BANGLADESH
PROMOTING
SAFE MIGRATION
In the last few years, increased remittance flow has been contributing to the economic development of Bangladesh. Remittances, migration and development are interrelated as they are all relevant to the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development (World Bank, 2010). Compared to other countries of South Asia, Bangladesh has fared relatively well in two out of the five indicators in the Migration Governance Index 2016, released by the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) of the reputed publication ‘The Economist’. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina has taken a number of steps to ensure safe, orderly, regular, and responsible migration.

The Awami League government has declared the labour migration sector as a ‘thrust sector’. Therefore, government and civil society of Bangladesh have initiated many steps for ensuring good governance in labour migration within and beyond South Asia. It has played a significant role in dealing with refugee issues as well by working in cooperation with relevant international agencies.

**Global Compact on Migration**

Bangladesh, a pioneer of sharing the idea of ‘Global Compact on Migration’, broadly focuses on safe, regular and orderly migration. As the current chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), Bangladesh has adopted certain measures to ensure safer migration. Mr. Mohammed Abdiker, Director for Operations and Emergencies (DOE) of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), mentioned that, IOM has taken such initiatives to settle a global forum on migration on the basis of HPM Sheikh Hasina’s suggestion in the recent United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) summit, under this attempt for the first time UN will form a framework, where countries will uphold necessary steps regarding rights and protection of migrants.
BANGLADESH’S ACHIEVEMENTS IN MIGRATION

16 labour wings in 14 countries with 24 labour attachés engaged as counselors

Migration health facilities broadened, such as insurance

Smart Card initiated for labour migrants

More training institutions for skilled and semi-skilled labour

Set up labor market research cell under Ministry

Successful MOUs with Kuwait, Jordan, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Iraq & Malaysia

Accelerated remittance management and banking

Financial assistance up to $4000 to family members of deceased migrants

42 BMET offices set up to provide services to migrants at the grassroots level

STEPS TAKEN FOR SAFE AND EFFECTIVE OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT

Expansion Of Labor Market

The Middle East is a major destination for Bangladeshi workers. The recent political unrest in the region has caused a decrease in the number of migrant laborers. In this scenario, Bangladesh is exploring new labor markets to stabilize the remittance inflow. The current Awami League government has recently signed a deal with Malaysia to export labor under government management as well as private recruiting agencies. Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment has already set up a labour market research cell. These steps resulted in the expansion of Bangladesh’s labour market to 63 countries including Hong Kong, Jordan, Angola, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Canada, Sweden, and South Africa.

Exporting Labor Through G2G

Current Awami League government has taken up several initiatives for promoting overseas work and thereby encourage legal and sustainable outward migration:

The government is sending housemaids to Jordan free of cost. The employer has to bear the travelling cost as well as the living cost of the laborer.

Processes are undergoing to send women laborers to Jordan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East.

The government is sending workers to South Korea at a cost of only US$ 865.
Expatriates' Welfare Bank
The present Awami League government has opened a specialized bank in 2011, ‘Expatriates' Welfare Bank’, to help those who are willing to work abroad and those who seek new employment abroad after returning from one. The bank has disbursed US$ 5.3 million as migration loan and US$ 190,000 as rehabilitation loan in 2015.

Welfare of Overseas Workers
The government is ensuring complete assistance for the workers whoever fall in distress in the employing countries. These assistances range from support in sending workers abroad safely to support in bringing the deceased migrant workers home. The government also ensures that the families of the deceased workers are compensated by the employers.

Immigration Modernization
To put a stop to the harassment of migrant workers by the recruiting agencies and eliminate the influence of middlemen, current Awami League government has initiated registering information including the biometric data of the workers on a database. Smart card has been introduced for providing immigration certificate using the database.

Reducing Migration Costs
The government has introduced “Overseas Employment and Migration Law, 2013” to ensure transparency and accountability of the recruiting agencies and to reduce the cost of migration. This law has provisions for imprisonment and fine for the crooked recruiting agencies or those who charge an illegally high price for migration. In addition, Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 has been formulated, modernizing the policy of 2006.
Prime minister Sheikh Hasina mentioned in an article written for Project Syndicate, that migration is a multidimensional issue and it requires a comprehensive approach which is respectable to existing national laws and regulations. Bangladesh has promoted such migration policies which can reconcile any conflicting situations within proper institutional and legal frameworks by effective migration governance and already has achieved landmark appreciation in home and abroad as regards labour migration.

**MIGRATION GOVERNANCE**

**Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment:** For the welfare of the expatriate workers and enhancement of overseas employment this ministry is working with a principle of equal opportunity for the people of all areas of the country.

**Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET):** It provides institutional training through Technical Training Centers, emigration clearance to the migrant workers, maintaining computer database network for the migrant workers, and regulate and monitor licenses of Recruiting Agencies.

**Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd (BOESL):** BOESL is the only state-owned manpower exporting company in Bangladesh. Its main objective is to explore new labor markets and to ensure safe labor migration with minimum cost.

**POLICY MEASURES FOR MIGRATION**

Three triggering facts working behind the migration policy concerns, namely: prevent illegal migration and facilitate safe migration, welfare of overseas workers and strict management of trafficking issues. Potential contribution of migration in development perspectives has been acknowledged by many national policies and planning.

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<th>7th Five Year Plan 2016-21</th>
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REMITTANCE INFLOW AND WORKERS ABROAD
TILL SEPTEMBER, 2016

ENCOURAGING REMITTANCE INFLOW

In 2015-16, Bangladesh earned almost $15 billion from incoming remittances.

- 27 microfinance institutions and Bangladesh Post Office for sending remittance.

1,100 foreign exchange houses drawing systems in operation

- Reduced money transfer fee and exchange rate margin

- Approval to 24 commercial banks to distribute remittances through mobile operators

34 foreign exchange houses of Bangladeshi Commercial banks abroad

- Reduced time-frame of 2 to 3 days in remittance distribution

- 3 NRB banks

REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh became a refugee-hosting country in 1992 by accepting Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. According to data from the United Nations Refugees Agency (UNHCR) updated till June 2016, the country currently hosts 32,984 documented Rohingyas living in two camps in the coastal city of Cox’s Bazar and another 300,000 to 500,000 undocumented ones outside. The practices of the country, vis-a-vis refugees, was recently lauded by the Country Chief of the UNHCR Stina Ljungdell who expressed satisfaction over the state of refugees in Bangladesh, saying it was among countries having the “best practices” (6 June 2016).

Bangladesh is currently also hosting thousands of stranded Pakistanis, also known as ‘Biharis’ in several designated areas in the country. In 2008, a landmark Supreme Court decision granted nationality to almost 300,000 Urdu-speaking minorities. A large percentage of adults from this population were registered to vote in the 2009 election.