INTERIM INSIGHT REPORT

Trafficked from Bangladesh to Cambodia

Phase 1 Interim Study of Cyber-Scam Compounds, Forced Criminality and Exploitation

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This interim report presents an early analysis of 20 qualitative interviews conducted between June and July 2026 with Bangladeshi victims who were trafficked to Cambodia and exploited across a range of forced cyber-scam compounds. Participants were not all trafficked to the same site, through the same route or by the same network. The findings therefore present a mixed but thematically connected set of early patterns concerning recruitment, travel, arrival hand-off, labour sorting, control, exit, financial loss and post-return harm.

The findings are not intended as final conclusions or population estimates. They provide a first-stage analytical foundation for Phase 2 of the study, which will test and refine these emerging patterns through a substantially larger dataset later in 2026-early 2027. This second phase will be especially important because, while trafficking into scam compounds and forced criminality in Southeast Asia is increasingly recognised as a major and expanding phenomenon, there remains extremely minimal published survivor-centred evidence focused specifically on Bangladeshi nationals trafficked into these systems.[1]

The central finding is that exploitation in these cases is best understood as a staged process of recruitment, financial commitment, destination hand-off, labour sorting, control and unresolved post-return harm. Existing desire to migrate, familiar recruiters and attractive job promises often reduced scrutiny; up-front payments created household exposure before departure; ordinary commercial travel frequently concealed risk; and the decisive transition usually occurred after arrival in Cambodia, when receivers, brokers or associates controlled accommodation, agency, onward movement and placement.

The 20 cases suggest five provisional victim typologies: direct cyber-scam criminal exploitation; refused direct cyber-scam work and subsequent manual or service labour exploitation; broker-abandoned and stranded migrants; manual/service workers under labour exploitation; and precarious but less coercive workers. These should be read as “ideal types” rather than fixed classifications. They distinguish victims by position within the wider scam-compound economy, while recognising that individual cases may overlap and that the model requires further testing in Phase 2.

The most extreme harms were reported by participants forced into direct cyber-scam work, including passport confiscation, confinement, 12–16-hour working days, surveillance, targets, wage deductions, food deprivation, beating, psychological abuse, forced exposure to extreme cold, resale or contracting, and payments demanded for release or passport recovery. However, the evidence does not support a simple distinction between “scam victims” and “ordinary migrant workers.” Participants who refused scam work, were diverted into manual/service exploitation, or were abandoned after broker extraction could still experience wage theft, deprivation, irregular status, dependency, substantial debt, physical and mental trauma and distress, and limited ability to exit.

The report therefore proposes a provisional “compound-economy” interpretation. Direct scam production sits within a broader labour system that may also rely on cooking, construction, painting, restaurant work, waiting, brokerage extraction and other support or peripheral forced labour. Across these positions, harm converged around substantial debt, tight control or

[1] See for instance: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2026; Humanity Research Consultancy 2026; Amnesty International 2025; IOM 2024; UNODC 2023

dependency, physical and mental distress, and no access to remedy. As noted throughout the report, these findings should be treated as early analysis: they lay the foundations for a more in-depth second phase and should be tested, refined and, where necessary, revised as the dataset expands.

Top five early analytical findings

1. **Financial exposure began before trafficking was fully visible.** All 20 participants reported making payments before travel, and 19/20 described debt or major financial harm after return. This suggests that vulnerability was created upstream, before destination exploitation was fully apparent, and then intensified when promised earnings failed, further payments were demanded, or return costs and household losses accumulated.
2. **The most important transfer of control usually occurred after arrival in Cambodia.** Ordinary commercial routes often concealed risk. In 18/20 accounts, the decisive transition was the arrival hand-off, when a receiver, broker, relative or associate controlled onward movement, accommodation, information, documents or placement.
3. **Destination placement shaped both the form and severity of exploitation.** The cases do not point to one uniform victim profile. Instead, participants appear to have been sorted into different positions within the wider scam-compound economy: direct cyber-scam criminal exploitation; refused direct cyber-scam work followed by manual/service exploitation; broker abandonment; manual/service labour exploitation; or precarious but less coercive work.
4. **Direct cyber-scam criminal exploitation involved the most extreme forms of trafficking and coercive control, but trafficking-related harm extended well beyond direct scam production.** The direct scam cases included reported sale or contracting of individuals to companies, passport confiscation, confinement, surveillance, 12–16-hour working days, targets, wage deductions, food deprivation, beatings, psychological abuse, forced exposure to extreme cold and payments demanded for release or passport recovery. However, participants outside direct scam production were not simply "ordinary migrant workers": those who refused scam work, were diverted into support or manual/service roles, or were abandoned after broker extraction could still experience coercion, wage theft, deprivation, irregular status, dependency, substantial debt, physical harm, trauma and limited ability to leave or secure remedy.
5. **Exit did not translate into remedy, recovery or accountability.** No participant reported filing a formal complaint. Return often ended immediate destination exposure, but debt, distress, trauma, livelihood disruption, family pressure and barriers to justice remained unresolved.

The table below provides the descriptive cross-case prevalence behind these early findings. These figures should be read as indicative patterns within the Phase 1 interview sample, not as population estimates:

CROSS-CASE THEMATIC PREVALENCE

Theme	Cases (share)	Possible Interpretation
Recruitment through a known/trusted contact	**14 (70%)**	Trust frequently substituted for verification.
High-salary or attractive job promise	**20 (100%)**	The offer created a credible route out of financial pressure in every case.
Payment made before travel	**20 (100%)**	Financial exposure began before departure in every case.

No meaningful pre-departure assessment	**17 (85%)**	Weak screening made promised roles difficult to validate.
Broker/agent hand-off or multi-actor chain	**17 (85%)**	Fragmented roles obscured responsibility and enabled transfer.
Job substitution or scam-work offer	**11 (55%)**	The destination role often differed materially from the promise.
Significant control or restriction	**11 (55%)**	Including passport confiscation, hostage conditions, personal confinement, threats, restricted movement.
Debt or major financial harm after return	**19 (95%)**	Substantial losses were transferred to households and persisted after return.
Significant mental and emotional distress	**20 (100%)**	Distress accompanied substantial debt and exhaustion as well as shame, uncertainty and unemployment.
Physical health harm	**9 (45%)**	Torture, illness, weakness (e.g., unable to walk), pain, sleep deprivation and/or food deprivation.
Formal complaint or case filed	**0 (0%)**	Justice pathway not seen as a viable or accessible option for any participants or their families

EVIDENCE, SCOPE AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

This interim report is based on 20 one-to-one qualitative interviews conducted between June and July 2026 with Bangladeshi victims trafficked to Cambodia and exploited across forced cyber-scam compounds. Interviews were conducted by Justice and Care Bangladesh programme staff using a trauma-informed approach, with attention to participant safety, pacing, distress and the avoidance of unnecessary re-traumatisation.

Interviews were transcribed and translated into English for analysis. The English transcripts were then reviewed using several complementary approaches: whole-case trajectory analysis; cross-case thematic analysis; typology development and co-occurrence analysis. Each participant was treated as a complete case so that recruitment, payment, travel, arrival, exploitation, exit and post-return harm could be interpreted as connected trajectories rather than isolated coded statements.

Short boxes of indicative interview data are included towards the end of several sections of the report. These translated excerpts are used to illustrate the analysis rather than serve as standalone proof. Because they have been translated into English, the wording should be read as indicative of participant meaning rather than as verbatim English speech.

The findings are descriptive and exploratory within a purposively selected Phase 1 sample of 20 interviews. They should not be read as population estimates or causal effect sizes. Co-occurrence indicates that themes appeared in the same cases, not that one caused another; an absent code means that a theme was not identified in the available English transcript, not that the experience definitely did not occur. The analysis should therefore be treated as an early foundation to be tested and refined in Phase 2 of the study.

This study is positioned against a growing but still limited evidence base on trafficking into forced criminality and cyber-scam compounds in Southeast Asia. Existing reporting has established the contours of the phenomenon, including deceptive recruitment, movement through formal and informal channels, coercive control inside compounds, and significant gaps in victim protection and post-rescue support.[2] However, much of the available evidence remains regional, institutionally focused, or based on mixed survivor populations, with relatively little published research centred on detailed first-hand survivor accounts.

Within that context, this interim study appears to be one of the first of its kind in its specific focus on Bangladeshi nationals trafficked to Cambodia and exploited across forced cyber-scam compounds and related labour systems, based primarily on survivors' own accounts. At this stage, its contribution is not to determine what may be unique about Bangladeshi experiences, but to provide an initial survivor-centred evidence base from which those questions can be examined more rigorously in Phase 2. The findings that follow should therefore be read as an early contribution to an under-developed evidence base, rather than a final account of the phenomenon.

[2] See: United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2026; Humanity Research Consultancy 2026; Amnesty International 2025; IOM 2024; UNODC 2023

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A. PATHWAY INTO EXPLOITATION: RECRUITMENT, TRAVEL AND DESTINATION HAND-OFF

80% (16/20) of participants were approached through friends, relatives (often via 'cousins' or 'uncles') or local contacts (e.g., 'neighbours'). Familiarity made job promises credible and often substituted for independent verification. The promise of a higher salary, a computer-related role, construction or service work, and the expectation of supporting family members converted livelihood aspirations into concrete financial commitments. Trust alone did not predict role mismatch strongly; its importance lay in how it operated alongside attractive promises, overwhelming desire to migrate, weak verification and up-front payment.

Every participant (20/20) spoke of a **payment before travel**, as an initial migration or recruitment cost - usually paid to a broker, recruiter, relative or agent network. In the vast majority of cases, significant borrowing/debt or family resources financed the journey. A more detailed financial breakdown is discussed below.

Once money had been committed, participants and households had limited bargaining power when the job changed, further payments were demanded, wages failed or no placement materialised. Expected earnings were needed to service the migration cost, so non-payment or abandonment transferred the loss directly to the household back in Bangladesh.

Transit routes appear to be revealing mainly as part of the broker's logistics, not as a standalone predictor of harm:

Dominant documented route –all departing from Bangladesh	Cases (% share)	Logistical features
Malaysia air transit	8 (40%)	Usually 4–18-hour airport transit, then flight to Cambodia
Thailand/Bangkok air transit	7 (35%)	Short air transit followed by direct arrival in Cambodia
Vietnam followed by land border	2 (10%)	Hotel stop, microbus/multiple vehicles and overland border crossing
Complex Thailand–China–Malaysia route	1 (5%)	Multiple airports and unexpected deviation from promised direct travel
Direct Dhaka–Phnom Penh	1 (5%)	No international transit; broker met participant on arrival
Route internally inconsistent (recall issue)	1 (5%)	N/A – data inconsistent

Most journeys used ordinary commercial air connections through Malaysia or Thailand/Bangkok, which could make travel appear legitimate. 17/20 participants said that nothing unusual happened during the journey itself, whilst 3/20 spoke of worrying unexpected costs or suspicious paperwork.

Overwhelmingly the **critical transition occurred after arrival rather than during transit**. Arrival reception or destination hand-off was documented in 18/20 accounts. In 15/20 cases a house, flat or hotel was used as a staging space before a person was moved to an exploiter, compound, worksite, company interview or period of waiting. These spaces could provide accommodation, but invariably they also severely curtailed individual freedom, and concentrated informational control: participants depended on others to know where they were going, when work would begin, who held documents and how/if they could leave:

Control-transfer point	Cases/share	Possible Interpretation
Journey reported as ordinary/no unusual event	17 (85%)	Commercial travel often appeared normal and legitimate.
Arrival receiver or destination hand-off documented	18 (90%)	Reception after landing was the dominant transfer point.
House, flat or hotel used as first staging space	15 (75%)	Initial accommodation frequently functioned as an operational control point.
Explicit destination passport confiscation	4 (20%)	Document seizure marked the sharpest escalation into coercive control.

The clearest escalation overwhelmingly occurred after arrival, when a broker or associate received the participant and controlled onward transport, accommodation or company placement:

1. Recruitment	→	2. Commercial travel	→	3. Arrival hand-off[3]	→	4. Staging and placement	5. Control escalation
Trusted contact, relative, broker or online approach Offer and payment create commitment		Standard air routes via Malaysia/Thailand or other corridors 17/20 described no unusual travel event		Broker, relative or associate receives participant 18/20 had a documented receiver/hand-off		House/flat/hotel → interview, worksite or compound At least 15 used residential or hotel staging spaces	Passport seizure, confinement, wage/visa dependency 4/20 explicitly reported destination passport confiscation
Risk is socially concealed		Route alone does not predict outcome		Key transfer of control		Placement infrastructure	Strongest coercion marker

B. FIVE VICTIM TYPOLOGIES: AN INITIAL MODEL OF POSITION WITHIN THE WIDER CYBER SCAM-COMPOUND ECONOMY

The 20 participants do not form a single homogeneous category. Their trajectories appear to separate most clearly according to their position in the cyber scam-compound and related ecosystem: some were trafficked for direct cyber-scam production; some were able to refuse or avoid scam work but remained in scam-linked support roles or prolonged limbo; some were abandoned after brokers extracted payments; others performed manual or service work as a form of labour exploitation and wage abuse; and a very small group suggested real work but extremely limited with irregular and illegal status, high costs and little return.

Using a cross-case analysis five '*ideal types*'[4] can be identified across the 20 interviews set, offered here as an *initial conceptual model* that should be tested during the next phase of this study. The five typologies are based on patterns in recruitment, destination experience, control, exit and post-return consequences.

The typologies distinguish direct scam coercion from the wider cyber scam-compound economy while showing that debt, broker dependency and weak justice access cut across every group in various ways:

[3] For the purpose of this study 'hand-off' is used here to represent a transfer of responsibility or practical control from a recruiter to another broker, receiver, exploiter, staging location or company during or after the journey.

[4] The term "ideal types" is used here in an analytical rather than literal sense. The typologies are not intended to imply that every participant fits cleanly or exclusively into one fixed category, nor that the categories represent statistically distinct groups. Instead, they summarise recurring whole-case patterns across the interviews in order to make sense of variation in recruitment, placement, control, exit and post-return harm. Individual cases may contain features of more than one type, and the typologies should therefore be read as heuristic categories for comparison and further testing, not as definitive classifications

TYPOLOGY OVERVIEW						
Typology	**Cases**	**Defining trajectory**	**Position in the ecosystem**	**Control and dependency**	**Typical exit**	**Post-return pattern**
1. direct cyber-scam criminal exploitation	6	Legitimate computer-job promise becomes direct cyber-scam work after destination interview or selection.	Core scam-production labour (e.g., telegram, Facebook); brokers reportedly sell or contract the worker to a company.	Passport seizure, confinement, targets, extended hours, extreme punishment and torture, payment demanded for release.	Raid/closure, repayment to company, permit change or release after passport return.	Severe financial loss and debt; unemployment and distress; mental emotional and physical trauma; stigma; legal needs but no formal complaints.
2. scam-linked exploitation after refused direct cyber-scam work, moved to compound-support exploitation	3	Participant encounters scam recruitment or a scam-centre setting but refuses or is diverted from direct scam work.	Refusal to participate did not remove exploitation but instead pushed into different forms of exploitation (cyber compound-support exploitation): cooking, construction, painting or restaurant work.	Dependency variable: coercion, unpaid labour, waiting at broker housing, restricted movement and loss of control, irregular status, dependence persists.	Family-funded ticket, overstay waiver, WhatsApp information or broker-mediated departure.	Significant debt and related harms, distress and livelihood needs remain despite avoiding direct scam participation.
3. Broker-abandoned and stranded migrants	**3**	Payment and travel are completed, but the promised job never materialises, and further payments may be demanded.	Held in broker-managed flats/hotels/ spaces sometimes with hundreds of victims while waiting.	Dependence on substantial family remittances, broker information and immigration status rather than formal employment control.	WhatsApp return opportunity, NGO help or family-financed travel.	Significant debt and related harms, unemployment, illness and/or mental distress; strong sense of deception.
4. Manual/service workers under labour exploitation	**6**	Participant performs construction, masonry, painting, restaurant or related work, but work is unpaid, substituted, intermittent or underpaid.	Peripheral productive/support labour that may sustain the wider compound economy or adjacent businesses.	Wage withholding, poor food/housing, attempted passport control, broker abandonment or constrained job mobility.	Self-arranged work/return, family money, permit expiry or government return opportunity.	Financial loss and debt dominate; harm and trauma vary from severe disappointment to extreme distress.
5. Precarious but less coercive workers	**2**	A real job is obtained and there is limited evidence of direct scam involvement or severe coercive control.	Restaurant or welding employment outside the clearest scam-production pathway.	Very hard work, weak returns and irregular/expiring status rather than hostage-like control.	Government overstay waiver followed by self-funded return.	Major migration loss and time loss, but accounts show more agency and fewer direct coercion markers.

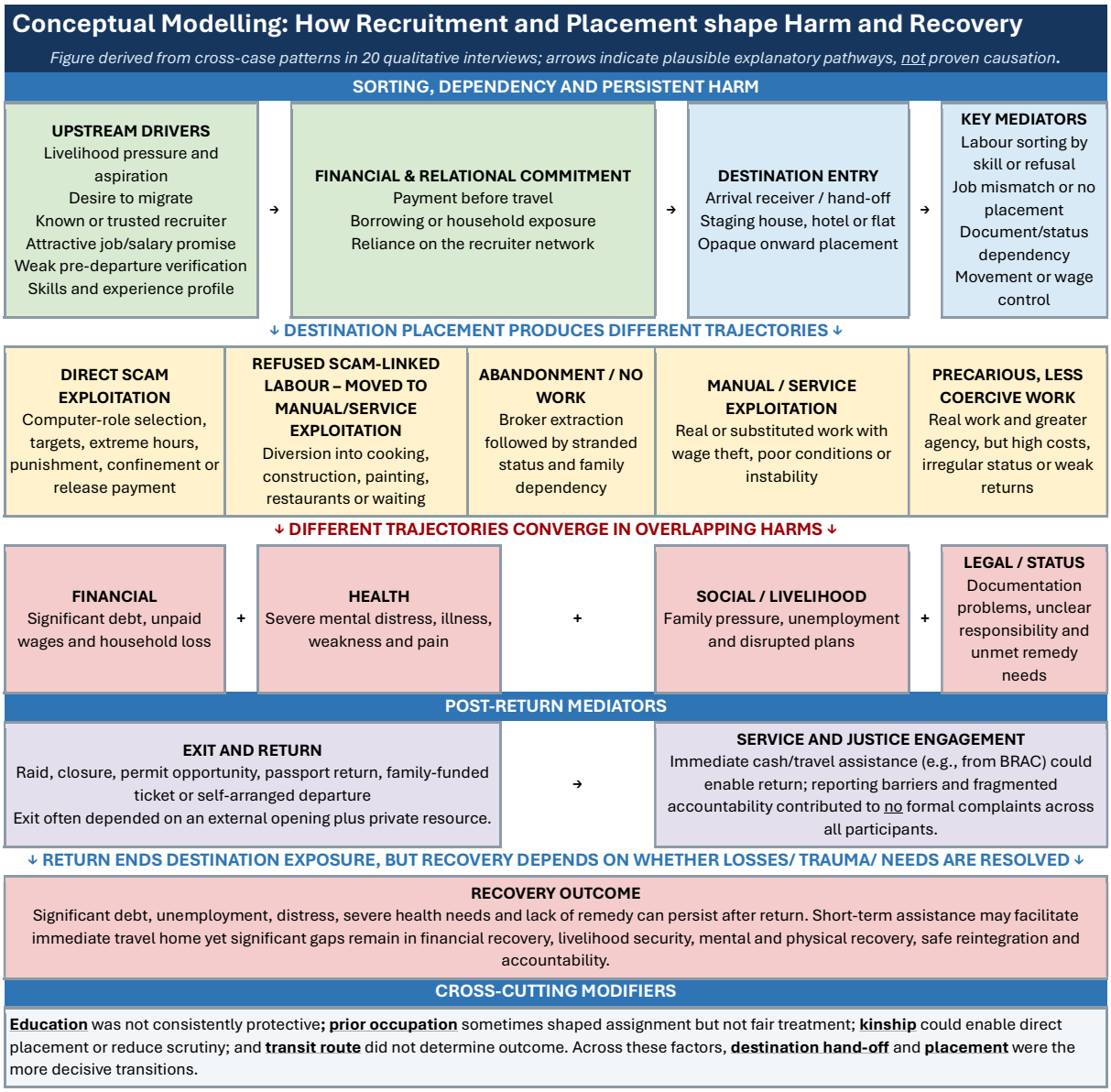
Even though the data pool for this level of cross-case analysis is small (n=20), it is nonetheless possible to see that route patterns differ within and across typologies. Instead, they are likely to reflect particular broker networks, travel periods and visa availability.

Education level alone does not separate the typologies cleanly: direct cyber-scam exploitation, support work and manual exploitation occur across secondary, higher-secondary and unknown education levels. The clearest background association is computer proficiency: 5/6 captured scam-production workers explicitly reported computer-operating skills and 1/6 was implied, compared with 0 of the remaining 15 participants. This is consistent with recruitment into computer-operator roles and destination skills testing, but the small purposive sample cannot establish that digital skill caused placement. Substantial prior employment also did not protect participants: experienced credit, restaurant, mechanical, pharmaceutical, garment and construction workers appear across several typologies.

Indicative Interview data:
*'While staying at [*Broker's name*] house, I was given an online interview. The following day, I was driven to a building within the G-7 compound, where my passport was confiscated. It was at this point that I learned [*Broker's name*] had sold me to the company under a contract worth USD 2,200. The work I was forced to undertake was online scamming specifically*

romance scamming, involving the deception of individuals from various countries through Telegram and other online platforms' (Research Participant - translated interview)

The following model proposes that exploitation developed through a staged sorting-and-dependency process. Upstream pressures and trusted recruitment enabled financial commitment; broker-controlled reception and placement then mediated the form and severity of exploitation. Although participants followed different destination trajectories, many converged in financial, health and livelihood harm. Recovery was subsequently shaped by the availability of exit resources, sustained support and accessible remedy:



C. EXPLOITATION INSIDE CYBER SCAM-COMPOUNDS

Experiences inside cyber-scam compounds reveal a range of exploitation, punishment and trauma. These appear to be layered rather than a single form of abuse, and most prevalent and extreme for the 6/20 victims of direct cyber-scam criminal exploitation:

Exploitation breakdown	Evidence from the interviews	Suggested interpretation
Forced criminal exploitation	Participants forced to use Facebook or Telegram, fake female profiles, romance approaches, loan/benefit promises and supplied contact lists to deceive targets.	Participants simultaneously exploited as labour and compelled to harm third parties; refusal was not available.
Labour commodification	Participants sold or contracted into direct cyber-scam criminal activity for approximately USD 2,000–3,000, sometimes for a year; one described resale when targets were missed.	Broker payment converted into a debt-like claim over the victim and could become the amount required for release.
Working time and surveillance	Direct scam shifts were commonly around 12–16 hours. Eating, restroom use and movement tightly scheduled or monitored by the minute.	Control over time and bodily routines reduced autonomy and kept production continuous.

Targets and punishment	Reported sanctions included longer hours, so-called salary deductions, confinement, food deprivation, beating, psychological abuse, stripping and prolonged forced exposure to extreme cold.	Work targets functioned as coercive discipline, not ordinary performance management.
Passport and movement control	Companies held passports, kept workers inside premises or rooms and restricted outside movement; one escapee was caught again.	Document custody and confinement made exit practically or financially impossible.
Food and living conditions	Accounts included one or two meals, lack of food, poor food, self-cooking with limited resources, dark rooms and inadequate accommodation.	Deprivation operated both as punishment and as a consequence of abandonment, non-payment or dependency.
Wage exploitation	Participants reported no wages, partial wages, deductions, intermittent work and pay too low to recover migration costs.	Economic exploitation linked the compound experience to persistent household debt after return.
Support and peripheral labour	Cooking, construction, painting and restaurant work sustained compounds or adjacent businesses; others waited in broker housing for placement.	The exploited workforce extends beyond people directly conducting scams and includes support, peripheral and reserve labour.

Indicative Interview data related to victims of direct cyber-scam criminal exploitation:
'The company kept me like a hostage. I had to work 14 to 15 hours every day. There was no chance to leave their control.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'I was kept like a hostage and was forced to work there for 6 months. To become free, I brought 2 lakh 50 thousand taka from home and paid the company. Then I got my passport back from the company.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'On a typical day, I was made to work 14 to 15 hours a day under distressing and exploitative conditions.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

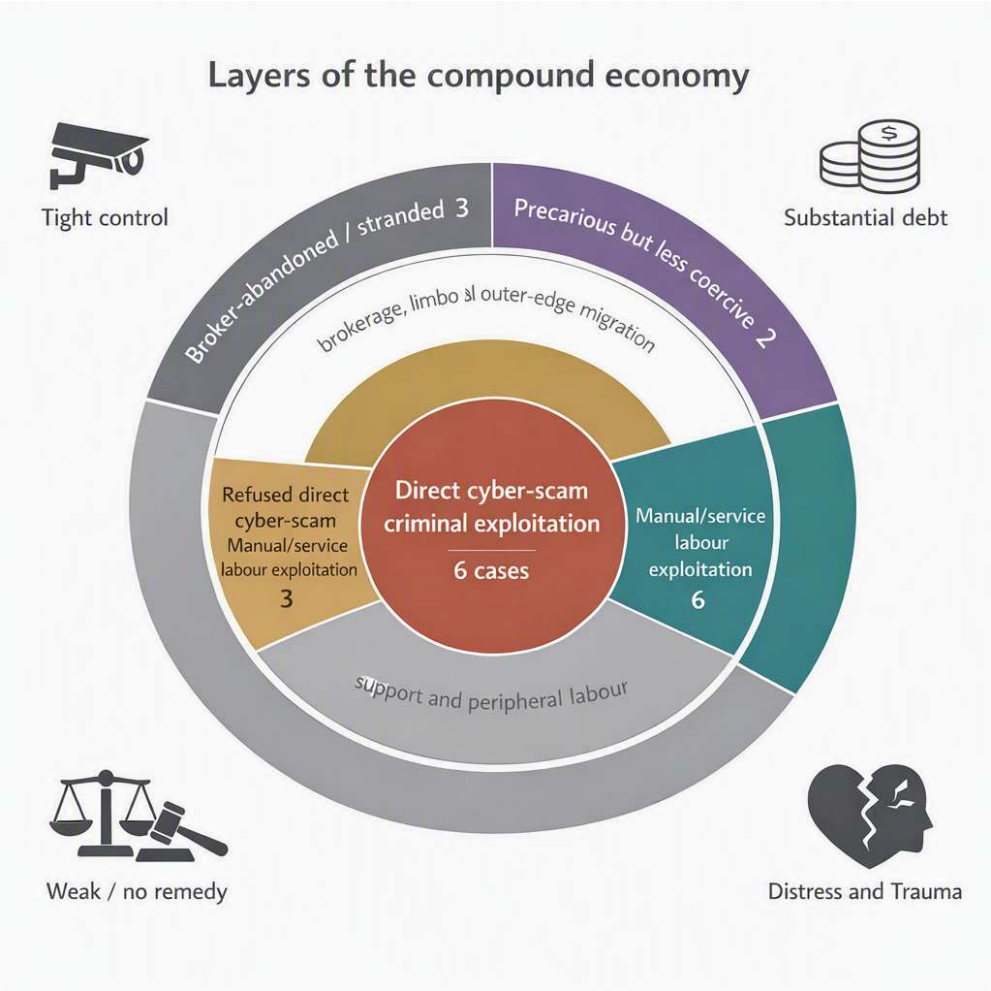
'A typical day was spent under terrible conditions. The duty hours were from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM every day. After that, we had to work an extra 2 hours. If we failed to complete the tasks they assigned on time, they beat us and deducted our salary. The daily food menu was absolutely horrible, and meals were only served twice a day: once at 5:00 AM and again at 11:00 PM.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'If I refused to work or violated any orders, they locked me in a dark room without food. They striped us of our clothes and made me stand inside a room with an air cooler running at maximum capacity, causing me to freeze. There were many other forms of torture.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'If targets were not met or instructions were not followed, I was subjected to psychological abuse and had deductions made from my salary.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

D. THE WIDER CYBER SCAM-COMPOUND ECONOMY: BEYOND DIRECT SCAM WORK

The figure below summarises the report's central analytical point: **direct cyber-scam criminal exploitation sits at the centre of the documented harm, but the wider economy also includes support labour, manual/service exploitation, broker abandonment and precarious migration**. The figure is not intended to show a hierarchy of suffering, but the different positions through which trafficking-related harm was produced:



A more developed map is provided in Appendix 2. The expansiveness of this economy should also be tested in the later phase of this study.

E. POTENTIAL MODUS OPERANDI: RECRUITMENT, LABOUR SORTING AND CONTROL

Cross-case analysis of the 20 interviews suggests that the **clearest modus operandi across this form of trafficking is a relay rather than a single-broker transaction**. Familiar recruiters or online contacts create credibility and collect money; Bangladesh-side actors arrange documents and departure; destination receivers move recruits into houses, flats or hotels; and brokers or companies then sort them into scam production, compound-support work, manual/service work, or waiting and abandonment. In the six direct forced-scam cases, participants describe sale or commission arrangements, passport seizure, confinement, targets and payments demanded for release. Distributed roles and phone-based coordination fragment accountability, while kinship, fear, not knowing how to report, anticipated legal costs and reluctance to cause 'trouble' suppress formal reporting.

Whilst the network interpretation is strongest in the scam-linked and explicit broker-chain cases, the following operating sequence is offered as an *initial analysis* that requires further testing during the later phase of this study:

Operating sequence	Observed method	Operational function	Evidence signal
1. Prospecting	Known neighbours, relatives, acquaintances or expatriates; some social-media discovery.	Borrowed trust lowers scrutiny and gives the offer social proof.	14/20 trusted contact
2. Offer construction	Computer, construction, restaurant or other legitimate work paired with attractive salaries and little meaningful assessment.	Creates a plausible migration opportunity while concealing the destination role.	16/20 promise; 14/20 mismatch
3. Financial binding	Large pre-travel payments, staged instalments, family borrowing, passport or document transfer.	Sunk costs begin before departure and weaken the recruit's ability to withdraw or reject changed terms.	Payments reported across all 20 cases
4. Relay logistics	Recruiter, airport/document actor, transit escort, destination receiver and onward broker may perform separate tasks coordinated by phone.	Compartmentalisation moves the participant while fragmenting knowledge and accountability.	17/20 broker-chain; 18/20 arrival hand-off
5. Staging and sorting	Houses, flats and hotels used for waiting, surveillance, interviews, extraction or onward placement.	Allows brokers to hold and re-sort labour into scam production, support work, manual/service work or abandonment.	At least 15/20 staged in house/flat/hotel
6. Monetisation	Recruitment fees; reported commissions or victim sale; family transfers, wage withholding and release payments.	Extracts value from the victim/household and, in direct scam cases, the destination company.	All 6 direct scam cases describe sale/contracting
7. Control and punishment	Passport seizure, confinement, monitored movement, irregular status, food/wage dependency, targets and punishment.	Raises the practical and financial cost of refusal or exit after placement.	11/20 control markers; 4 explicit passport confiscations
8. Exit without remedy	Raids or closures, family-funded tickets, informal WhatsApp information, broker-mediated release or self-arranged departure.	Exposure ends without dismantling the chain; fear, kinship and cost then inhibit reporting.	15/20 reporting barriers; 0 formal complaints

Akin to the table above, *initial analysis* also identifies the following possible role architecture:

Potential role architecture	Observed function	Why it matters
Trust broker / recruiter	Introduces the opportunity, vouches for the destination and collects or directs payments.	Often socially close to the participant, making verification less likely.
Origin organiser / document actors	Processes visa, ticket or passport; schedules departure; may use a travel-agency identity or airport intermediary.	Creates a lawful-looking surface even where the promised work is false.
Escorts / transit handlers	Accompanies groups, provides phone directions, changes vehicles or routes, or transfers custody to the next actor.	Maintains movement without requiring every actor to know the full chain.
Destination receivers / housing controllers	Meets the participant, transports them to a house, flat or hotel and controls the first placement decision.	The arrival hand-off is the point where promise becomes dependency.
Companies / compound buyers or employers	Interviews, selects, assigns or accepts workers; in direct scam accounts, pays commission or treats the worker as a transferable asset.	Converts recruitment into labour exploitation and creates a debt-like release price.
Supervisors / enforcers	Controls passports, movement, targets, schedules, food, wages and punishment.	Turns economic dependency into coercive labour discipline.

Indicative interview data:
'The brokers never met me in person. After I arrived in Cambodia, they sent a microbus to pick me up and take me to the hotel. At the hotel, there were four brokers' associates who kept watch over a large number of Bangladeshis. It seems this is a group who followed instruction of the main agent.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'Each broker or trafficking group sends people to scamming companies. In return, they receive 2,000 to 3,000 US dollars as commission from the company' (Research Participant - translated interview)

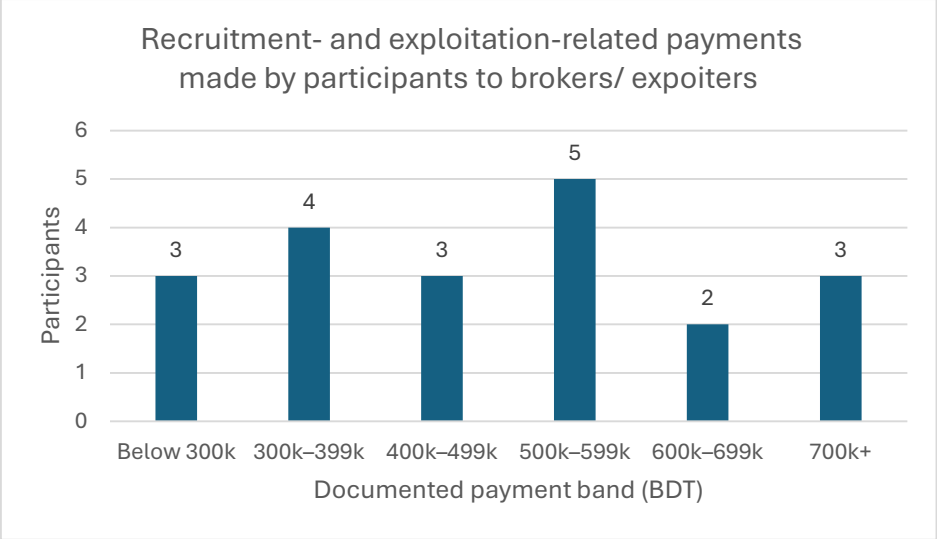
*'[*Broker's name*] had sold me to the company under a one-year contract in exchange for USD 2,000–3,000'.* (Research Participant - translated interview)

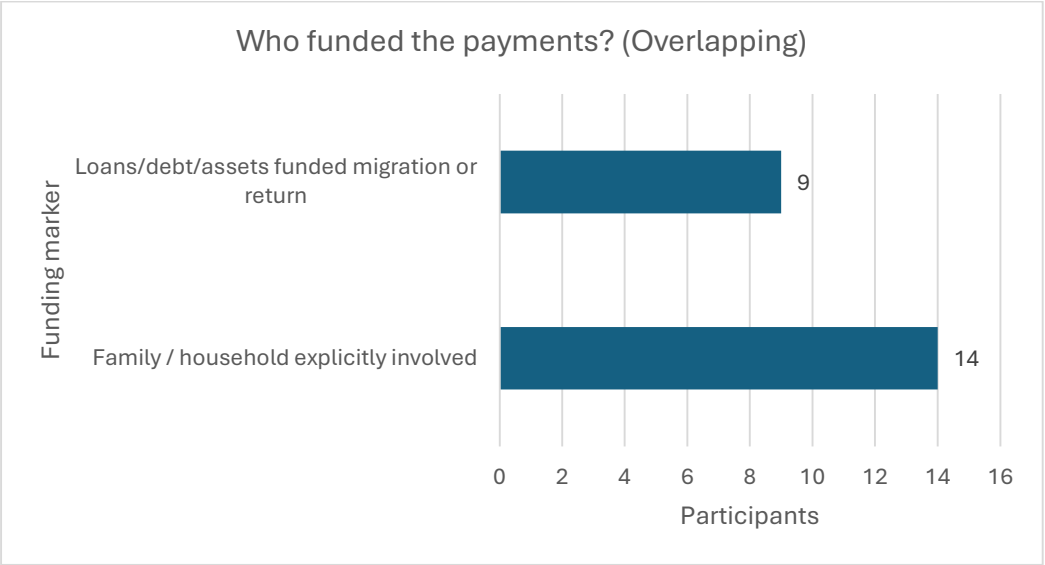
*'Based on my experience, I understand that brokers such as [*Broker's name*] sell victims like myself to Chinese companies for sums ranging between USD 2,000 and USD 3,000'.* (Research Participant - translated interview)

F. INDICATIVE MINIMUM COST AND DEBT ANALYSIS: PAYMENTS, FINANCING AND EXCLUDED LOSSES

As noted above, every participant (20/20) spoke of a **payment before travel**, as an initial migration or recruitment cost - usually paid to a broker, recruiter, relative or agent network. It is unclear how many explicit costs were bundled with airfare, visa processing, passport/ document handling. 5/20 also spoke of additional amounts paid on destination once they met a further broker and were held in a 'staging' space, again possibly bundled with hotel and promised job arrangements.

These **payments ranged from BDT 100,000 to BDT 750,000, with a median of BDT 475,000; 10 participants paid at least BDT 500,000**. **The distribution indicates that substantial financial exposure was not confined to a small number of exceptional cases. Family or household resources were explicitly involved in at least 14/20, while loans, debt, mortgaging or asset sales financed migration, return or related costs in 9/20**. These categories overlap, showing that payments were frequently absorbed by the wider household and sometimes required borrowing or the liquidation of assets:





These figures should be read as a defined *minimum*, not as a complete measure of each victim's financial loss. Initial payments to brokers sometimes appear to have bundled recruitment fees with flights, visa processing, passports, documents or other arrangements, making individual components difficult to separate. Confirmed additional payments to brokers or companies - including release and passport-recovery payments - are included only where they can be distinguished without double counting. By contrast**, return tickets and unknown-price tickets, unpaid wages, salary deductions, loan interest, prior debts, livelihood losses, medical fees, government fines, and food and living expenses are excluded from the headline BDT range above. These payments should also not be treated as current outstanding debt: only 1/20 participants gave a numeric current debt balance (BDT 600,000), while 18/20 described debt and continuing financial burden in broader terms.**

Indicative interview data:
'My family has been placed in a helpless situation as a result of what happened to me. They now bear the burden of repaying debts and have lost a degree of confidence in me. The family as a whole continues to face a very difficult period.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'My family is facing a severe financial crisis because I paid 5 lakh BDT to the agents, which has made it very difficult to manage our daily expenses.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'On returning home, I went straight to my family. I am now in a state of financial hardship and, rather than being able to support my family, have placed them under further financial strain. My family currently carries a significant debt burden as a result of my experience.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'The aspirations my family held for me were shattered as a result of the brokers' actions, and my family has suffered severe financial hardship.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

'I collected this money by mortgaging land, taking out NGO loans, and borrowing at high interest. Because of this, my family and I are spending our days in terrible distress.' (Research Participant - translated interview)

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – route overview by typologies (table)

Dominant documented route – all starting from Bangladesh	Cases (% share)	Typologies represented	Logistical features
Malaysia air transit	8 (40%)	Direct cyber-scam exploitation 2; scam-linked 2; abandoned 2; manual/service 2	Usually 4–18-hour airport transit, then flight to Cambodia
Thailand/Bangkok air transit	7 (35%)	Direct cyber-scam exploitation 3; scam-linked 1; manual/service 1; less coercive 2	Short air transit followed by direct arrival in Cambodia
Vietnam followed by land border	2 (10%)	Manual/service 2	Hotel stop, microbus/multiple vehicles and overland border crossing
Complex Thailand–China–Malaysia route	1 (5%)	Broker-abandoned 1	Multiple airports and unexpected deviation from promised direct travel
Direct Dhaka–Phnom Penh	1 (5%)	Direct cyber-scam exploitation 1	No international transit; broker met participant on arrival
Route internally inconsistent (recall issue)	1 (5%)	Manual/service 1	N/A – data inconsistent

Appendix 2 – Participant typologies within the wider cyber scam-compound economy (visual map)

PARTICIPANT TYPOLOGIES WITHIN THE WIDER SCAM-COMPOUND ECONOMY

Draft visual map showing position in the system, not a hierarchy of harm. Counts refer to the 20 interview cases.

CORE REVENUE-PRODUCING LAYER

Typology 1: Direct scam criminal exploitation (6/20)
Direct forced cyber-scam work; strongest convergence of sale/contracting, passport control, confinement, targets, punishment and inability to exit.

SCAM-LINKED AND COMPOUND-SUPPORT LAYER

Typology 2: Refused scam-linked labour – moved to manual/service exploitation (3/20)
Refused, avoided or were diverted from scam work, but remained exploited through cooking, construction, painting, restaurant work, broker housing or waiting.

Typology 4: Manual/service workers under labour exploitation (6/20)
Construction, masonry, painting, restaurant or related work; substituted, intermittent, unpaid or significantly underpaid, sometimes sustaining adjacent compound services.

BROKERAGE, PERIPHERAL AND OUTER-EDGE LAYER

Typology 3: Broker-abandoned and stranded migrants (3/20)
Large fees extracted but no meaningful work delivered; dependency through housing, family remittances, misinformation and irregular status.

← position in system →
from direct scam production to peripheral or less coercive migration

Typology 5: Precarious but less coercive workers (2/20)
Real work and small degree of personal agency, but high costs, status insecurity, very weak returns, debt and unresolved harm after return.

CROSS-CUTTING SYSTEM EFFECTS ACROSS TYPOLOGIES

Significant debt and financial exposure
Up-front payments and household losses cut across groups.

Control and dependency
Ranges from broker reliance to passport control and severe confinement.

Overwhelming physical and mental harm and distress
Mental distress, illness, deprivation and pain appear across pathways.

Exit without remedy
Return often depended on family and debt, disruption (e.g. law enforcement) and/or short-term support (e.g. BRAC).

Weak justice access
No participant reported filing a formal complaint.