speak up against the company for fear that they might be sent home. As one worker noted, “no one wanted to open [their] mouth” during meetings with welfare officers inquiring about the status of their workplace and living environments. Several respondents confirmed this belief, noting that even though this was “not said by the company,” in other words, supervisors did not expressly prohibit workers from speaking against the company, it was “known that she will face a lot of pressure if [she] speaks.” One worker remembers that during her time as a supervisor, she was told that “if there is any problem [with workers], we will discuss it with ourselves, but you will say nothing in front of the workers.” Another worker noted that she had friends whose monthly salaries had been cut because they spoke up against the company or agitated for better wages. She remembers that some workers “had their passports seized” or were sent away “overnight” so that they barely had time to say goodbye to anyone or even to collect their personal items. This culture of fear also made it difficult for workers to seek any help from those outside the company, including the Al Hassan Workers’ Center (supported by WiF-2), which several

workers had heard about but whose services they had never used. The embassy of Bangladesh was seen as an alternative support entity that was barely used. While not all workers were aware that there was an embassy, others noted that the embassy could be accessed when a worker had died to arrange for return to Bangladesh, when a worker had fled from the company and other, severe workplace incidents.

Relatedly, as one worker noted, this culture of fear made it difficult to organize: “But if only one person opens their mouth, it won’t have any effect if everyone [else] doesn’t [also] open their mouth.” Instead, what happens is that only a few people complain and “they are force[d] to quit” because of the “company’s power.”

Further contributing to this culture of silence was the understanding that workers were replaceable and “disposable” (Wright 2006). The notion of “disposability” has been a longtime focus of feminist theorists in studies of factory work around the world; “disposability” refers to the ways that workers are discursively and materially disciplined into cheapened labor that is easily replaceable. Workers’ disposability was reinforced by the fact that companies, according to one respondent, could quickly “replace” workers that misbehaved or worse, were the victims of crimes. One woman relayed a particularly disturbing story of two women factory floor workers from Bangladesh who had died as a result of a boiler explosion. When other workers noticed the absence of these women and pressed the company to respond, the company avoided their questions and simply hired new workers. “They hid many dead bodies this way,” she notes; the company constantly tried to “convince” workers that nothing was wrong, and that no one was missing, by simply hiring newly recruited workers to fill their place.

#### **4.2 Individual Responsibility and Being a “Good Girl”**

##### ***Individual “Choice” and Sexual Relations in Jordan***

Answers to questions about gender-based violence (GBV) in Jordan among factory workers were tied up with gendered expectations of Bangladeshi women and how they should behave while living in a foreign country. Many workers were ambiguous in their answers to whether GBV occurred during their time in Jordan, commonly noting that “it happens.” When pressed further, workers laid blame at the *individual* or *micro-level*, noting that “naughty girls” are just that: naughty by *choice*. During her recruitment process, one worker remembered:

“They [the company] asked us to go directly to our rooms after work and insisted that we not go out. They warned that the boys out there were not good. So, whether we stay good or not is up to us. If you are good, then the world is good.”

Another respondent replied that male supervisors had misbehaved in the past, “but it was on the girls. Those who gave access, it happened to them only,” implying that only the “bad” or “naughty” girls experienced any type of gendered violence or manipulation at work. “It will be the girl’s fault if it happens,” noted another respondent. “Good or bad, it is up to you,” another worker noted, implying that individual choice seemed, in her opinion, to underlie instances of consensual and non-consensual sexual interactions. Other workers seemed to approach the issue of sexual relations with neutrality, noting that to “misbehave means that there is both good and bad everywhere” and that “there was no force...nobody can force it.” In other words, this respondent did not agree that sexual violence occurred, again implying that individual choice was at the base of all sexual interactions between women workers from Bangladesh and those they met in Jordan. Speaking about women who form long-term relationships with men in

Jordan, one interviewee noted that “if someone does not want to be good, I am unable to make her good. Am I able to make her good? If she chooses to do this, it is her wish.”

Several workers noted that it was the lack of community pressure and norms that gave women a false sense of freedom: As one worker noted, “naughty” or “bad” women who have experienced GBV or other types of “misbehavior” “think that [because] they have gone abroad, they have the freedom to do everything. They do not fear *Allah*.” Relatedly, one worker noted that “If women walk around in hijab, they are more respected.”

Many workers stressed that “problems” often arose between Bangladeshi women and Jordanian men, with several workers identifying viral news stories of Bangladeshi women workers who had disappeared or were abducted while in Jordan. In one of the worst stories, a worker reported that, following an affair between a Bangladeshi worker and a Jordanian man, the woman was later murdered. One worker reported that prior to arriving in Jordan, she had begun to hear rumors about the dangers of Jordanian men from a friend: “She was saying that here [in Jordan] the [Jordanian men] pick up the beautiful girls, rape them, and throw them in the mountains. I was more and more afraid when I heard this.” One worker reported that she and her fellow workers knew that “If you [Jordanian] do something to a [Bangladeshi] girl, the police don’t keep any proof,” or evidence of the crime. Several workers reported of improvements; incidences of sexual violence happened “a lot before, but no longer now,” as one woman reported.

While these beliefs were the norm among interviewees, one respondent offered a more nuanced approach to the sexual and gendered relations between Bangladeshi women and Jordanian men. The Bangladeshi women working abroad experience a freedom they had never before experienced: She noted that in Bangladesh, physical and other types of relationships are “hidden,” while in Jordan, “it is not the case.” “There,” she notes, “you can have a relationship, which means having a *habibi*.” Here, she uses the Arabic term *habibi* to signal a love interest or relationship. “This is your option, you choose.” She highlighted the temporality of these relationships, noting that “you [women] are not recognized as *habibi* after you come back to your country or your family.” For women that chose to take up relations with either Jordanian men or even other men working in the factory, they would spend “two or three hours” with their *habibi* after work until curfew, when they were required to return to their dormitories because, as she notes, if you were locked out you risked being returned to Bangladesh. In this way, she “lived” with her partner: after work, she would “come home,” to her partner’s house or dormitory, cook, and later return to her own dormitory.

Tellingly, when asked about the “advantages” of having such a relationship in Jordan, the respondent pointed to the *lack* of familial responsibilities as a key driver. “He [*habibi*] sees you as single; he does not see your family.” More importantly, “the family does not see that you are walking around with a boy.” These relationships, as she describes them, seem to provide a brief respite from the gendered familial responsibilities that define her life in Bangladesh. In her story, “freedom” is more than simply running around as a “naughty” or “bad” girl; it is evidence of the strict family and gendered expectations set on married women in Bangladesh.

### ***“If you are good, they are good to you”: “Good” and “bad” workers in Jordan***

Notions of “good” and “bad” were also evident in the ways that respondents described the community of workers from Bangladesh in Jordan more generally. Several respondents highlighted the “bad” nature of workers in Bangladesh relative to how they treated each other within the community. When asked about the different demographics of workers in garment

factories in Jordan, respondents noted that workers from Bangladesh, along with Nepali and Sri Lankan workers, outnumbered other ethnicities. However, as one respondent noted, “we from Bangladesh spoil everything.” She even noted that her own “good” work behavior was evidenced by how co-workers from other countries, in particular her supervisors, spoke about her: “Many people would tell me that I am not from Bangladesh; I am like Indian girls, like Nepalese...It means that Bangladeshi women had established a bad reputation,” she noted. Similarly, one worker noted the following:

“To be honest, Bangladeshis are not good. But foreigners are really good. Bangladeshis were jealous of each other. Is that not true, sister? Bangladeshi girls are not that good of people. But foreigners are nice.”

Another worker reported that Bangladeshi women not only make more mistakes but gossip more about each other: “It does not seem that we’re in a distant land or that we’re all like sisters, or something like that,” she reported, implying that competition and disagreements between Bangladeshi women workers was often rife. “When girls first go there,” noted another worker, “they are very good, very quiet. [But] they change day by day...Garment [work] is bad” for these women because of the effects it has on them. Several other workers noted that Bangladeshi workers tended to “quarrel” with each other, “did not smile,” and caused other types of issues: “Everyone was good,” noted one worker, “better than our Bangladeshi workers.”

Notions of “good” and “bad” workers also emerged in discussions about discipline and punishment on the factory floor and in the living quarters by company staff. Most workers insisted, however, that “if you are good, then good will happen to you” and that only those who made “bad choices” were subject to more severe forms of punishment, including being sent back to Bangladesh. One respondent described the relationship with her supervisors thusly:

“For example, if I ask my children to do something, they do not comply. What would happen then? There might be an issue. It happened sometimes [at work], but they [supervisors] used to say sorry to us after some moments. They also asked us whether we were disappointed with him and requested not to continue with that feeling. That was usual and might happen in the workplace.”

When probed for more details about whether “scolding” happened, the respondent noted that:

“No such thing happened there [Jordan]. As I said, one might get angry if she needs to explain a thing multiple times. Wouldn’t I become angry if I were required to present an item several times to my children? They also got angry, but after half an hour they said sorry to us. It might happen in the workplace.”

Supervisors were frequently described as “good” people who were only there to “help” workers. As one respondent noted, supervisors discussed “official issues” with workers; in particular, she remembers her Bangladeshi supervisor discussing “how to behave with others, maintain personal hygiene and the workload” during one such training on “official issues.” “If you can do the task,” one worker noted, “it is good for them [supervisors].” In this way, being a “good” worker was seen as important for establishing good relationships with supervisors and co-workers, and for ensuring that you were treated well during your time at the factory.

### 4.3 Racialization

While the majority of respondents claimed that there were no “issues,” or personal problems and quarreling, between workers of different nationalities, racialization emerged in the anecdotes of several workers. Here, the term racialization is used to signify processes of difference-making, and how communities are established and created as fundamentally different from one another (Gilmore 2002, 2007). As a process, racialization is both material and discursive, and ultimately affects how people perceive different communities and their treatment within the larger system. In workers’ responses, differentiation between communities of workers occurred along national lines, and sometimes religious, and was reinforced through workers’ living and working arrangements, as well as their treatment by supervisors of different nationalities.

Living arrangements were organized “naturally,” according to nationality: overwhelmingly, Bangladeshi workers lived and worked alongside other workers from Bangladesh, while Sri Lankan and Indian workers, for example, also lived and worked in similar quarters. The organization of living arrangements specifically was both tolerated and understood by the respondents, who noted that living with non-Bangladeshi workers was difficult: “They eat different foods, they do different things,” noted one worker. One worker even replied that “it was not possible to live with the Nepalese...their living style was foreign and challenging for us to adjust to.” Relatedly, some workers pinned issues of cleanliness onto certain communities of work. For example, one Bangladeshi worker who experienced bed bugs complained that the bugs “continued to return even [though] they sprayed pest-control medicine” in her room. She reasoned that:

“Of course, we cleaned. But there were so many people [in the dormitories]; they cooked and kept wet clothes in the room. So, there were always bed bugs. Maybe bed bugs are all over their country...Some girls cooked a lot and were very dirty. Maybe something was wrong with their country. Otherwise, why don’t we have this many bed bugs in Bangladesh?”

In contrast, some of the respondents felt that other communities “did not like Bangladeshi people or Bangladeshi food.” As one worker reported, other workers would “say that they get a terrible smell from Bangladeshi people.” “They,” these other workers, “did not want to maintain a social relationship with us,” she noted, “they did not like how we bathed [and] they did not allow Muslims to sit in front of their gate.” As well, Bangladeshi workers themselves sometimes reinforced and maintained boundaries between themselves and other nationals. As one worker noted, “among the Bangladeshi workers, some workers were arrogant. They used to not talk with others [different nationalities] and say that everybody is not the same.”

While workers claimed there was no “discrimination” between workers of different nationalities, tensions often emerged between supervisors and workers of different nationalities. In many instances, racialization took place through the relationships between workers and supervisors of different nationalities, with some workers reporting that supervisors sometimes favored workers of their same nationality. As one worker commented on at length:

“As the manager was Sri Lankan, they [Sri Lankan workers] used to have many advantages. In some cases, they highlighted that Sri Lankan workers are performing

better, and Bangladeshi workers are performing poorly. They used to insult Bangladeshi workers more than Sri Lankan workers. They would insult us but be proud of their [Sri Lankan] girls...The supervisor insults me a lot. They say, "Sri Lankan girls are submitting the targets, why are you unable to submit?"

Other workers noted that Bangladeshi workers were more frequently "scolded" than other workers. These power dynamics intersected with higher pay, with many respondents identifying that Sri Lankans and Indians "had privilege and superiority" over Bangladeshi workers. When pressed to elaborate on these privileges, one worker noted that "they used to get a higher salary" and that they were treated better by factory owners and other higher-ups. Interestingly, these higher salaries did not seem to bother workers when they spoke about the "good work" that supervisors and bosses generally did, as discussed in the previous section. Rather, they pointed to higher salaries as problematic primarily when associating supervisors and bosses with one specific nationality and their specific treatment of Bangladeshi workers in general.

Relatedly, racialization occurred between factory floor workers and Jordanian workers, who, according to one worker, "used to sit idle and work only in the presence of supervisors." This, she reasoned, was because "they were native, so they were more powerful" than Bangladeshi and other migrant workers. Another interviewee noted "As a citizen of Jordan, they came to the office at 7 AM and continued till 4 PM. They did not do the fixed 2 hours overtime, which was mandatory for the migrant workers."

## 5. Conclusions

Bangladeshi women migrants in the Jordanian garment sector face numerous vulnerabilities. These are exacerbated by the strict surveillance that companies and company employees reinforce over employees as well as each other. These uneven power dynamics are coupled by the regulatory framework that further exploits workers (the *kafala* system): workers face difficulties leaving their employers of their own free will and are beholden to their employers for renewed residency and work permits. Further, workplace demands in the form of daily production quotas place large amounts of stress on workers, especially those workers who have incurred large debts resulting from their migration.

Our study findings suggest that these conditions dramatically increase vulnerabilities that migrant women workers experience in Jordan's garment sector. Upon learning their "real" salaries upon their arrival to Jordan—which are much lower than the salaries written in their contracts—most workers find themselves "incentivized" to work overtime hours and to meet these production quotas. Women workers revealed that they felt they did not have a choice regarding this overtime; overtime was essential to generate income and was also expected by factory management.

Alongside these low salaries, many workers were also unable to access their social security wages upon leaving the garment sector and were frequently unaware that they were able to participate in collective bargaining.

We also note the strict company surveillance that encouraged a culture of silence among workers. If workers did choose to lodge a complaint these were "dealt with" by a company employee; while many workers felt that this was a good arrangement, it is important to mention that internal responses to worker complaints might not have the workers' best interests in mind, as their overall goal is to support the company and to ensure its success and productivity.

Relatedly, many workers did not feel it was necessary to seek out the support of outside advocacy organizations, such as the Al Hassan Workers' Center supported by the ILO. Moreover, only a small handful of interviewees reported knowledge about the center; most workers, unfortunately, were unaware that such an organization existed and that it catered to the needs of migrant workers.

Based on our findings, several important recommendations can be made to strengthen migrant workers' rights in the garment sector in Jordan and equally, to strengthen research on the status of migrant workers in the industry in the future.

1. **Create awareness-raising and organizing opportunities for workers before they leave Bangladesh.** An important entry point for working with migrant workers in the garment industry in Jordan is before they leave Bangladesh. As almost all of the workers interviewed for this study reported, they received a brief training session from BOESL about what they should expect when they arrive in Jordan, before they left the country. However, workers reported that what they learned in these sessions did not accurately reflect the working arrangements and environments that they would experience once they arrived in Jordan. Ideally, workers should be given training and awareness-raising sessions about important issues, such as union organizing, sexual and workplace harassment, and workers' rights in Jordan, during these BOESL trainings as well. Reaching workers at this point, prior to their departure, is critical because it will give

them the knowledge to ask for and demand their rights, as well as the knowledge of advocacy organizations that can support them, while they are in Jordan.

2. **Translate contractual documents.** Contracts are usually in Arabic or English language, which migrant workers do not read or adequately understand. Having contracts available in languages that migrant workers can read or that a fellow migrant worker can read to them in case of illiteracy can reduce frustrations and misunderstandings between workers and employers, such as on level of salaries.
3. **Invest in awareness-raising of supporting actors and actor networks.** Broadly, workers articulated a very limited knowledge about organizations, including the Al Hassan Workers' Center, that advocate for migrant workers in Jordan. And not everyone was aware of support services provided by the embassy of Bangladesh. It is critical that workers know about the existence of such centers: Only one interviewee had knowledge about Al Hassan's worker training programs and social activities. In the context of the strict company surveillance that workers live with in Jordan, it is also highly concerning that workers felt that they "did not need" the support of an entity such as the Workers' Center, as one interviewee noted. Again, this is not to suggest that workers are unable to articulate their own needs; however, it is important to remember that the culture of silence and a possible fear of retribution for speaking out about violations of workers' rights might be causing workers to turn away from advocacy centers like Al Hassan for fear that they might be targeted or punished for interacting with the organization.
4. **Continue to research uneven power dynamics and relations in the garment industry in Jordan.** As many interviewees noted, discrimination does not only happen between workers and company employees of different nationalities or gender, but also within communities. However, the continued focus on inter-community or male versus female discrimination in research conducted by both local and international organizations reifies certain social boundaries that are not helpful in explaining how such discrimination works on the ground. In other words, it is important to use a feminist approach to racial and gender discrimination that foregrounds and analyzes how social differences such as race and gender are exploited by certain individuals or groups to gain power. Within the context of the garment sector in Jordan, the strict company surveillance and the high-pressure work environment puts both migrant workers and their supervisors in highly exploitative positions, as one worker noted: "they [supervisors] are the same as us. They can't change anything." Thus, to effectively challenge discrimination, researchers must focus on properly documenting and analyzing how discrimination works in this context.

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## Annex A Questionnaire

1. What were your reasons for emigrating to Jordan to work?
  - Probe on decision-making process – individual versus family decision.
  - Probe on financial reasons to send money back to parents/children or to build a house.
2. Describe to me how you were recruited to work in Jordan.
  - a. Where did you work in Jordan (which factory)?
  - b. For how long (how many years/months)?
  - c. When did you travel to Jordan and return to your country?
  - d. What were your work responsibilities?
  - Probe the mode of recruitment through government offices versus informal recruiters.
  - Probe whether participants paid recruitment fees in their country of origin.
  - Is any loan taken to go to Jordan? From whom – NGOs/Relatives/other sources?
3. What were your experiences after you arrived in Jordan and started working? Describe what happened before and after you began working.
  - Probe whether expectations matched reality.
  - Probe whether she was promised things related to wages or work conditions that did not materialize.
4. Tell me about your work conditions.
  - a. Describe a typical day at work.
  - b. What about on your days off? What did you do during your time/day off from work?
  - Probe housing conditions and salary deductions for housing.
  - Probe wages, number of hours of work per day, and work tasks in detail.
5. Tell me about your housing conditions.
  - a. Living arrangements
  - b. Food
  - c. Health services
6. Now, let's talk about your relationship with your work supervisors when you worked in Jordan. Describe to me who the supervisors were (nationality, gender), their responsibilities and work hours, character, and supervision style.
7. How about relationships between workers?
  - a. Let's first talk about social relations. In what ways do you and other workers interact with each other during and after work hours?
  - b. Where did you use to socialize (probe on meeting or attending activities at the Al Hassan Workers Center)?
  - Probe on social interactions like parties and cooking.
  - Probe social interactions between workers from different national backgrounds.

8. How has Covid-19 affected your migration experience?
  - Probe on whether COVID-19 reduced the participant's and other workers' ability to communicate with each other.
  - Probe on whether employers did not pay workers during lockdowns and work interruptions.
  - Probe on whether participant and workers in general experienced more abuse and exploitation during/because of COVID-19.
  
9. When you were in Jordan, did workers organize amongst themselves on work-related issues or rights? Describe to me a situation when workers organized to improve their housing, work conditions and rights, or wages, whether you were involved in these efforts or not.
  - Probe on whether workers were members of a workers' union.
  - Probe on whether organizing took place across national backgrounds.
  
10. Describe to me a situation when you were (or someone you know was) subjected to unfair treatment or punished for asking for improved work conditions or other rights. Where did workers go in these situations? What did they expect to see happen?
  - Probe on the involvement of the workers' centers in protecting workers' rights.
  - Probe on whether workers were connected to these centers and sought them out for support when needed.
  
11. Are you familiar with the Work-in-Freedom Program that the ILO is implementing in South Asian countries as well as in Jordan?
  - Probe on activities in countries of origin that participants were involved in and what difference Work in Freedom made in terms of agency over the migration process
  
12. What do you think programs such as the Work-in-Freedom should do to help migrant garment workers in Jordan and improve their living and working conditions?
  
13. When was your last return (Since 2019)?
  - a. From where?
  - b. How / Who helped?
  - c. Why did you come back?
  - d. Who took the decision to come back?
  - Probe: COVID impact on return
  
14. Differences between Bangladesh and Jordan RMG Sector?
  - a. Working environments
  - b. Payments
  - c. Working hours
  - d. Skill set that you learned from Jordan
  
15. Tell me a little about where you live now (in Bangladesh) and what you do?
  - Probe on family life and work (whether the participant works or not and where).

16. What are experiences after returning to Bangladesh? How are they treating you?
- a. From family
  - b. From community
  - c. From industry (if joined to RMG sector again)

17. Do you want to go again to Jordan as an immigrant worker? If yes/no, why?

18. What needs to be changed to go there again?
- a. Recruitment process? (In Bangladesh/Jordan)
  - b. Initial money to go there?
  - c. Housing, Salary deduction etc.
  - d. Reduce exploitation/violence (Physical, Mental, sexual, ...Etc.)?

**Annex B**  
**Codes**

After-work Activities
Age
Al-Hassan Worker's Center
Arab Workers
Camp Boss - Demographics
Camp Boss - What They Do
Camp Boss or Supervisor - Behavior
Care Dynamics at Home (in worker's absences)
Coming Home - Marital Status
Community Dynamics in Jordan
Contract Marriage (in Jordan)
Contractual Agreements
COVID-19 - Salary
COVID-19 - Worker Treatment
Crimes - Committed Against Workers
Demographics - Work History
Demographics - Work History in Bangladesh
Duration of Stay in Jordan
Education
Emotional Response - Upon Arrival
Emotions in Jordan
Factory Discipline
Factory Location
Factory Name(s)
Factory Owner Demographics + Info
Family Members
Family, Community Reactions to Migration
Feelings about Jordan
GBV - Complaint Mechanisms

GBV - Harassment
GBV - Why Does it Happen
Gender Issues - Relationships
Gender Issues - Women Migrants
Home Village + District
House Leader - Demographics
House Leader - Roles
Household Dynamics
Household Income - Primary Earner
Individual Responsibility
Inter-worker Relations
Job Post
Leaving Jordan - Emotions
Leaving Jordan - Reasons
Leaving or Running Away from Company
Living Arrangements
Living Arrangements - Company Treatment
Living Arrangements - Food + Cooking
Living Arrangements - Living Costs
Manager - Demographics
Marital Status
Meals
Migration Networks
Overtime
Post-Migration Process - Visa Renewal
Pre-migration - Making the Decision to Migrate
Pre-Migration Process
Pre-Migration Process - Duration of Process
Pre-migration process, debt + loans
Pre-migration process, recruitment fees
Promotions

Public Perception of Immigrants - Bangladesh
Racial Dynamics
Reason for Migrating - Financial
Reasons for Migrating - Domestic Issues
Reasons for Migrating - Family Pressures
Reasons for Migrating - Info from Other People
Reasons for Migrating - Personal
Reasons for Migrating - Savings + Income
Recruitment Preferences
Religion
Remittances
Remittances - How did they use it
Returning Home - Complications
Returning Home - Economic Standing
Returning Home - Family Needs + Demands
Returning Home - Feelings about
Returning Home - Work Status
Returning to Jordan for Work - Reasons
Salary
Salary - Social Security
Sick Leave
Supervisor - Behavior
Supervisor - Demographics
Supervisor - What they do
Travel to Jordan
Work in Other Countries
Work Responsibilities
Work Schedule - Daily
Work Targets
Work Welfare - Auditing
Worker Bonuses + Time Off

Worker Communications - Languages
Worker Demographics
Worker Organizing
Worker Relations - Issues Between Workers
Worker Support - Complaint Mechanisms
Worker Treatment - At Work
Worker Treatment - in Bangladesh
Worker Treatment - Problems at Work (Work Pressures)
Worker Treatment - Transparency

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