

Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh

The Labour Migration Project *NEWS*

The Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013 passed

The Bangladesh National Parliament passed the 2013 Act (Act No. IVLIII of 2013) on 27 November 2013. The rights-based Act was drafted with technical assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO), adopting the international standards of major labour and human rights treaties ratified by Bangladesh.



Mid-term Evaluation Completed

The Mid-term Evaluation of the project was carried out by an International Consultant, Mr. Pierre Mahy over the month of October. Among other things, the evaluation aimed to review: (a) the trends and achievements of the Project by assessing to what extent the stated objectives and major outputs are being achieved; (b) the extent to which the Project is on target in identifying opportunities and strengthening activities in areas where these have been introduced; (c) draw conclusions in terms of the progress made and make recommendations for the remainder of the First Phase of the Project and future actions for the Second Phase of the Project. The consultant visited Bangladesh twice over the month to hold meetings with key stakeholders including GoB officials, implementation partners, employers and workers organizations, etc. The draft report was shared with all participating organizations in November 2013. The final report is scheduled to be completed by December 2013.



PSC Members

The Project in brief:

Objectives:

- ◆ Strengthened policy and institutional frameworks to improve migration management and the protection of migrant workers
- ◆ Improved operational efficiency and effectiveness in overseas employment promotion under protected conditions, including the reduction of migration costs
- ◆ Strengthened social protection for migrant workers available in the countries of destination and upon return.

Beneficiaries

Potential, outgoing and returning migrant workers are the ultimate project beneficiaries. Women migrant workers constitute a specific target group and are given special attention in the overall project delivery.

Main partners

- ◆ Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE)
- ◆ Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)

Other Key Partners

- ◆ Employers' organization
- ◆ Workers' organizations
- ◆ IOM
- ◆ UNWOMEN
- ◆ CSOs

Donor

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3rd Steering Committee Meeting held

The third Steering Committee meeting of the Project was held on 08 September 2013 in the conference room (Level 5) of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Probashi Kalyan Bhaban, Dhaka. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Zafar Ahmed Khan, Secretary, MEWOE.



Participants at the 3rd PSC

Consultation workshops on policy and legislative frameworks

The International Labour Organization (ILO) facilitated a day-long multistakeholder workshop on 11 July 2013 organized by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) to share the first draft of the proposed Overseas Employment Policy 2013. The workshop was attended by representatives of the civil society, migrant associations, research organizations, academics, media, legal practitioners and international organizations among others. The participants went through a thorough section-wise review, commenting on each paragraph of the draft policy.

Following the multistakeholder workshop, an inter-ministerial meeting was organized by the MEWOE on 14 July 2013 to further review the proposed draft of the Overseas Employment Policy 2013. The meeting was attended by 18 ministries, divisions and departments and was chaired by Mr. Hazarat Ali, Additional Secretary, Ministry of

Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE). The main purpose of the day-long meeting was to obtain feedback on the proposed Overseas Employment Policy 2013. Technical assistance for the meeting was provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO).



Participants at Inter-ministerial Workshop

Intergovernmental Regional Seminar on Promoting Cooperation for Safe Migration and Decent Work

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment arranged a two-day "Intergovernmental Regional Seminar for Promoting Cooperation for Safe Migration and Decent Work" from 1-2 July 2013 in Dhaka to undertake a collective analysis of the issues that affect labour migration governance of the SAARC countries with the participation of both sending and major destination countries.

The seminar was attended by representatives of Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines (also in its capacity as the Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue), Qatar, SAARC Secretariat, and Sri Lanka. The seminar created a platform (a) to exchange good practices between the countries of origin and the countries of destination, (b) to discuss how such exchanges of good practices could benefit the parties in different ways, and (c) to identify possible regional and inter-regional solutions and mechanisms to support migrant workers.

Over the two days, representatives from the above-mentioned countries engaged in reviewing needs, opportunities and scope of collaboration to enhance effective service delivery to the migrant workers from the South Asia. At the end of the seminar, they came out with 'The Dhaka Statement' which primarily addressed three key issues of labour migration: (1) effective governance of labour migration; (2) protection of migrant workers, in particular, women migrant workers, and (3) regulation of recruitment.

Following the adoption of 'The Dhaka Statement', it was agreed that all the participants will follow up with their respective governments to consider and implement in order to improve migration practices.



Participants at the Intergovernmental Regional Seminar

Comprehensive System Review of the BMET and the WEFW



FGD with women migrants

A Comprehensive System Review of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) and the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund (WEWF) has been initiated by the ILO under the Labour Migration Project. The Washington based think tank, Migration Policy Institute (MPI) was engaged to undertake the review in Bangladesh.

The primary aim of the comprehensive system review is to identify the strengths, good practices and possible areas for improvement for the BMET and the WEFW. The focus of the review is to produce practical recommendations, strategies, and technical assistance to strengthen the operation of BMET as well as the WEFW, both in the immediate and long-term and, ultimately bolster the Government of Bangladesh' capacity to protect and serve the interests of its migrants workers abroad.

In view of this, the International Labour Organization in collaboration with the Migration Policy Institute collected data, conducted desk review, interviews, focus group discussions and several other methodologies to gather adequate information to analyze operations and functioning of the BMET and the WEFW over September and October 2013. The review is scheduled to be completed by the end of December.

National Communications Strategy Divisional Consultations

With the greater aim to spread awareness of safe migration channels, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) undertook the development of a National Communications Strategy under the project "Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policies and its Application in Bangladesh". The National Strategy is being developed in collaboration with Asiatic 360 and the Government of Bangladesh and assesses the most effective mediums, messages and information to disseminate at the grassroots level to ensure that all migrant workers are aware of the safest and most beneficial channels of migration thereby reducing incidences of exploitation and abuse.

In preparation for the strategy development, a baseline assessment was completed by the team and included key informant interviews, focused group discussions, questionnaires and consultations with government officials and migrants. The consultations were held in October in the DEMO offices of Rangpur, Khulna, Sylhet, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Barisal and consisted of participants representing the GoB and civil society as well as potential and returnee migrants. The information collected during the consultations determined the number of migrants from each respective district; the common coun-

tries of destination; the popular professions of employment; the migration information sources; the awareness of GoB services; types of media exposure; and the types of communication that would be most effectively received in the district.

The consultations served as an outlet to prove and disprove any preconceived notions about the levels of awareness of migration issues around the country. It appears that the most viewed media still remains to be television and middlemen and family members are still the biggest proponents of migration at the divisional levels. Many participants admitted awareness of the GoB's services but felt that an increased capacity of the DEMO offices would encourage more participation in these services. It was also suggested that billboards, docudramas and miking be used to deliver effective migration-related messages.

The divisional consultations have proved to be an important source of information of the reality of peoples' awareness. The consultations will be followed by a national sharing workshop culminating the findings of the baseline to create a comprehensive national strategy with multi-stakeholder involvement and ownership.

Language Labs in partnership with BRAC Institute of Languages

The BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL) has partnered with the ILO and the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) to set up Language Labs in two Technical Training Centres (TTCs) in Dhaka. The two labs will primarily focus on providing English and Arabic language training to prospective migrant workers with low education levels who have no or very limited Arabic and English proficiency. Prior experience in language training has suggested that trade based language training is most effective and beneficial for this target population. Therefore, under the partnership, BIL will design modules in four trades- housekeeping (domestic work), care giving, construction work, and electrician in both English and Arabic. While majority of migrant workers from Bangladesh are known to target the Middle East, there is an increasing number of migrants going to areas where English is also prevalent, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. In view of this, training in both the languages are going to be available at the TTCs. It is expected that after the modules are developed and tested, the BIL will provide ToT to existing language trainers at the TTCs to ensure sustainability of the initiative as well as its possible replication in other parts of the country.

Workshop on the Legal Cell

In October, 2013, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) held a brainstorming session at the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment with government officials, project partners and civil society representatives to take stock of current legal services being provided by the GoB and CSOs; identify the gaps in existing services; identify the major problems faced by migrants in search of legal support; and to identify the most effective means to address these problems. The aim of the session was to identify areas for collaboration in terms of providing legal services of exploited migrant workers, under IOM's component of 'Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh.'

The brainstorming session also provided a number of recommendations on how to effectively address the legal needs of migrant workers. The participants emphasized on the need for creating awareness of the legal services offered so that migrants have greater access to those services. It was also noted that the biggest issue faced by the service providers is a lack of documentation presented by the complainant rendering the provider unable to assist the client effectively.

Following the brainstorming session, IOM has been able to identify areas for collaboration in order to synergize with existing mechanisms and strengthen government's capacity to provide legal services to migrants.

Panel Discussions on Five Studies

The ILO in collaboration with the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) and the Human Development and Research Centre (HDRC) organized five panel discussions on 10 September. The topics covered the five ongoing researches on: (1) Skills and Certification for the Bangladeshi migrant workers; (2) Cost of Migration and Recruitment for the workers; (3) Remittance contributions of the Bangladeshi migrant workers; (4) Mainstreaming Migration from Gendered perspective into the National Development Plans of Bangladesh; and (5) Bangladeshi Diaspora Contributions.

Survey of the Returning Bangladeshi Migrant Workers and Analysis of Skills and Entrepreneurship Demand in Bangladesh

The International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) and the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) has started a survey of returning Bangladeshi migrant workers.

The survey of the returning Bangladeshi migrant workers and analysis of skills and entrepreneurship demand in Bangladesh aims to bring an understanding of the scope and nature of return migration. As of now, systematic data collection about the categories, reasons, motivations, etc. behind return is lacking. It is expected that this survey will, to some extent, bridge this information gap. Such information is critical for the government to be able to make sound policy decisions. At a more immediate and practical level, it will also help understand how return migration can be better managed. In Bangladesh, the importance of labour migration has been consistently growing over the last decade. There is also a growing importance of the role that the workers who are doing well overseas or who are coming back could play in the economy of their home country.

The analysis of the skills and entrepreneurship demand in domestic economy is in recognition of the need to develop a clear direction about professional re-integration of the workers. Over the next few months, data collectors and researchers will engage with ap-



Data collectors at a briefing at BMET

proximately 1,200 returning migrant workers at the two international airports of Bangladesh. Following this, in-depth interviews will be carried out with approximately 100 workers in 10 different locations across the country.

The institutions involved in this initiative hope to develop understanding beyond the commentaries on success and despair that returning home is often seen to be. It would clarify why some workers return and why some return only to have another opportunity to move on to a new destination or the same destination. This survey, therefore, is an attempt of the policy-makers to acknowledge return migration as a major component of migratory flows and that our collective knowledge requires considerable improvement to bring out well-informed actions to support the Bangladeshi migrant workers and to boost the Bangladeshi economy.

DECENT WORK <i>A better world starts here.</i>		Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh	Funded by:  Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra
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