

SYNTHESIS PAPER ON THE STUDIES OF LABOUR MIGRATION PROCESS IN BANGLADESH

“Properly managed migration can contribute to prosperity, development and mutual understanding among people. IOM exists to help migrants with all their needs and to assist governments in managing migration for the good of all”

- Brunson McKinley, Director General of IOM

Introduction

The movement of people within and across geographical or political frontiers has been an enduring component of human civilization. People have constantly dispersed under compulsion or voluntarily, either to escape from life threatening situations or in search of better livelihood. These movements have contributed to enriching societies and benefiting the economies of both origin and destination countries. Globalization has made migration more complex as a growing number of people are migrating in search of better living conditions, employment, education and freedom, safety from persecution or violence.

There are currently about 185 million people living outside their country of birth. The changing geopolitical as well as the economic landscapes and emergence of “knowledge-economy” in the 21st century is likely to enhance movement of people. It is predicted that the total number of international migrants will approach 250 million by the year 2050. The profound changes in scope, nature and structure of global financial trade and commerce in the WTO centric trading regime would influence the dynamics and forms of migration. The relationship between globally mobile trade and capital and territorially tied labour are likely to become more complex in future.

The increased volume and pace of migration, in combination with forces of globalization, will pose challenges to management of migration, particularly for the labour-originating developing countries. The future challenges are likely to be more complex as the current phase of globalization seems to be contributing to the widening of inequalities between the rich and the poor. Despite the huge potential of trade to create global wealth, the existing trade regime has rather had a limited impact on distribution of wealth between the developed and the developing countries. It is now argued that international mobility help increase wealth of nations and in reducing poverty and inequality in developing nations. The global output is expected to increase if people are free to move across the planet, particularly from areas of lower labour productivity to areas of higher productivity. According to Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen, trade along with migration can help to break the

dominance of rampant poverty. A recent Commonwealth study suggests that if quotas are fixed within the WTO member countries by an amount equal to 3% of developed countries' labour forces, there will be an increase in world welfare of US Dollar 156 billion per year.

International migration has moved beyond humanitarian concern, drawing interest of academicians and policy makers world-wide. In the "age of migration", a thorough understanding of the migration and development nexus is essential for better governance of migration. It is becoming one of the main forces reshaping present day state governance and management of the inter-state relations. Migration has multi-dimensional impacts on its broad spectrum : economic, political, social, security, health and culture both in the originating and destination countries. Migratory patterns demand greater importance and innovativeness on the part of governments to effectively manage labour migration process. It entails a wide range of measures and close cooperation both within and between governments.

Review of Labour Migration Situation in Bangladesh

The international migration of labour has also emerged lately as one of the most important issues in the development discourse in Bangladesh. The gradual increase in migration abroad in late 1970s brought the issue at the center-stage of policy debate. It is now considered as one of the central components of economic policy planning in a labour originating country.

Bangladesh is a huge labour surplus country and belongs to the supply side of the world labour market. The trend of migration of present day Bangladesh could be traced to the beginning of the 20th century. Pressure on land, famine, drought and flood, rapid population growth and depletion of resources through plunder by colonial powers "pushed" the people of Bengal to the neighboring areas. History of present day migration dates back to early 1940s when Bengal crew of the British merchant ships used to land in British ports and settle in UK. By mid '70s Bangladeshi labourers began migrating in large numbers to countries in the Middle East. Subsequently, employment opportunities opened for Bangladeshis in other countries of Asia, America, Europe, etc.

Although there is lack of accurate and aggregated data on migration from Bangladesh and no data are available on returnees back to Bangladesh, gross official figures indicate that between 1976 to 2002 (July) some 3.24 million Bangladeshis have left the country for overseas employment. The current annual average flow of migrant workers is estimated to be 200,000. In addition, a large number of Bangladeshis go abroad undocumented and are not recorded in any statistical record. It is estimated that the foreign employment currently constitutes about 5% of the country's labour force. The labour force of Bangladesh working

abroad is mainly made up of unskilled and semi-skilled male labourers. In 2001, the professionals were only 3% of the migrants' work force against 58% of unskilled workers, 16% of semi-skilled workers and 23% of skilled workers. The flow of official remittances in Bangladesh between 1976 and 2002 (July) has been estimated to be US\$ 23.7 billion. These figures represent the amount of remittances officially recorded by the Bangladesh Bank. It is believed that an equal amount is brought through unofficial channels. The remittances not only make a significant contribution towards GNP but also helps offsetting negative balance of payments by providing about 30% of the export earnings and also 20% of the import payments. Remittances by the migrant workers constitute 30% of the country's national savings.

Over the last few decades, the labour market conditions in the region have changed considerably. New sources of supply such as Nepal and Vietnam have emerged, resulting in increased competition and lowering standards of labour-migration policies, which is detrimental to the migrants' rights and welfare. The current situation has pushed wages down, by as much as 50% in some sectors of employment, especially in the Middle East labour-receiving countries. The labour market in South East Asia, which was previously expanding rapidly, also suffered from the economic crisis that swept the region, resulting in a considerable reduction of foreign employment opportunities. Malaysia, for example, has seen the flow of Bangladeshi migrant workers reduced from 152,844 in 1997 to 551 in 1998 (source BMET). Meanwhile, some labour exporting countries, such as Sri Lanka and the Philippines, have changed their policies or developed better mechanisms to face competition as an answer to the new labour market realities and to ensure the protection and welfare of their migrant workers.

Bangladesh, like other labour originating countries, has two goals. namely (i) maximization of labour migration, and (ii) ensuring protection and welfare of the migrant workers abroad. Overseas employment as an industry is governed by the same law of supply and demand as one of business. But this is more of a demand-driven market and is, therefore, inherently biased in favour of labour-receiving countries. This typically means that the labour-receiving countries, more often than not, dictate the terms and conditions of employment, and can literally and figuratively act as the master of the worksheet. And in a highly competitive global market, foreign principals have the luxury of forum shopping to achieve the best deal for their money.

There are two key actors in the labour migration process- the labour-sending and the labour-receiving countries. Thus, it follows that any sort of action by one actor demands a response from the other in order to keep the equation balanced. In this respect, it can be said that without the corresponding and reciprocal efforts from labour-receiving countries, labour-sending countries can only hope to mitigate the negative effects of overseas employment on its workers. This is a reality because of

circumstances that are stacked against the worker and which cannot be ignored. These realities are not necessarily inherently bad or detrimental to the migrant workers' interests, but when taken together and put in the context of the migration process, they become major factors that inhibit the formulation of appropriate and effective remedies to migration problems.

In order to initiate a strengthening process for labour migration, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) commissioned a set of studies under the project "Strengthening the Labour Migration Process in Bangladesh" with financial support of UNDP. The same was undertaken for better understanding of migration dynamics in Bangladesh and for identification of areas which need to be strengthened for effective management of international migration. It was also intended to help in developing a comprehensive and integrated "Plan of Action" to provide the government with policies and legal instruments to develop a labour migration policy and to protect the rights of Bangladeshi migrants. The studies are:

1. Recruitment and Placement of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers: An Evaluation of the Process
2. A study on Remittance Inflows and Utilization
3. Are Migrants chasing the "Golden Deer"? A Study on Cost-Benefit Analysis of Overseas Migration by the Bangladesh Labour.
4. Contribution of Returnees: An analytical survey of Post Return Experience
5. The International Labour Migration Institutions of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka in Ferment: The Philippines as Catalyst

The studies were conducted by national consultants except the last one which was conducted by an international consultant. The major findings, conclusions and recommendations of these Studies are highlighted below.

Recruitment and Placement of Labour: *[Recruitment and Placement of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers: An Evaluation of the Process by Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit, RMMRU]*

The recruitment process is a complex one. It involves, firstly, a number of persons, institutions and agencies. These may be government, private, local or foreign. Secondly the whole process is often channeled by a host of intermediaries; some official and formal, while others clandestine and dubious. Finally, at least at the formal level, there are rules and regulations, implementing and overseeing authorities and bodies, further complicating the recruitment process.

As revealed by the study despite importance of international migration for the economy, this sector has not attracted appropriate attention of policy makers and

planning and implementing agencies of the country. This lack of attention is reflected in sheer paucity of literature on migrant workers. The lack of interest may have partially been caused by constant 'negative' reporting in the media. A report about Bangladeshi workers abroad almost invariably refers to their illegal status or deportation.

In Bangladesh, the recruitment process is more or less privatized. That is, the recruitment of migrant workers is in the hands of private recruiting agents. More than 700 registered recruiting agents are responsible for recruitment of about 250,000 migrant workers. However, a small number of them dominate the market. This means that majority of agents have hardly any business. The study revealed that in the absence of any information-base or ability to appraise future trends of employment pattern or apprehend the current state of affairs vis-à-vis job market in migrant receiving countries, the recruitment agencies are dependent on 'chance business' and 'favours' bestowed upon them by relatives, friends and others in migrant-receiving countries. The knowledge and understanding of the recruiting agents, regarding major economic development trends in migrant-receiving countries, is not adequate. This makes it difficult for them to plan investments through expansion of their business. The agencies go for maximizing their profit at any cost because of the fact that the 'normal turnover', in terms of the number of migrant workers sent abroad by any single agency, is not high enough to ensure sufficient profit.

The agencies of the Government of Bangladesh dealing with migrant workers are (i) the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) and the Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), a newly created ministry from out of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) also plays a role to the extent that Labour Attaches of the MEWOE function as outfits of MFA.

The BMET is responsible to ensure that all activities related to terms and conditions of employment of a migrant worker is regulated by it. Every migrant worker should get clearance from BMET before s/he is allowed to leave the country. The Bureau further monitors the task of the recruiting agencies and is responsible for the Technical Training Centers (which are likely to be controlled by the MOLE).

The picture that emerges from the findings of the survey and discussions with the recruiting agents is that the migrant sector does not have much assistance and support from the government, for example support. The migrant workers gather information on jobs abroad from private sources, mostly arranged through own funding through friends and relatives, does not have any contact with the official agencies prior to migrating for work and, most important of all does not have much or any training to prepare them for their jobs abroad. The government's involvement in budgetary terms is also meager, with an allocation of only Taka 30

crore for the fiscal year (2000-2001). For a sector, generating almost 8,000 crore Taka in 1999, such a small allocation is a clear indication of the inadequacy of appreciation of the government of its correct role the migrant sector plays for the national economy.

The study identifies transparency and accountability as the two most important aspects of the migration process. Transparency in terms of payments, necessary terms and conditions of employment abroad, remittance, etc., could have been ensured through involvement of financial institutions, like banks and NGOs providing credit. As the survey indicates, all migrant- workers need loan to pay for the expenses of their migration process. These expenses are met through loans from friends/relatives “dalas” (touts), or by selling fixed assets. Involvement of organised financial institutions would go a long way in ensuring that documentation necessary for migration are not left to the recruiting agents alone. This will ensure proper verification of document to reduce illegality. Although, those who want to travel as ‘tourists’ and overstay their status to find jobs in the ‘underground’ economy may not be deterred by such a process. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of migrant-workers would surely welcome access to ‘official’ sources of credit. Obviously, financial institutions would make their own decisions, but the institutions, particularly, credit-NGOs, should explore the option of financing migrant workers which they may do profitably. IOM, along with BAIRA, BMET and other organisations involved in the migration process, can initiate a dialogue to work out the modalities of NGO involvement.

Information about the migration process, conditions of work and other terms and conditions are not readily available and hence most of the migrant workers take recourse to private and often unreliable sources of information. Again, institutional involvement in providing information is almost non-existent, except briefing sessions by BMET. The requirement of attending these briefing sessions is often flouted and this needs to be looked into by BMET. The expertise of NGOs can be utilized, at least on an experimental basis, for an initial limited information campaign, to facilitate later on a more informative migration process.

The following recommendations came out of the PMMRU study :

- ◆ In consideration of importance of the sector to the national economy, migration-friendly policy interventions by the government of Bangladesh (GoB) are needed, rather than making regulatory interventions that hinder/ delay migration outflow. For example, the current procedure of doing everything with Ministry's approval may be revised to allow delegation of authority to appropriate levels in the hierarchy. The infrastructure of training institutions may be improved, and a more functionally independent management system for running training institutions may be streamlined to facilitate their effectiveness and output.

- ◆ Establishment of a Data Bank/ Documentation Centre is a great necessity. The DB/DC will collect information on :
 - demand-side of migrant labour, eg. information on upcoming major projects in migrant receiving countries through economic counsellor/Lbour attache offices, demand and sources of supply of migrant labour, requirement in migrant receiving countries of specific skills by level/ number, etc, and forecast of such requirement in a time frame.
 - supply side of migrant labour in Bangladesh, eg. skill development/ training institutions with their capacity/skill level demand-wise by level/number, and potential of skill development, desired capacity level for supplying migrant labour in accordance with present/future demand in present and potential migrant-receiving countries, etc.
 - regulation of migrant-receiving countries with regard to valid legal documents for allowing entry to migrant-labour, etc.
- ◆ The Data Bank/ Documentation Centre may be established in the BMET or in the BAIRA or in Migrant Workers' Association or in any NGO/private company, but having network with all other stake-holders/users. For the purpose, technical assistance may be provided by a Development Partner (eg. IOM). One of the ToR for TA may be to link the Data Bank/ Documentation Centre of the ILO/IOM/ Migrant receiving countries. Training will have to be provided to users of Data Bank/Documentation Centre.
- ◆ A regulatory framework should be devised/strengthened to curb the opportunity of unscrupulous persons to profit at the expense of the unwary and eager migrant worker. The current procedure whereunder BMET is both an accuser and a judge of the activities of recruiting agents surely needs change. The legal provision that only BMET may file cases in the Labour Court regarding offences under the Emigration Ordinance needs to be amended. This restriction on filing cases by BMET only fosters corruption and makes the victim helpless as he cannot resort to the judicial process without the involvement of BMET. Restructuring of BMET with re-distribution of regularity and the service aspects is an important area of intervention.
- ◆ Promotion and protection of migrant workers should now be made the focal point/issue of any regulatory framework and change/amendment of the Ordinance has by now certainly become overdue. The Emigration Ordinance, 1982, is for regulation of the migration process and not for promotion and protection of the migrant workers' rights. Recent changes in the law and regulatory framework of migration in similarly situated migrant-producing countries such as, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, etc. can be studied as an example

for formulating changes to Bangladesh law regime. Information about the migrants and the migration process generated over the last few years will surely facilitate law reform for this sector.

- ◆ **BOESL's** present role and contribution are far from being ideal or model or even workable. Combining service and regulatory functions in BMET is another issue for re-consideration. In the backdrop of almost 700 private recruiting agencies chasing for jobs of limited market with vast supply of migrant workers, a much higher per capita cost (per migrant sent abroad). is required to be investigated into.
- ◆ **It is necessary to find out best-use of Migrant Workers' Welfare Fund** for which purpose a status on competing demands and uses of the Fund can be made and assessment of options for more useful and better utilization (eg. financing migrant workers for getting a job or rehabilitating a returnee migrant) of the Fund can be made for actual welfare of migrant workers.

Remittances and their Use: [A study on Remittance Inflows and Utilization by KAS Murshid, Kazi Iqbal, Meherun Ahmed of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, BIDS]

Migrant remittances represent most direct positive impact of migration on migrant-sending countries. Its impacts on development is complex and to some extent, a controversial issue. The study reveals that most migrant workers send remittances to their family on a regular basis. In Bangladesh, there is little literature available on the impact of remittances on the overall economy. The study reported that the growth of remittances has not always been steady. It climbed from TK. 866 million in 1977 to TK. 15,684 million in 1982. After a temporary slump, it picked up again from 1985. A growth of nearly 17% was noticed in remittance inflow between 1996-97 and 1997-98 (from US\$ 964 million to US\$ 1125 million) and the ratio of remittances to GDP was 7% in 1998-99. The remittances accounted for about 43% of the development budget thereby playing a critical role in maintaining balance of trade deficits – a kind of “precarious balance”, as observed in the study.

The study, using the standard Keynesian macro-economic model, attempted to determine the impacts of remittance on the Bangladesh economy. It revealed that the remittance multiplier depends positively on the marginal propensity to consume and invest and relatively on marginal propensity to import. It also revealed that remittance induced consumption gradually increased over the years. as against, remittance-induced-imports declining in recent years. However, it has been noticed that remittance induced private investments increased during the period.

The positive effects of remittances could be further developed by promoting the use of official channels to remit the foreign earnings. Opportunities and possibilities

should also be created to reallocate both remittances and the skills of the returning migrant workers. Most of the migrant workers had planned to start some small business after their return home. Before they left the country, skills gained in their absence from the country, could have helped them to reach that goal, but the investment climate has not been congenial. Information is needed on potential investment opportunities, loan and banking facilities and sources of technical assistance for those willing to develop a micro-enterprise. Even the combination of skills and good intentions have not been enough to sustain their long-term plans.

The study also carried out a field survey to inquire into the process and mechanism for channeling remittances. A household survey of those families which have members working abroad was carried out in Sylhet, Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla and Dhaka Districts. It has been found that families of returning migrants had the highest land ownership while the current migrant households have the least. In case of non-land assets, however, would-be migrant households are relatively better off than the current or return migrant groups.

The findings also suggest that migrant households do not belong to the poorer groups in rural society. In the process of migration and returning home, considerable sale and repurchase of land takes place but other assets are not involved in the transaction. Most households try hard to regain assets lost on the way but success is not ensured.

The study also examined the channels for remittance flow. There are two ways migrants send their remittance, one official (through demand draft, telegraphic transfer and postal orders) and the other unofficial with the help of the *hundi* system (a method that bypasses the banking system to transfer money or goods through friends, relatives or trusted agents). It seems that lack of information both in Bangladesh and abroad and access to formal channels in receiving countries, contribute to a rather high involvement of the *hundi* system in sending remittances of Bangladeshi migrant workers. Especially for those working in more remote areas it is difficult to open an account and make a regular deposit. The study pointed out that the level of pre-departure information regarding the official system of remittance and its advantages was very inadequate among the would-be-migrants.

The study concluded that the unofficial system has the following advantages over the official system:

- ◆ In the case of *hundi*, the rate of exchange is usually higher than the official exchange rate.
- ◆ The migrants do not have to go to the banks (transportation cost saved) or pay any commission or drafts.
- ◆ As a large number of the migrants are illiterate, they want to avoid paper formalities in remitting the money.

- ◆ Quick delivery of money is ensured.
- ◆ Migrants in illegal situation avoid the banks for fear of getting detected.
- ◆ Banking documents may get lost.
- ◆ Banking services in Bangladesh are poor and unpopular and that makes transactions through banks unpopular.

Recommendations:

The study concluded that remittances had a strong, positive impact on GNP, and consumption, while low impact on investment and imports. In order to improve official remittance flows and ensure its productive use, the study recommended the following:

- ◆ **Information and Awareness:** Widespread (awareness building) campaign is required to be made to inform migrants about the existing facilities and opportunities for sending money, investing in savings instruments or in other productive areas. These have to be conducted by relevant institutions, such as BMET, in partnership with recruiting agencies and NGOs. A systematic effort should be made to provide **pre-departure orientation or briefings** as well as the undertaking of other motivational work.
- ◆ **Creation of New Opportunities:** In addition to the existing facilities and investment opportunities, new innovative methods need to be created. These should take into account the attitude and expectation of the migrants, geographical areas within Bangladesh where they come from, and their financial and entrepreneurial capabilities. New financial products and mechanisms for channeling remittances currently introduced by NCBs and multi-national banks should be expedited. Financial institutions should recumbent the service strategy to enable to provide better, to serve this market and to address areas that are not being adequately served. In particular, instruments are required to mobilize families with relatively small savings, including provision of better rates and rapid access. It is also important to devise incentives to attract the savings of the better-off segments of migrants.

The financial system should look carefully at the prospect of attracting remittances from the white collar workers, as for example from the USA. Although this market is small in terms of the number of workers, it is not insignificant in terms of potential volumes. An appropriate incentive package would go a long way in attracting their savings back home. The much-publicized Sonali Bond is a step in the right direction. Special attention needs to be given to migrants' families of Chittagong and Sylhet, where “*hundis*” tend to be more popular.

- ◆ **Government Initiatives:** The existing fiscal rules of the government are remittance-friendly to the extent that remittances are not taxed or baggage rules are generous. However, there remains considerable governance problems - harassment by customs, police and *mastans* which must be stopped. The desk at ZIA is supposed to assist returnees; but in practice it is not reportedly doing a good job. This desk must be adequately staffed and efficiently run.

The government also should encourage investment in Bangladesh by wage-earners staying abroad. Some of the ways in which the smaller savers can be brought into the scene may be through directed sale of shares of de-nationalized industries, formation of a Wage-earners' Bank and sale of dollar-bonds in designated markets. For the bulk of the recipients, the main problem is the relatively small size of savings which may best be mobilized by NGOs. A programme of savings mobilization of remittance earners, training and skill-development may be a good way to encourage productive investment, especially in small and medium enterprises. There is a strong potential demand for such investments that could benefit immensely from appropriate training of return migrants, in such areas as management, accounting, technology and marketing.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Labour Migration: [Are Migrants chasing the “Golden Deer”? A Study on Cost-Benefit Analysis of Overseas Migration by the Bangladesh Labour by Rita Afsar, Mohammad Yunus, ABM Shamsul Islam of (BIDS)]

There is a highly ambivalent feeling about benefits and costs of migration of workers especially to the Middle East. Some have eulogized migration because of its beneficial impact through remittances, but others have criticized that migration results in ‘cosmetic economic development’ and ‘remittances are detrimental to the long-term prospects of economic development’. But there is not much systematic study on cost-benefit analysis of labour migration in Bangladesh. The study aimed at addressing the crucial question as to whether migrants are chasing the 'golden deer' and at kind of policies needed to protect the interests of the migrant labourers.

This trend in human capital generated significant financial flows in the form of remittances to Bangladesh. Based on official statistics, Bangladesh earned a total of Tk. 625-672 billion as remittance from the nationals working abroad during financial years 1977-99. The remittances by Bangladeshi migrants have become a valuable and inexpensive source of foreign exchange available for economic development of the country. Migration of workers also helped in reducing the unemployment rate, which is one of the major problems of Bangladesh.

The study applied triangulation of methods using multistage sampling techniques since population covered under the study is scattered over widely dispersed geographical area and there is no frame or list readily available for sampling. Eighty-

five Bangladeshi migrant workers including seven female workers of the garments sector were surveyed in United Arab Emirates (UAE) along with 15 employers. Also 105 randomly selected migrant households were surveyed from three thanas viz. Fatikchari, Keraniganj, and Chatkhil.

In UAE Bangladeshi expatriates constitute nearly a tenth of the total expatriate population and they are employed in the municipality, formal services sector, informal services sector, construction, manufacturing and industries, small business, etc. Bangladeshis are the third largest workforce after the Indians and the Pakistanis.

The study conducted in the UAE show that the visa- fee along with a one way ticket should not cost more than Taka 15,000 and Taka 17,000 respectively. The average amount being paid by the respondent was Taka 76,500. This amount is much more than the charges regulated by the GoB, which is set at a maximum of Taka 50,000. One explanation is that the majority of the migrant workers are ill informed and can rather easily be deceived by the agents. In the pretext of service charges for visa, tickets and contract they were charged such exorbitant rates by the private agencies in the absence of strong monitoring mechanism. Due to widespread ignorance and lack of initiative by the official recruiting agencies, a large part of these costs appear to have been expropriated by unscrupulous agents in collusion with the overseas employers and sometimes by the Bangladeshi diplomatic mission.

As the cost for migration is high, the migrants often had to sell their assets like land or other valuables and borrowed money in order to pay the charges. Again there is network of relatives and friends which provide the necessary amount needed for the cost of migration. But a considerable amount is also raised through moneylenders and /or dalals. Formal institutions like banks or NGOs generally do not lend money to finance overseas migration. Their involvement could have certainly reduced some of the unscrupulous activities of agents / dalals. The inclusion of these institutes would make the migration process more accountable, transparent and formal. On the basis of the direct benefits and costs the inflow of remittances from migration appeared to have yielded a benefit-cost ratio (BC Ratio) of 2.88. The way they sent it is through a bank demand draft. Unlike white-collar professionals, who often choose *hundi* as a way to transfer their money, skilled and unskilled labour rely on official banks for remitting their hard earned income.

The study estimated the average gross monthly income of migrant- workers in UAE at around US \$ 288.48. Among the lowest income earners are the female garment factory workers, male private agricultural workers, carton pickers and those without any fixed job. Moreover, wage rate is the lowest for the garment factory workers compared to even unskilled workers of other sectors. On an average, around 30% of their overseas income is spent for self-maintenance and 45% is sent as remittances.

Remaining portion of their income is kept as security money to meet emergency requirements both at home or abroad.

Generally, companies in UAE provide accommodation, food and treatment facilities to their employees. Big companies and the formal sector provide accommodation to their employees in the labour camps at the outskirts of the city. The bulk of the employees of the big and small companies, ranging between two-thirds and 100 per cent, get free accommodation from their employers. Majority of the construction sector labours and those who run business and involved in part-time work do not get such facility.

Unlike accommodation, the responsibility for food largely lies with the workers/employees. This is reflected clearly in their expenditure pattern. With the exception of formal and informal sector employees and small business owners, migrants working in all other sectors spend 43 per cent of their monthly income on food.

Like food, the cost of treatment is largely borne by the migrants. Big companies and municipalities do provide medical facilities but that is limited to medical check up in public hospitals or by the company's doctor. It seldom covers the cost of medicine and pathological tests. Thus, the bulk of the workers do not have access to the company- provided medical facilities, and those who had such access enjoy only partial coverage. They spend around 5 per cent of their income to procure health care services but it varies greatly across different occupational groups.

Drinking water is a big problem for many workers working and living in Ajman. From the running tap water they often get saline water, which is not suitable for drinking. As an alternative arrangement, the management buys drinking water or provide mineral water but often the quantity supplied is too little to quench their thirst. The situation however is the worst in the case of private agricultural workers. They live alone or with 2/3 other farm boys in the middle of the desert, far away from human habitat where they have to cook and do everything alone. In many cases they neither have proper drinking water and sanitation facilities and the small room in which they live becomes too hot in summer. Excessive heat at workplace, especially at the construction site or private or public agricultural fields, semi-pucca type of vegetable and fruit markets that operate in open space covered with tent and corrugated iron (CI) sheets on the top leads to heat stroke and other types of diseases. Even the formal sector employees are not immune from accidental hazards.

In general, living conditions of the migrant workers reflected lack of consistency between the standard practice and actual entitlement. Such inconsistency occurs mainly because a large majority of migrant workers were not given any written contract before migration. Survey data also reflect that nearly 90 per cent of workers

were not aware about the labour laws of UAE and more than 80 per cent did not have any idea about the Bangladesh Embassy.

Bangladeshi workers are also cheated in terms of their nature of job and entitlements. Nearly two-thirds of the workers did not have their contract prior to migration. Among those who heard or saw their contracts prior to migration, nearly half of them found discrepancy between the actual wage and working conditions and those stipulated in the contract. Bangladesh Embassies receive plenty of such complaints. However, if the worker is not recruited by a corporate sector and s/he fails to produce adequate evidence of discrepancy, s/he is not covered under existing legal protection of the host country. In this process, a large number of workers with low income, skill and educational background who made their passage to UAE through relatives, friends and private recruiting agencies remained outside legal protection.

From the migrants' point of view, international migration enhances the chance of their better earnings in the host countries due to wage differential between the sending and the host countries. Empirical findings of the study indicate significant changes in the status of the underprivileged groups. Nearly two-thirds of the workers perceived that migration has ensured a self-sufficient status to them and their families. More than a tenth of them also reported enhancement of their social status.

Average size of the remittances sent is estimated at Taka 6527.10 per month or US\$ 128 and it varies greatly in their expenditure pattern and types of liability at destination. Duration of migration exerts strong positive influence on the size of remittances which is found statistically significant. A typical migrant appeared to have remitted a total of Tk. 267 thousand during the period of migration. A comparison of the level of annual household income indicates that migration has increased the level of household income by 55 percent. While non-agricultural wages and salary, agricultural produce, and small business were the principal sources of annual household income before migration, remittances contributed around two-thirds of the annual household income after migration. A comparison of the level of household expenditures indirectly shows that annual household expenditures of the migrant households increased by 22 percent. Migration has enabled these families to increase the level of household surplus to a respectable level of Tk. 25 thousands annually. While the share of household expenditure on food and other necessities declined marginally, the same on luxuries and other supernumerary items increased at the margin.

Migrant households experienced enormous expansion of their income base during the post migration period. Currently a fifth of the migrant households have monthly income between Taka 20,000 and 30,000 compared to a solitary household prior to migration of the respondents. Expansion of income base leads to a dramatic

improvement of the household's poverty situation. The total land holdings seem to have increased by around 3 percent after migration. While the migrant family seems to have sold out some of the agricultural land, they have increased the area of village homestead land.

Using head count index (HCI), the study estimates that 21 per cent of the migrant households were moderately poor prior to overseas migration by the respondents. In the post-migration period the proportion of such households slashed down dramatically to seven per cent. The study also observed that it takes around four years to send remittances that can help keep the household out of poverty threshold if it is dependent solely on the respondents' remittances.

Analysis of non-economic cost of migration revealed significant increase in the female's work burden. The study shows almost negligible participation of women in the labour force and it is important to study whether international migration is likely to reduce women's economic activities and enhance their household burdens. Another adverse social consequence of international migration is the family problem. Nearly a quarter of respondents surveyed in UAE reported family problems of which conjugal relations and child related problems featured most prominently.

Analysis on social benefits of international migration reveals that, most importantly, migrants relieve unemployment and underemployment at origin. Remittances appear to increase migrants' households capacity to bear the greater burden of unemployed members and education of active age members than ordinary rural households. Concentration of student population in the sample households is higher than the general pattern found among rural households.

Paradoxically unemployment rate among the active male members of migrant households is worked out at around 10% which is much higher than their age-cohorts in rural areas, and a reverse pattern is observed in the case of female members. Had overseas migration not occurred it might not have been very difficult to say that the sample household could not afford either to finance the education of such a large number of members or to keep them as unemployed or housewives.

Remittances promote development through increased material and human capital investment. The study shows that from zero level of savings, respondents now save a quarter of their overseas income beside remittances. Apart from that, their investment on health and education of family members, the two major indicators of human capital has increased significantly compared to the pre-migration level.

While analysing the issue of migrants' fallback and reintegration after return it was found that nearly 90 per cent of the respondents' wanted to return to Bangladesh and start business on their return. However, materializing their future plan in fact depends on their savings and asset base. Here it is important to note that most of the migrants

channeled the bulk of their income through family members' account as they do not have bank accounts in their own name in their areas of origin.

Despite the weaknesses of the recall biases, household data on use of remittances reveal clearly that more than 80% of the households had productive or profitable assets to bank on after their migration. Average value of assets is estimated at US\$ 2704.91 after discounting for the investment on unproductive sectors such as loan repayment, marriage ceremony, medical expenses, and conspicuous consumption goods like clothes, electrical gadgets, etc.

It is interesting to note the consistency between the above estimate and respondents subjective perception of their situation would not have been possible had migration not occurred. Four out of five of them perceived worsening of their situation had migration not occurred to them. Pre-migration conditions and post-migration entitlements influence the gains of migration.

On broader social impacts of remittances, there are strong arguments on both positive and negative sides. However, in the ultimate analysis it would depend among others on the types of government policies and migrants' ability as well as the supportive base.

The study also concluded that on one hand, private recruiting agencies are considered as "necessary evils" because they opened the door of overseas employment for the poor and unskilled labours who were not covered by official agencies. On the other hand, corruption related to work permit and visa fee are so wide-spread and deep rooted that legislative measures alone are not likely to succeed to deal with them.

The study finally concluded that migrants are not chasing the "golden deer" especially in terms of material gains. Migration has enabled the migrant households at origin to increase the level of household surplus to a respectable level of Taka 25 thousands annually. Moreover, migrant households are marked by better human resources development than an ordinary rural household as borne out from empirical data on expenditure pattern and enrolment rate. After the first few years they are capable of sending remittances that alone can keep a family above poverty threshold.

The report recommended the following:

- ◆ Expand the profit margin of official recruiting agencies up to taka 25,000 provided they serve as the links between employers and unskilled and/or semi-skilled workers.

- ◆ Staff and officials of Bangladeshi Mission in GCC countries should have non-renewable tenure for not more than three years to minimize the scope of corruption.
- ◆ A high-powered audit body should be formed with the representatives of National Board of Revenue, Bangladesh Bank, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Expatriate Welfare Overseas Employment and Representative of Auditor and Controller General's office to audit the income and expenditure of private recruiting agencies and BMET's licensing practices after every three years.
- ◆ 42 District Employment and Manpower Office (DEMO) of BMET should be reorganised to have members of local NGOs and representatives from returnee migrants who should give necessary information about labour laws of the Middle-East and workers' rights, entitlements and necessary steps to be taken prior to migration.
- ◆ “Help Window” at the Zia International Airport, should be opened in collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Employment and Ministry of Expatriate Welfare Overseas Employment for Bangladeshi labours going abroad to check their visa status, contracts and more importantly to save them from undue harassment at the airport.
- ◆ System of registration after their arrival at destination should be set with the Bangladeshi Mission which could deploy few staff at Dubai and Abu Dhabi International Airport and other points of entry in host countries in order to help the labourers to meet the formalities and registration. They should have easy access to those missions and to Labour Attaché and their wellbeing should get the highest priority. In this context regular inspection of particularly garment factories by labour attaché and the deployment of a lawyer on a regular basis to deal efficiently with litigation cases are some of the steps to be undertaken on urgent basis.
- ◆ In the bi-lateral agreement of labour export, Bangladeshi government must emphasize on legal protection for labourers working in the non-corporate sector; particularly in the context of tough working conditions of the private construction and agricultural workers which reportedly lead to high morbidity, mortality and even suicide, the government must demand the right to inspection and legal protection of those labourers. Workers or their family's entitlement to insurance against accident or injury and death during work should also be ensured at the time of such agreement.

There has been a general absence of a concrete policy framework for facilitating re-integration of the returnee migrant workers in Bangladesh. More importantly, there hardly exists any understanding or reliable information on existing integration process of the returnees. In that sense, re-integration and rehabilitation of returnee migrants is perhaps the least explored area in the migration literature of Bangladesh.

The study attempted to make a preliminary enquiry into this area. It assumed that in the absence of any formal support mechanism, the returnee migrant workers find it very difficult to reintegrate with the society and economy. However, the capital and skills brought by returnee migrants may not be put to effective use for national development. Given the paucity of secondary information the study relied more on the generation of primary data at two levels: a field based survey of randomly selected 200 returnee households at four locations of Bangladesh and detailed interview with government functionaries, leading members of private sector and banking institutions and migrant support associations.

It was found that majority of workers under study migrated when they were young and spent the most productive years of their life in host countries. More than half their number migrated for the first time between the age of 25-35 years. About 90 percent of the migrants had some educational background and their average family size was 6-7. The average family income of the respondents at Tk 10,455 suggest that the returnee belonged to relatively financially stable families. It was found that about 25% of the returnees went overseas for more than once and on an average they had spent 5-39 years in the host country. The field survey indicated that majority of the migrants (78 percent) went to the Middle-eastern countries with only 1 percent going to the west. On an average, the returnees spent 4.21 years in the home country following their return.

Most of the returnees did not have any specific idea about their rehabilitation plan. The bulk of the remittance of the returnee migrants was used by their families in their absence and very little amount is left for their economic rehabilitation. Only a small portion of the remittance was used for productive purposes. Returnee migrants also faced enormous pressure to part with resources that they still possessed.

The process of reintegration of the returnee migrants with the mainstream society and economy proved to be very difficult. A host of problems were identified by the returnee migrants. These include, lack of information on current business trends, advisory service and job opportunity, etc. Families of large number of migrants had used up the bulk of the remittance and very little was left aside for them to use on return. In that context, access to formal credit has become a major need of the returnees.

The study also dealt with social problems that returnees face. Their relatives and friends consider them to be the fortunate ones and make constant demands on

them. Almost 50 percent of the returnees were approached for financial support, and there had been other forms of pressure on them.

The returnee migrants did take various measures for their economic reintegration. These include, exploring employment opportunities in government, private and NGO sectors. But absence of contact with mainstream social forces hindered such opportunities and made them look for self employment opportunities. Only a small fraction went into manufacturing. Though more than 40 percent reported that they got involved in some form of economic activities or the other within a year of their return, a large proportion of them were not satisfied with their involvement.

With regard to planning their reintegration, 62.5 percent of the returnees had intended before their departure for home of setting up small businesses on return. Those who possessed skill wanted to set up service stores to make use of their skills, while some others wanted to be involved in some form of transport business. Only a handful of returnees considered investing in manufacturing or getting involved in agriculture. Quite a few of the them considered migrating abroad once again.

With regard to the issue of resource accumulation, the researchers considered these types of sources, namely remittance, cash and other assets brought along and skills acquired. It was found that it took less than a year for the returnees to recover the cost of the first migration. Interviewees informed that on an average 80 percent of their total surplus income was remitted to their families and the rest was brought along with them. However, the bulk of the remittance was spent to meet some of their day to day expenditure, health, education and loan repayment, a portion was spent on savings, income generation activities and land purchase.

Although the total amount of money brought along was much less than the amount remitted by migrant workers, this money was used relatively better. A significant portion of the amount was channeled into non-farm income generation activities. Rate of savings was higher from the amount brought along than the amount remitted to the family. However, expenditure on social account was higher from the money brought along compared to the amount remitted. That the returnee migrants did not plan their return well was also evident from the fact that very few had brought any baggage item that could be used in their income generating activities.

With regard to skills it was found that a large number of migrant workers acquired/developed their skills while staying abroad. However, on return a large number of them were engaged in occupations that did not have any link with the skill they had acquired. There was hardly any correlation between the nature of their employment at home and abroad.

Most of the returnee migrants stated that an enabling environment had to be created. This included improvement in law and order situation, controlling of extortion, access

to business information, access to credit and technical assistance. A section of returnees wanted the facilitation of links between their skills and employment opportunities. Others suggested reorientation trainings and trainings in organisation and business management, keeping accounts and marketing. A good number reported that they would prefer to migrate again and expected the government to facilitate such a process. There were also suggestions that migrant associations should be strengthened to provide services to the returnees.

The researchers argued that plans for return and reintegration should begin much before the actual repatriation process itself. It found that there hardly existed any advisory service or information channel to help migrants plan their return. This information gap exists both in the host and home countries. The study further established the fact that there was an absence of formal initiative to harness the specialised skills that are acquired by the migrant workers while working abroad. Government, private and non-government sectors were all very poorly equipped to provide reintegration assistance to the returnee migrants. BMET was hardly concerned with the reintegration process. BAIRA, the most important institution from the private sector involved in the labour migration process, has also remained oblivious to the problems of returnee migrants. The recent decision by government to mobilise part of the Wage Earner's Welfare Fund for helping the reintegration process is a step in the right direction.

The initiatives of civil society organisations have also been rather weak and limited. The mainstream development NGOs and trade unions are yet to bring the issue of migrant workers in their organisational agenda. However, a number of legal aid, human rights and migrant workers associations have begun working on migrant workers issue, including return migrants. An interesting finding of the study has been the efforts of the migrants themselves trying to explore opportunities for their reintegration in the economic realm of the home country. The study also documented major success of a forward looking private bank in harnessing the resource of migrant workers and in providing them guidance and effective alternative to mobilise their savings through the official channel.

The report concluded that for effective reintegration of the returnees, there was need for business support and creation of enabling environment, improvement in law and order situation, controlling of extortion, access to business information, access to credit and technical assistance.

The researchers are of the opinion that reintegration of return migrant workers should be linked with development of a well-defined reintegration programme with a well designed plan of action. Reintegration should be conceptualised as a process that begins in the receiving countries much before the actual return of the migrant worker.

The following recommendations are important :

- ◆ **Access to Information on Investment:** While abroad, information on potential investment opportunities, loan and banking facilities and sources of technical assistance for developing micro- or small enterprise development should be made available to the potential returnees. Information on job vacancies and relocation placement assistance should also be made available.
- ◆ **Mobilization of Savings:** The migrants should be encouraged to retain a section of their income so that they can have it at their disposal when they eventually return. An alternative to formal banking arrangement has to be organised to encourage the migrants in the host country as the migrants sometimes face difficulty to keep money in traditional banks (like AMC in the Philippines). A pilot project can be initiated for mobilization of savings by a Bangladeshi organisation or NGO. In case of restriction on the operation of such NGO in the host country, a program may be initiated following the Filipino model in Singapore, where migrant assistance is provided by the NGOs under the auspices of the Filipino embassy in Singapore. Bangladeshi NGOs may be approached to consider taking up this type of challenging programme that would help reintegration of Bangladeshi migrants. Savings programme in the host country will be followed through arrangement of transfer of savings at the time of departure of a migrant worker to Bangladesh. The services of NGOs can be extended after the return of the migrant workers in the form of technical assistance, advice and accessing credit. The gamut of services may be developed into a package and if pilot projects prove to be successful then this may be taken up on a large scale.

Considering the view that a major portion of remittance is sent through unofficial channel causing loss to the state, the government should consider providing special incentives to promote official flow of remittance. This may include special interest rates for the money sent through official channels.

- ◆ **Database:** There is an urgent need for the development of a database of returnee migrant- workers. The database can be developed by BMET. A project may be developed for implementation under the statistics division of BMET. Under present situation the migrant workers do not get in touch with BMET after their return. If they are to be made interested to get in touch with BMET for registering their particulars in the Database, then an attractive incentive package has to be developed for the returnees. This may include linkage with formal banking sector and credit agencies for soft loans, land allotment on soft terms, stipend programs for the returnee migrant's children, insurance scheme and providing loan from the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund.

- ◆ **Government Subsidy:** Following earlier examples for boosting private sector industrial development, the government should consider underwriting certain percentage of loans granted to projects of returnee migrants provided by commercial banks. In case of failure of such projects, the government could bear the loss proportionate to the percentage underwritten. This needs to be a confidential arrangement between the bank and the government. Such an arrangement would encourage the banks to provide financial support to schemes developed by returnee migrants in their efforts to reintegrate.
- ◆ **Welfare Fund:** The Wage Earners' Welfare Fund is a contributory fund of migrant workers. The resources of the Fund could be spent on different reintegration programmes including providing soft term credit opportunities to the returnee migrants. An important issue is the participation of returnee migrants in the management of the Fund. Such participation is likely to increase the opportunity of the quality use of the Fund. This fund may be used in making information available in the labour- receiving countries with regard to various options available to returnee migrants.

Institutions Involved in Labour Migration: *[The International Labour Migration Institutions of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka in Ferment: The Philippines as Catalyst by : Tomas D. Achacoso]*

The globalization process, rapid population growth in developing countries, failing developmental plans, weak government machinery, environmental degradation and increasing urbanization have made the management of international labour migration a more complex and difficult undertaking. The “tension” between national interest and sovereignty on one the hand and international obligations of states to ensure the rights of migrants on the other, further complicates the process.

At the global level, factionalism and disjointed efforts of international organisations have compounded the problems confronting the governance of the migration process. As a consequence, the interests of migrant workers have been marginalized due to lack of rules, migration norms and expertise in migration management, both locally and globally.

The “reasoned rejection” of international conventions represent a reality. Many labour- sending and receiving member States of the ILO have failed to ratify various ILO Conventions or the UN Convention on Migration despite the fact that these instruments are designed to promote universal norms and standards and to protect the interests of workers when employed in other countries.

The study used the experience of the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to demonstrate how to manage migration to protect and promote the welfare of migrant workers despite the absence of international

agreements and conventions. Observations on the unique and substantive aspects of the legal and administrative mechanisms of the POEA are defined, albeit piecemeal, in an appropriately extended but delimited context to showcase the proposition that the administrative mechanisms are as important as the rules and the laws themselves.

Bangladesh is yet to formulate a well-defined policy on international migration. The only discernible policy, at this stage, is the encouragement for labour migration to ease unemployment and earn foreign exchange.

It is, however, encouraging to note that there is an emerging awareness among the government about the need to formulate a National Migration Policy, in line with the provisions of Chapter X of the ICPD Plan of Action. The National Plan of Action for Population and Development 1996 recommended a Plan of Action for the implementation of the Chapter on International Migration. These recommendations are however yet to be incorporated into the policy and programmes of the relevant institutions.

The whole migration process cannot be managed and structured without an adequate and functioning legal framework that clearly defines the responsibilities and policy implications for each sector involved. The Emigration Ordinance of 1982 serves as the basis for administering the overseas employment programme of Bangladesh. However, the Government of Bangladesh still has to finalize the rules to effectively operationalise the 1982 Ordinance.

Bangladesh finds itself late in terms of developing the rules and regulations to implement the Migrant Act of 1982. However, this need not be a disadvantage as it can turn this around and be in a position to reform and strengthen its international labour migration system without necessarily having to experience the pain and snail-paced progress that other countries like the Philippines had to go through. It can leapfrog directly to certain policies and procedures that have been proven effective under certain conditions without having to pass through the arduous process of trial and error. A needs assessment exercise with a particular focus on best practices of other countries will be worth considering.

The report strongly suggested that what happens 'within' countries can turn out to be part of a much broader international process of political and economic change. The unilateral decisions and actions of nations can influence events in the international arena in spite of the view of how international the world has become. It was further suggested that international labour migration institutions need more practical assistance than the rhetoric of intentions that past studies and manuals can provide.

In this region, the Bangkok Declaration on Irregular Migration, convened at the initiative of the IOM, along with UNITAR, UNFPA and the Government of Thailand, declared, *inter alia*, the need for capacity building of government institutions and their administrative machinery as a means for improving the administration of the international migration process in the Asia – Pacific region. It concluded that the mix of academic studies and interventions have not resulted in mitigating the problems encountered by migrant workers nor have the output of most research-based findings trickled down from the “knowledge factories” to the points of applications and implementation – the international labour migration institutions of both labour-sending and receiving countries.

A common characteristic of developing countries is the extent to which allocation of scarce resources is decided by political rather than economic criteria. This method has resulted in certain political families or clans that attempt to influence certain industries, or laws, or contracts to favour those which the family or clan is interested or engaged in. As a result, the appropriate laws are compromised, or certain industries are monopolized or contracts are bloated as is being bruited about in Bangladesh due to the large number of politicians and members of Parliament who are perceived to own recruitment agencies.

The report recommended the following:

- ◆ The survey concludes that Bangladesh has to invest in its international labour migration system and processes in order to remain a player in the global labour market. That entails a review of the present practices and capacity of its institutions directly and indirectly involved in the international migration system and processes and an investment in law, rules and regulations that contribute to the orderly and efficient export of Bangladeshi manpower. In order to develop a comprehensive sustainable labour migration institution, it needs the input and involvement of different institutions like government, representatives of civil society, welfare associations, NGOs and the private sector.
- ◆ Along these lines, the MEWOE should strive to re-orient the government thinking. The role of BMET should not only be confined to social or labour aspects of national development but should involve the economic aspects of national development as well. Labour and migration concerns should be dealt with in a broader developmental framework as these are inextricably linked to the rapid development of the country. This is a challenge that faces the MEWOE at this stage. It must prove with the appropriate force and vigour, that its role is inextricably linked to and is an indispensable condition for the progress of the nation. It should position itself as a major Ministry capable of influencing the national policy and as an indispensable institution for national development and

not merely as a ministry playing a token role for a symbolic function. It is, after all, the ministry whose primary concern is people – the most abundant and noblest resource of the country and one of its few major factors of production. And a large segment of this “people” is comprised of Overseas Contract Workers (OCW’s) whose remittances have injected billions of foreign exchange into the national economy.

- ◆ In light of the impact that the Overseas Employment Programme (OEP) has on the national economy, the MEWOE should demonstrate that the overseas employment programme of the country requires more than the current 0.2 % of its share of the national revenue budget.
- ◆ The BMET should therefore strive to strengthen its organisational capacity to administer its international labour migration system in the most efficient and effective way possible in order to minimize situations that could put Bangladeshi OCW’s in compromising or unwanted conditions. It can do so by ensuring that its institutional capacity is constantly adapting to the ever-changing environment.

The supervision of private recruitment agencies needs the most emphasis particularly in the area of workers’ protection. In a span of a decade and a half, only 50 cases have been filed with the main Labour Court which can only evoke wild speculation and disbelief.

- ◆ Bangladesh can maximize the benefits to be derived from these IOM surveys by developing a sound sequential scheme that identifies what are urgent against those that are important. Of course, these have to be located within sound overall development policies of the country and matched by a favourable conjuncture in the world at large.

Conclusion

The global development trends and priorities are reshaping management of migration. The existing “migration regime” based on bans/restrictions on female migration of origin countries, (which is otherwise discriminatory in nature) and the restrictive policies of destination countries cannot effectively manage migration. Rather, it pushes the flow underground making innocent people easy victims of criminal gangs. It can be better managed by progressively “regulating” the flow of migrant workers. The process will require not only adoption of a migration policy, but also a reorientation of basic strategies and rationale for migration management.

The international development partners should “rethink” the importance of migration on the socio-economic developmental process, both in origin and destination countries, especially about its potential role in addressing global inequalities. It is encouraging to find that increasingly, migration is conceived as a “developmental

force” as well as an “equalizing force” which could soften the impact of adverse consequences of globalization process on the developing countries. A comprehensive, flexible and balanced mechanism to regulate migration can also reduce “tension” between states on one hand and between employers and migrants on the other. It helps enhancing the image of the country and society. There is a need to look beyond traditional boundaries of “security”, “sovereignty” or “immigration” in developing the migration policy.

Today, the challenge is to maximize the benefits that accompany migration and minimize its attendant risks. This task cannot be undertaken by individual states acting in isolation, as international migration is an inter-state phenomenon. Programmes and activities in the labour migration process initiated by countries of origin can not be successful without corresponding and reciprocal support from the receiving countries. It is also beyond the capacity and reach of a country to effectively manage the process independently. Inter-governmental cooperation is vital to fully appreciate and develop positive effects of migration. The inter-governmental cooperation should rely on an integrated policy approach that links migration to development cooperation, trade and investment, security, as well as demographic and social development at the national and international level.

The most important aspect of immigration management, however, remains sound management of labour migration at the national level. It is clear from the study conclusions that, at the national level, effective management of migration requires a comprehensive, flexible and integrated approach that could promote multi-ministerial and broad based dialogue involving civil society. However, call for such co-ordinated approach is easier said than done owing to competing priorities within respective ministries, socio-economic limitations, varied capacity of related bodies, and above all adequate understanding and perception of migration realities.

The IOM studies will help in enhancing better understanding of migration dynamics in Bangladesh as well as its impacts on economy and society. It will also help the Government to evolve an effective mechanism for an accountable and transparent recruitment system, easy flow of remittances, productive utilization of the migrants’ resources, protection of the migrant's rights and their effective reintegration on return. All efforts should aim at harnessing potentials of migration for the promotion of development in Bangladesh.