



# **LABOUR MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH 2012**

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

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*Aspirant migrants registering online*

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# International Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2012: Achievements and Challenges

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Globalization has opened up enormous opportunities for international migration, but, at the same time it has thrown many new challenges. It is not possible for a single participating state to address all these complex challenges. Sending countries, receiving countries and international community, all have their role to establish good governance in migration. Migration specialists argue for continuous enhancement of capabilities to cope with new challenges in global migration. Bangladesh is highly dependent on labour migration. The government and civil society of Bangladesh have initiated many steps for ensuring good governance in migration. This report highlights Bangladesh's achievements and challenges in migration sector in 2012.

## 1. MIGRATION TREND IN BANGLADESH: 2012

### 1.1 Statistics

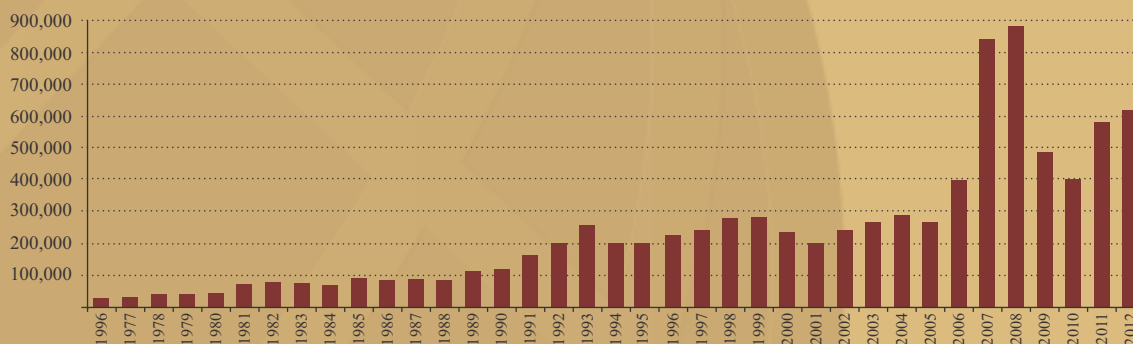
Except for a few special years, almost every year, the rate of short-term contract migration from Bangladesh has been increasing. According to BMET data, since 1976 a total of 8,307,749 migrant workers have gone abroad on work. The graph below summarizes the trend of short term contract migration form Bangladesh on yearly basis. In 2011 the total number of migrants was 5,68,062 whereas in

2012 it was 6,07,798. Compared to 2011 this year has experienced 6.99% growth in migration. Since there is no system for collecting data on returnee migrants in Bangladesh, it is difficult to figure out the total number of migrant workers currently working abroad. There is no scope to think that all the 8.3 million migrants who went abroad from 1976 till today, are currently working abroad. Compared to growth of male migration, female migration has increased more. In 2011, a total of 30,579 female migrant workers went abroad whereas in 2012 this figure has increased to 37,079. In 2012 the growth rate in female migration was 21.99%.

### 1.2 Destination Country

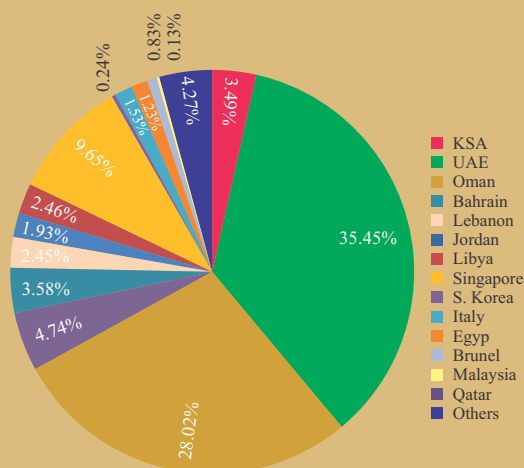
Like previous years, this year as well, most of the migrant workers had gone to UAE. But the rate in percentage is lower than that of previous year. Last year 50% workers went to UAE but this year the rate has decreased to 35.45%. This year in September, UAE government imposed sanction on receiving labour from Bangladesh. Later it imposed an embargo on traveling to UAE with visit visa. As a result migration to UAE sharply decreased since September. In last 3 months (October to December) only 1,124 workers migrated in UAE. In 2012, Oman was the second highest recipient of Bangladeshi workers. 28.02% workers had gone to Oman.

Graph A: Year-wise Overseas Employment from 1976 to 2012





**Top Destination Countries in 2012**

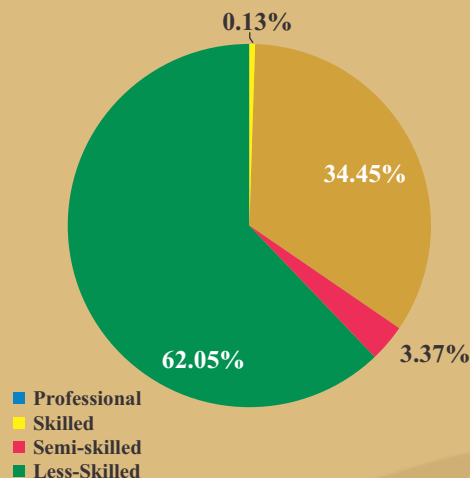


Singapore was the third highest recipient of Bangladeshi workers which has received 9.65% of total workers in 2012. Although Middle East is also the major market for female migrants but destination countries are different. For female migrants Lebanon was the highest recipient country. It received 33.50% of Bangladeshi female workers. Jordan remained as second largest (33.50%), the UAE as third (16.65%) and Mauritius as fourth (5.28%). The 2011 report of RMMRU suggested for reducing dependency on single country focused labour market. Similarly this year RMMRU suggests for exploring new markets rather than considering Malaysia as the single dominant market.

### 1.3 Skill Level

Compared to last year, the number of skilled migrants has decreased this year. Last year 40.34% of the migrants were skilled. This year, their percentage decreased to 34.45%. In 2012, the number of semi-skilled workers has increased to 62.05%. Bangladeshi male migrant workers mainly worked in construction, cleaning, agriculture and service sectors. Most of the female workers migrated as domestic workers. Beside that, they also worked in garments and other manufacturing companies and as cleaners. Only a very small

**Overseas Employment by skill category 2012**

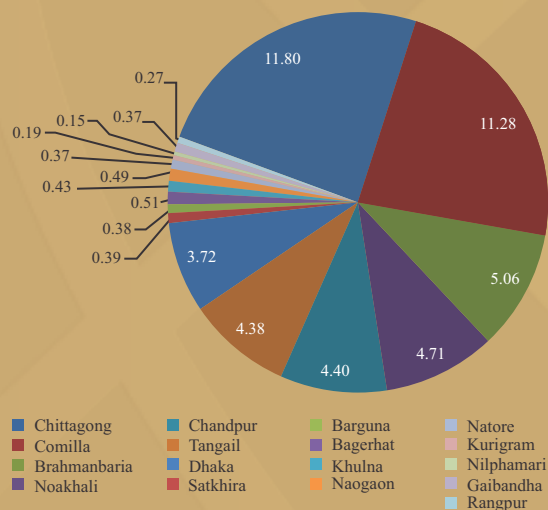


portion of Bangladeshi female workers were engaged in nursing profession.

### 1.4 Source Areas

An important feature of migration is that it takes place from certain areas on the basis of social network. Data up to December 2012 reveals that Chittagong was the main source area from where Bangladeshi migrants originate. 70,572 (11.80%) workers migrated from Chittagong. With 67,483 (11.28%)

**Source Areas**





workers, Comilla was almost at par with Chittagong. Brahmanbaria had 30,268(5.06%), Noakhali had 28,178(4.71%), Chandpur had 26,306(4.40%), Tangail had 26,228(4.38%) and Dhaka had 22,260(3.72%). Although there was a plan to increase migration from North Bengal, it is yet to be reflected in the figures. RMMRU research study suggests that internal migration is taking place from climate change affected areas. Data on BMET source areas indicate that the affected people of these areas were deprived of adopting international migration as livelihood strategy. In 2012, the rate of migration from Satkhira was 2,322 (0.39%), from Barguna 2,273 (0.38%), from Bagerhat 3,029 (0.51%), from Khulna 2,591 (0.43%), from Naogaon 2,924 (0.49%), from Natore 2,229 (0.37%), from Kurigram 1,166 (0.19%), from Nilphamari 876 (0.15%), from Gaibandha 2,209 (0.37%) and from Rangpur 1,641 (0.27%).

### 1.5 Remittance

In 2012 Bangladesh received US\$14.17 billion as remittances. Compared to last year the growth in remittance was 15.13%. This year remittance was equivalent to 10% of national income and it was more than 3 times higher than the net foreign exchange earnings of garments sector. This was 6.4 times of total foreign aid and 12.5 times of Foreign Direct

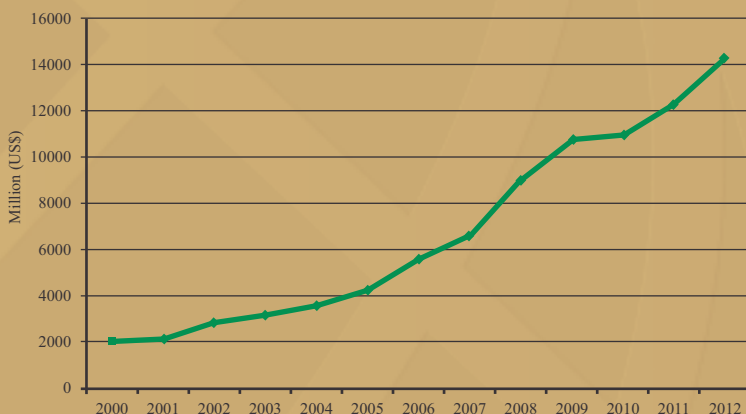
Investment (FDI) received by the country. According to recent LDC Country Report of UNCTAD, Bangladesh's remittance is almost 44% of total remittance earned by 48 least developed countries.

This year Saudi Arabia was the largest source country for remittances to Bangladesh (27%). The second highest source country for remittance was the UAE (19.10%). USA (11.65%), Kuwait (8.7%) and UK (7.86%) were the other important source countries of remittance. The flow of remittance from Malaysia had increased in last 4 years, still it was very small share compared to the number of migrant workers residing in that country. Each year 8-9% Bangladeshi workers migrate to Singapore but they send only 2.69% the rest found its way through *hundi* of remittance. The business community of Bangladesh import raw materials from Singapore and Dubai. In order to reduce tax they under invoice for their purchase. They purchase dollars in Singapore and Dubai and settle the remaining payment with that. Besides gold are also smuggled to Bangladesh. Organised *hundi* operators collect the earning of migrants through offering higher exchange rates and later selling that to business community. At the same time they deliver the money to migrants' families in local currency. *Hundi* operators also collect the remittances from Bangladeshi migrants working in Malaysia for

the Singapore market. At present Oman and Bahrain contribute only 2.45% and 3.51% of remittances respectively. Remittance transfer from these two countries can also be increased.

Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited remained in the top position in collecting remittance (27.75%). Agrani Bank (9.95%), Sonali Bank (9.89%) and Janata Bank (8.24%) are also in the list of

Year wise remittance flow 2000-2012







major conduits of remittance transfer. Beside these four, the other receiving banks who were in the list of top ten, are National Bank, Brac Bank, Uttara Bank, Southeast Bank, Pubali Bank and Prime Bank. All these banks are private banks.

### 1.6 Use of remittance

There are some mis-perceptions about use of remittance. Many think, that a large portion of remittance was spent in unproductive sectors. RMMRU's research on 2,000 returnee migrants of 4 districts in 2012 proves the perception to be wrong. Migrant families spend 22% of remittance for family maintenance. 13% of the remittances were spent for paying various loans including loan for financing migration. 9% of the remittances was spent for meeting educational expenses of children. 3% was spent for medical treatment of elderly and other persons. 6% was spent for purchasing homestead land. 14% was spent for purchasing agricultural lands, lands in market place and nearby towns. 7% remittance was spent in financing migration of other members. 3% was spent for maintenance and building of better homestead. Most importantly migrants' remittance played a crucial role in modernizing agriculture. 4% remittance was used for purchasing hybrid seeds, fertilizer, insecticide and irrigation. Migrants' family or returnee migrants spent 7% remittance in agriculture related business. They purchased shallow machine or irrigation pump and sold water to farmers. They purchased power tiller. Many of them opened shops to sell fertilizer and insecticide. Migrants' involvement was also in fish firm and poultry firm. Migrant families had invested in leasing in ponds. Some migrants (2%) were operating factories. They also invested in fish firm, spice grinding mill, flour mill, salt cultivation and manufacturing mill, weaving mill, textile and garments factory. 3% of the remittances remained as savings. Recently migrant families are opening DPS account in private banks. None of the investment products developed by the Ministry of Finance and

Bangladesh Bank such as US Dollar Bond or Premium Bond are used by the short-term migrants. Migrant families have invested 1% remittance in various types of insurance policies of Meghna Life Insurance Company, National Life Insurance Company etc. Use of the rest 6% of remittance is counted under 'others'. There is a general tendency of not respecting migrants' contribution. Lack of proper information contributes to such generalization.

### 1.7 Returnee Migrants

The general trend of short-term and contractual migration is, some will migrate and some will return after completing their contract. There is no data on how many migrants have returned on completion of work this year and how many have returned without completion of contract. 17,518 workers have returned after being deported by taking out pass up to October 2012. Due to lack of information and data on returnees and their acquired skills, no public or private sector organization can contribute to the social and economic rehabilitation of returnee migrants. It also hinders to utilize their skills. As of today there is no government job portal for them which contain information on the returnee migrant.

### 1.8 Complaints

In case of fraud, BMET receives complaints from migrants in two ways, through online ([www.ovijogbmet.org](http://www.ovijogbmet.org)) and through manual complaints at BMET. Up to November 2012, only 27 online complaints have been lodged whereas 429 have been lodged in person. Combining these two only 456 complaints were lodged in 2012. 12 online and 183 in person complaints were settled through BMET arbitration. 273 complaints were under process. This year 45 in person complaints were rejected on the ground of absence of necessary papers. However, no online complaint has been rejected. This year, 11 online complainants helped recover a total of



*Aspirant migrants registering online at in union information centers to go to Malaysia under G2G*

Tk. 5,29,000 and manual complaint helped recovery of Tk. 1,44,11,000. In the first nine months of 2012, RMMRU helped the migrants to recover a total of Tk. 23,75,000 through local dispute settlements in 21 Unions of Bangladesh. It appears that not all the complaints published in newspapers reach the BMET office. In that case the awareness programmes focusing on the opportunities for registering complaints should be increased. This year a major development has taken place in complaint management system of BMET. Earlier migrants could not take any representative to the BMET organized hearings. BMET has changed this system upon RMMRU's suggestion. If a complainant wants, his/her representative may be present at the time of hearing from now on.

## **2. IMPORTANT ISSUES OF 2012**

### **2.1 Malaysia-Bangladesh G2G Memorandum**

Signing G2G memorandum of understanding was the most important achievement of the

Bangladesh government this year. On 26 November a memorandum was signed between Bangladesh and Malaysia after a long diplomatic effort. Under this memorandum, Malaysia will receive workers from Bangladesh in its plantation, agriculture, manufacturing, construction and service sectors. In the first phase, 30,000 male workers will get jobs in plantation sector.

To qualify for working in plantation, one must have experience in agriculture and should belong to the age group of 18 to 45 years. He should at least be 5 feet tall and be able to carry a weight up to 25 kgs. The Ministry has fixed the cost of migration to a maximum of BDT40,000. In plantation sector, the minimum wage has been settled as Malaysian Ringgit 900 which is equivalent to BDT25,000. As per the job contract, workers have to work 8 hours per day and 6 days a week. Potential migrants will have to apply online. Once they are selected, their information will be verified in 13 TTCs of BMET. The Government of Bangladesh claims that the government of Malaysia will take responsibility once the worker reach Malaysia.



In sending workers some tasks need to be performed at the destination point. Government should formulate a work plan and ensure service at destination.

Prior experiences indicate that compared to other sectors jobs in the plantation sector are very demanding and salaries are also lower. In that case, there remains the possibility of workers quitting the assigned jobs for other better paid jobs. The Government must decide now how the liability would be borne. The migrants should be made aware of their liability prior to their journeys. "Security Bond" may be kept that will be refunded to the migrants with interest upon successful completion of job. If a migrant worker leaves his assigned job, then the bond will enable the government to pay for the loss of employer from this security money. Security bond can help the migrant resettle himself upon return. A returnee migrant can use this money along with interest in creating a livelihood. In G2G memorandum there is no specific provision on female migration. We think that there are opportunities in manufacturing sector for female migrants. There should be a detailed work plan for ensuring women's participation in the labour market of Malaysia.

## **2.2 Irregular Migration to Malaysia by the Sea from Teknaf**

In 2012, irregular migration to Malaysia from Bangladesh and Burma using sea routes from Teknaf has become an important challenge for the Government of Bangladesh. There are many aspirant migrants originating from Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Akiyab of Burma and from Teknaf, Cox's Bazar and greater Chittagong districts of Bangladesh who intend to go to Malaysia through help of local intermediaries (dalal). Although this route has been in operation for long, it is during the June of 2012 that the propensity to migrate through this route increased manifold. It is assumed that the prospect of opening of Malaysian labour market and the Malaysian government's regularization scheme 2011 of undocumented

workers have largely encouraged this trend of irregular migration. Cargo carrying engine boats were used to transfer the migrants from Shahpori Island of Teknaf to Malaysia. Press reports indicate that half of these people were Rohingyas and half were Bangladeshis. Migrants usually spent BDT25,000 to BDT50,000 for going to Malaysia through this route and paid Malaysian Ringgit1,200 to 1,850 to Malaysian government through local intermediaries as levy for availing job. A few entrepreneurs in Shahpori Island, has transformed human smuggling into a profitable business. Due to courageous reporting of some journalists, the Government can easily trace these individuals. But as yet no formal action has been taken against them. Attempt to enter Malaysia by boat using sea route is a risky journey. In last 6-8 months 8-10 incidents of sinking of trawlers have been reported in the media. Many migrants have been apprehended by the Coast Guards and Bangladesh navy. These boats have a capacity of carrying 30 to 60 persons, but they carry 100 to 150 persons. Some of these boats sank in the high seas. Dead bodies of some migrants were found and others got swept into the sea while only a section could be rescued.

The government and civil society should launch awareness campaign to stop such unnecessary casualties. It is also necessary to arrange exemplary punishment for these human smugglers under trafficking laws. Opportunities of migration from Bangladesh through formal channel would surely decrease the flow through this route. Nonetheless, members of Rohingya community will continue to participate in such desperate journeys if their citizenship is not reinstated and international pressure is not exerted to stop their persecution and exploitation in Myanmar.

Many labour receiving countries have linked irregular migration as one of the main reasons for not taking workers from Bangladesh. They have asked for stern action against the





*Thwarting irregular migration from Teknaf to Malaysia*

facilitators of irregular flows. So far, no visible action has been taken against the human smugglers of Teknaf by the Ministry of Home Affairs in spite of information about the active gangs that are operational in Teknaf-Malaysia route.

### **2.3 Hajj Flight operation in 2012 and Lack of Responsibility to Migrants**

This year Civil Aviation Authority has set an example of lack of responsibility towards the migrant workers. In early September this year, to carry Hajj pilgrims the Bangladesh Biman cancelled 50 of its flights without prior notice. According to different newspapers, since 10 September around 5,000 passengers had to change the schedule of departure for organizing the travel of hajj pilgrims. Unfortunately most of these passengers were migrant workers. Many of them were supposed to return to their country of work

after spending holidays. Moreover, newly appointed migrant workers required to report to their employer in destination country within a stipulated time. Otherwise their visas would get cancelled. Many could not join their work even after one week to ten days of end of holidays and expiry dates of visa. Press reports inform that the affected workers requested for a letter from Civil Aviation Authority, that would explain the reasons behind the delayed journey. This, they felt, was necessary evidence for the genuineness of the reasons for delay. But the Civil Aviation Authority has been alleged to have refused to issue any such letter. It has also been reported that the authorities did not bear the hotel and travel expenses of the affected migrant passengers. Ultimately the poor migrants had to bear the burden and paid the cost for the mismanagement of Hajj flights by the concerned authorities of government. RMMRU feels that the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment should take



*Majority Bangladeshi migrants work in the constructions sector*

an active role in this kind of situation to protect the interest of migrants.

#### **2.4 Rohingya Asylum Seekers and Bangladeshi Migrants**

For quite sometime, different quarters of the governments have made claims that Rohingya refugees are taking up employment in the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries by forging Bangladeshi passports. The Chair of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) stated that Rohingyas had made use of a section of the 28,000 Bangladeshi passports that were stolen from the government offices to go abroad. While Saudi Arabia government accused some Bangladeshi workers of engaging in criminal activities, Bangladesh government pointed fingers at the Rohingyas. This year when an attempt was made to know the measures that Bangladesh government took on the decision of beheading of two Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia, the

government claimed that they were Rohingyas and thus the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment did not have any role. Recent studies on Rohingyas conducted by RMMRU find that Bangladeshi workers who go to Saudi Arabia and Malaysia as irregular migrant workers, if apprehended by the authorities there, they claim themselves to be Rohingyas. Considering the persecution of Rohingyas in their own country the Malaysian authorities treat the Rohingyas with leniency and allow them to work. The Bangladeshi irregular migrants on the other hand, if apprehended, are put into jail. Under this circumstances, Bangladeshi irregular migrants declare themselves as Rohingyas when the police arrest them. The same is true of Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia.

Considering these, RMMRU prescribes that instead of securitizing the issue of Rohingya refugees, Bangladesh should take thoughtful



action so that the problem does not transform into a real security crisis. The Government of Bangladesh should provide asylum to the Rohingyas who cross the border and enter in Bangladesh under fear of persecution. Refugee status would refrain them from integrating with ordinary Bangladeshis and government will be able to distinguish them easily.

Instead of putting the blame on Rohingyas and delaying intervention, the government of Bangladesh should seek Saudi government assistance in finding those against whom criminal charges or aspersions are made in the Saudi media. Such concrete steps will help the process of re-entry in the Saudi market.

### **3. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

#### **3.1 Migration and Overseas Employment Act**

In order to bring changes in the Overseas Employment Ordinance 1982 Bangladesh Government encouraged cooperation of civil society. A committee formed by RMMRU under the leadership of Dr. Sumaiya Khair and Dr. Shahdeen Malik of RMMRU with representatives from the Ministry of EWOE drafted the “Migration and Overseas Employment Law” and submitted to the Ministry in June 2011. After re-assessing the law on the basis of Ministry's comments RMMRU re-drafted it and submitted it to the Honourable Minister in the first week of December in 2012. Re-examination of the law by the Ministry under the technical support of International Labour Organization (ILO) is currently under way.

The Law has been drafted considering the UN Convention on Migrant Workers, 1990. The main features of this new law are: revision of the provision of filing case against fraudulence. Current ordinance only allowed filing of cases only in 4 divisional special courts. According to the new law, a migrant worker has the right to file cases in any civil or

criminal court if government fails to take legal action within a stipulated time. Enough time has passed after drafting the Migration and Overseas Employment Law. We strongly demand for presenting the law in the national parliament in right earnest.

#### **3.2 ILO Domestic Workers Convention 2011**

On 16 June 2012 International Labour Organization (ILO) passed the Convention on “Decent Work for domestic Workers”. The Government of Bangladesh was present in the UN meeting. To uphold the rights of female migrants the Government of Bangladesh undertaken many steps, which include market exploration, trainings etc. With a view to ensure safety, security and rights of female migrants the government should ratify this convention without further delay.

#### **3.3 Dhaka Principles**

This year the most important achievement in the area of institutional reform, is the attempt of making business and industry responsible towards protecting the rights of migrants. The business sector can play an important role in this respect. Instead of limiting their responsibilities within the confines of factory premises, entrepreneurs can ensure fair and decent treatment of migrants, starting from recruitment process, treatment in the receiving country and upon return to the country of origin. In order to encourage private sector to take proactive role, RMMRU and UK-based Institute of Human Rights and Business (IHRB) have framed an international guideline on the rights of migrant workers which is called the “Dhaka Principles”. This set of principles have been developed on the basis of UN Guidelines on Business and Human Rights and ILO Conventions. The Dhaka Principles has already received support of global business, trade union and civil society organizations.





## 4. SERVICE PROVIDING ORGANIZATIONS FOR MIGRANTS

### 4.1 Wage Earners Welfare Fund

In 1990, the Government of Bangladesh established the Wage Earners Welfare Fund. The fund was created with the contributions of migrant workers, interest on registration fees of recruiting agencies and attestation and welfare fees obtained from foreign missions. According to the rules framed in 2002 a board of directors operates this fund. Each year, a substantive amount of resources are generated from this fund. Probashi Kallyan Bank was established with resources from this fund. Creating “Wage Earners Welfare Fund” has received recognition from international organisations as an innovative policy of Bangladesh government. It is observed that government is using this fund to meet some of government's operational costs of migration governance. That means this fund is being used on areas where the government is supposed to spend from its own budget. Costs for many activities such as online registration of potential migrants, finger print, smart card facility, setting up welfare desk at airports, sanctioning budgets for embassies or missions, recruitment of labour officers in some embassies are now being financed from this fund. Reviewing the activities it appears that only the task of bringing in dead bodies of migrants from destination countries and providing financial support to the family of deceased workers comply with the operational guidelines of this fund. To ensure direct benefits to the migrant workers, use of this fund should be more transparent. The cost of regular activities for migration governance should be borne by the government through regular budgetary allocation. The Wage Earners' Welfare Board should include migrants representation.

### 4.2 Recruiting Agency

According to BMET data, at present there are

846 recruiting agencies in Bangladesh. This year 52 new recruiting agencies have secured license and 10 recruiting agencies have lost validity of their license. However, the recruiting agencies which have already lost their license are still functioning on the basis of stay order issued by the High Court. This year one witnesses a gap between the government and the recruiting agencies. Accountability of the recruitment sector has to be ensured; at the same time any gap that may exist between the authorities and recruiting agencies should be bridged. Both the government and the recruiting agencies should work hard to create a congenial environment to facilitate movement of workers in dignity.

### 4.3 Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) - Expatriates' Welfare Bank

Expatriates' Welfare Bank (PKB) has been established to work in three areas: collecting remittance, offering migration loan and granting rehabilitation loan. Among these, offering of migration finance loan has started with vigour. Up to November 2012 PKB has issued migration loan of Tk.9,50,00,000 in favour of 1,229 migrants. The rate of loan recovery by PKB was 95%. Till date, PKB has opened 22 branch offices.

PKB has an operating capital of Tk 100 crores. 95% of this is constituted from the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund. Head and Branch officers are getting salary from this capital. It is very difficult to raise PKB's own income source by disbursing loan at 9% interest rate. This bank's original operating capital may get dissipated in meeting its administrative costs. We suggest that the government allocates a further amount of Tk. 100 crore as recognition of its responsibility to migrant workers.

The bank is yet to show success in providing investment loans. In 2012 this bank has issued rehabilitation loan worth Tk 40,00,000 to 30 returnee migrants. The rate of recovery on rehabilitation loan is 100%. Interest rate is 11%. This is lower than other banks. The





*House keeping training manual of RMMRU, "Information Guide Book for Departing Women Migrants"*

Government provided incentives to foreign currency earning garments industry. It has not provided any such incentives to the remittance sending migrant workers. We demand for incentives in the form of 3% interest payment if any remittance sender (in legal way) takes investment loan from PKB. The current Board of Directors of PKB does not have persons with substantive experience in banking. RMMRU believes that this bank can benefit immensely if retired CEOs of public or private banks are taken on the board.

#### **4.4 The government at the grassroots level: District Manpower and Employment Offices**

To provide services to migrants at the grassroots there are 42 DEMO offices of BMET. As per the 2010 Circular the DEMO's functions include registration of aspirant and returnee migrants, disseminating information on overseas employment, assist in securing

bank services, arrange funeral services and compensation for deceased migrants, investigate complaints, publicity and coordination and registering cases in Special Courts.

Unfortunately, DEMOs do not have budgetary allocation to carry out the above tasks. They mainly function in facilitating return of bodies of deceased migrants. This year DEMO officers were given orientation to provide services to the migrants who would be going to Malaysia. Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet DEMOs are being used by BMET in conducting finger printing.

#### **4.5 Human Resources Development and TTCs of BMET**

There are 38 Technical Training Centres (TTCs) operating under BMET. Among these 12 are operated under revenue budget and the rest 26 are under development budget. Another 35 new training centres are being constructed. In 2011, 65,569 trainees have availed training in 48 trade



*Bangladeshi migrants in the service sector in Qatar*

courses. Some of these courses are: plumbing and pipe-fitting, welding, civil construction, electrical maintenance, garments, carpentry, refrigeration, marine engineering ship building etc. This year, a 2 years HSC technical course has been introduced.

In last 2 years, under its 'skill development and job linking programme' RMMRU provided training scholarship to more than 200 young aspirant migrants, both male and female, through different government and non-government training centres like Comilla TTC, Chittagong TTC, Tangail TTC, Greenland Training Centre and Montage Training and Certification Centre. RMMRU is finding it difficult to link these trained workers with overseas jobs. Nature of current recruitment process, standard of training, lack of opportunity for apprentice system, work

against placing these workers in international job market. Pay scale of local job markets, (construction sector, garments sector) also do not suit those who received training. A major evaluation needs to be conducted on the TTCs. 40% of the vacant teaching positions should be filled immediately. Most importantly all the TTCs should be brought under the revenue budget.

#### **4.6 Labour Attachés**

At present Bangladesh has 16 labour wings in 14 countries. A total of 24 labour attachés are engaged in these wings as Counselor, First Secretary (labour) and Second Secretary (labour). Three of them are employed in each of the missions in Jeddah, Riyadh and Kuala Lumpur and 2 officials are employed in each mission of Oman and Iraq. A total of 81 officials including administrative officers,



personal officers and other staffs manage these labour wings.

Bangladeshi female workers are employed in large numbers in Lebanon, Jordan and Mauritius. In Jordan a female officer is engaged as first secretary (labour). Till now there is no labour wing in Lebanon and Mauritius. The Government has declared to open 21 news labour wings and create 150 new posts. The proposal is placed before the Ministry of Finance. It is logical to expect that the operating costs of these posts will be borne from the revenue budget of government. Currently remuneration of 16 labour officers and 16 welfare officers are being borne by the Wage Earner Welfare Fund. Remuneration of Welfare Officers based in USA, Canada and Australia are being paid through welfare fund maintained by the contributions of labour migrants. This shows virtual absence of migrants' voice in government decision-making process.

For many years RMMRU and few other organizations have been questioning the recruitment process of Labour Attachés and demanding to introduce a separate cadre service for this ministry. In this regard a resolution has been taken by the Parliamentary Standing Committee. But as yet no step has been taken to revise the existing recruitment system.

#### **4.7 Role of Civil Society in Migration Governance**

Government's attention in securing good governance in migration sector began due to demands from civil society. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have been working on this issue since 1997. It is the CSO of Bangladesh that has experimented with innovative programmes such as research, training and information dissemination and later the Government has replicated those in large scale. At the district level, RMMRU, WARBE DF, BRAC, BOMSA, OKUP and IMA have collectively trained 20,019 aspirant

migrants. The trainings include pre-departure training, 21 day long skills and awareness training, skill development training etc. these organizations also run awareness programmes in several parts of the country. RMMRU, WARBE and OKUP are engaged in providing direct services and policy advocacy along with awareness programmes. IMA provides legal support to the migrant workers especially to those who work or returned from Malaysia.

To remove fraudulence from migration this year BRAC has recovered Tk. 33,00,000 through arbitration to 178 deceived migrants and RMMRU has recovered Tk. 23,75,000. This year WARBE DF performed the role of advisor to GFMD 2012.

Moreover, the civil society organizations of Bangladesh are playing proactive role in international arena. As partners of Migrants Forum in Asia (MFA) they have participated in World Social Forum 2012. In this forum a session on "climate change and migration" was jointly organized by La via Campacia, Focus on Global South and RMMRU. This year RMMRU, WARBE, ACD and Ain o Salish Kendro with the assistance of MFA organized a 2-day consultation meeting in Dhaka for including the issue of stranded, irregular and women migrants in the UN High Level Dialogue.

Among the development partners, the Manusher Jonno Foundation has been providing financial and other assistance to many local and national civil society organizations since 2006. In order to combat human trafficking and encourage regular migration through training Winrock International is providing economic assistance to some civil society organizations.

#### **4.8 The role of international civil society for the rights of female migrants**

This year international civil society played an important role in achieving rights of a few Bangladeshi women migrant workers. Participation of female workers in formal





manufacturing sector is considered to be safer than domestic work. Still there remain risks of sexual harassment. In Jordan, 3,000 Bangladeshi women work in a manufacturing company named “Classic Fashion”. With the assistance of Institute of Global Labour and Human Rights a Bangladeshi female worker has taken legal action against an employee of this company. Classic Fashion is one of the biggest garments companies in Jordan which supplies 13% of total garments export to USA from Jordan. Institute of Global Labour and Human Rights has been successful in receiving commitment from US buyers such as Walmart and Macy's that these multinationals would not accept products of Classic Fashions if it fails to bring the perpetrator before law.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The above discussions bring to the fore that in 2012 the outward flow of migrants increased by 5 percent and the flow of remittance increased by 16 percent over the previous year. The growth rate of female migration was double compared to men. This year a government-to-government memorandum of understanding was signed with Malaysia. It is expected that in the next few years around 300,000 Bangladeshis will be employed in Malaysia on the basis of this G to G. The Institute of Human Rights and Business, UK and RMMRU have jointly launched the historic Dhaka Principles on 'Migration with Dignity'. This declaration has provided the guidelines for the employers and recruiters, including multinational companies to be respectful to migrant workers' rights at all stages of migration. A few pioneering research have been conducted this year. One of these researches demonstrates, remittance contributes in a major way in agricultural development through ensuring capital flow. Another study has shown that from climate change affected areas migration of one or two family members is being used as an adaptation strategy.

At the same time challenges in governance of migration are many. These challenges at one level include shrinking of labour market in the UAE, failure to re-access potential markets in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar and weakness of single country-focused labour market etc. at another level it requires concrete steps of the Ministry of Home Affairs to stop irregular migration to Malaysia from Teknaf by sea route.

To face these challenges, like last year this year also we demand for declaring the next decade as the “decade of migration”. We also demand for treating migration as a sector by itself in the 10 year Perspective Plan and Vision-2020. “Opening bank account before migration” should be made a pre-requisite for BMET clearance. Government should stop using resources from Wage Earners' Welfare Fund for executing its routine administrative costs. The daily operational activities such as registration, finger printing, salary of labour and social welfare officers posted in embassies should be borne from the government's revenue budget. We also recommend for launching of a separate cadre service under this ministry. We demand for bringing all TTCs under government revenue budget. We urge the government for providing 3% interest as an incentive to the banks against investment loans to migrant families and returnee migrants. A job portal of returnees is the need of the hour for providing assistance in rehabilitation of the returnees. Investment instruments should be developed for encouraging the small but frequent remitters. Finally, we urge the government not to mix up labour migration issue with the Rohingya issue. We also urge for taking steps to set up procedures for status determination of the Rohingya asylum-seekers as that would reduce the scope of Rohingyas taking up Bangladeshi identity.



# RMMRU ANNOUNCES

## Third Biennial Shonar Manush Shommanona and Remittance Festival September 2013

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In 2012 RMMRU imparted pre-decision, pre-departure and skill development trainings to 2972 migrant workers

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