

# The Indispensable Work and the Invisible Workers: undocumented Bangladeshi women immigrants in the Indian informal economy

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Can undocumented migrant women be empowered by working in the informal economy? While academia and politics in global north have brought the nature and trends of undocumented migration to the fore. The world's fifth biggest migration corridor, Bangladesh-India continues to be marred with invisibility.

The limited studies on the undocumented women in this channel has created an overwhelming imagery of vulnerability and exploitation, void of any academic representation of their lived realities. Leaving behind the simplistic framework of vulnerability, this study brings forth the complex realities faced by undocumented Bangladeshi migrant women in the Indian informal economy as domestic help and rag-pickers.

To bring forth the bargaining strategies used by this group, this research comprised of ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured in-depth interviews with twenty-six undocumented Bangladeshi migrant women in New Delhi, India. Using the

theoretical framework of bargaining and translocational positionality, this research found that low-skilled women face both liberating and constraining impact of undocumented migration. Not only do women undertake migration differently than men, but they also negotiate differently when faced by adversity.

By looking at these women's position through the interaction of intrahousehold and extra-household spheres, this research emphasises the need for further policy research on the different bargaining strategies used by undocumented migrant women, in order to deter future marginalisation of the group in the sub-continent. While undocumented Bangladeshi women workers are a visible reality in urban India, the lack of academic and policy attention has rendered most of them invisible, to affirmative action.