

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN FOR BANGLADESH TO MANAGE LABOR MIGRATION

1. INTRODUCTION

For Bangladesh remittances of migrant labour force has increasingly become the most important source of foreign exchange earning. In the period between 1976 and 2001, the country received a total of US\$ 21 billion as remittance. In 2001, US\$ 2 billion flowed through the formal channel. This year the flow has increased by about 35%. In financial year 2001, remittances financed 20% of the imports. The current level of remittances in Bangladesh is able to offset 65% of the trade deficit of the country. The importance of remittance for the national economy has become more pronounced in the wake of recent developments in the international scene that had adversely affected the country's other important export item, especially readymade garments. In recognition of the crucial importance of migration in Bangladesh economy, the Government has set up a separate Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment. The Ministry has, meanwhile, initiated commendable programs to strengthen the labor migration process in Bangladesh. The Ministry is however, facing major challenges primarily due to lack of resources and capacity.

In this context, the Regional Office of International Organization for Migration commissioned a set of five studies in 2000 to have a better appreciation of different aspects of labour migration process. The studies were to identify limitations as well as recommend interventions to help to develop and to strengthen institutional mechanism. The project also attempts to develop a Plan of Action, based on the study findings and general understanding to identify roles that various actors can play, on the one hand, to bring about efficiency and transparency in the sector; and, on the other, to make the sector more geared towards protecting the rights of the migrant workers.

2. BROADER MIGRATION ISSUES AND GENERAL RECOMENDATIONS

In the 21st century, the profound changes in scope, nature and structure of global market, global trade and finance are shaping the migration regime. The free flow of goods, technology, capital and services across borders on one hand and restricted labor mobility on the other is posing challenges for the governments to manage migration. "Migration management" relates to developing of clear and comprehensive policies, laws and administrative arrangements to ensure that population movements occur in a humane and orderly way, to the mutual benefit of the migrants, societies and governments. Mutuality of benefit can be achieved by policies, laws and administrations that balance the rights of migrants with the interests of societies and the responsibilities of governments. Given the international nature of migration, this endeavour necessarily has national, regional and global dimensions, and requires close cooperation among all parties. Since migration is also inextricably linked with other major policy issues such as trade, development, security, environment, health and economics, these need to be taken into account in any efforts to manage this complex and multidimensional development process.

A) Importance of Good Governance in Migration Sector

Good policies and institutional frameworks are not synonymous with good governance. Neither mere predictability of mechanisms for formulating policies and procedures are not sufficient to produce good governance. While it is essential that appropriate policies and procedures be formulated, it also requires that the government has the political will to implement the policies it adopts. It must also demonstrate that it can deliver what is promised and expected from its institutions. The Parliamentary Standing Committee pertaining to labor migration should actively pursue policies to bring about good governance and accountability in the sector.

B) Increased Budgetary Allocation for strengthening the Ministry

Given the sheer size of contribution of labor migration sector to the national economy particularly in harnessing foreign exchange, the government should substantially increase its budgetary allocation to the sector. Increased budgetary allocation is crucial in meeting new challenges that is currently being faced by Bangladesh as a labour origin country. It will also help set up institutions to better equip and train the migrant labour force.

Given the significant contribution of international labour migration to the Bangladesh economy, the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment should exert every effort to strive to position themselves more prominently among the hierarchy of government offices in order to receive greater budgetary allocation to support its goals. In light of the impact that the overseas employment programme has on the national economy, the Ministry of EWOE should demonstrate that the overseas employment programme of the country requires more than 0.3% of its share of national revenue budget. The agencies responsible for labour migration should prepare and present their plans and programmes during budget deliberations.

C) National Migration Policy

The Government may consider setting up a Task Force comprising of representatives of concerned ministries, policy planners, experts, economists and representatives of civil society, and international organizations especially IOM to chart out a National Migration Policy. The policy should give due consideration to the gender priorities, needs rights and interest. The policy formulation exercises should consider migration as a basic option for better livelihood for many families and communities. Attempts to address irregular migration should not adversely affect the common rights and dignity of person, in particular the rights of migrants. The policy should contain provisions for protection of both skilled and unskilled workers abroad especially women migrant workers.

D) Ratification of International Conventions

Migrant workers are aliens in the destination countries and therefore, are often subject to discrimination in various ways including in the field of employment. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants and Members of their Families, adopted by UNGA in 1990, establishes international norms and standards for ensuing equal rights for migrant workers in respect of remuneration and other conditions of work and terms of employment. This Convention ensures protection of both regular and irregular migrants. Bangladesh should immediately ratify the Conventions enabling the Convention to come into force (it needs one more ratification to be able to come into effect).

E) Standard Setting and Enforcement

Any institutional capacity building exercise should focus on protection and welfare of migrant workers that necessarily entail standards setting and enforcement, supervision of private recruitment and welfare services. The Filipino experience illustrates how unilaterally, through innovation and initiative, locally devised mechanisms were made to respond to the challenges brought about by the paucity of international and/or bilateral agreements.

F) Curtailment of Unregulated Migration

As migration and trafficking are distinct but interrelated phenomena, unregulated migration especially trafficking in persons can have negative social, financial and political costs for the individual, society and government. Migration is a development enhancing process and trafficking is a development retarding process. Comprehensive, transparent and coherent approach to migration will help minimise those “costs” and preserve the integrity of migration as development process.

G) Lifting restrictions of Women Migration

The existing restrictions on women to migrate for low and unskilled work abroad seem to be counter-productive. The provision is rather “pushing” women to seek help of traffickers and smugglers for circumventing the Govt. rules. These practices are making women migrant extremely vulnerable to exploitation and human rights abuses. The Govt. should initiate a process to review the policy to lifting the restrictions. These provisions be replaced with a more pragmatic and progressive policies.

H) Emphasis on Skill Development

The ultimate protection to all migrant workers is the possession of appropriate skills. Pursuant to this and as soon as practicable, the government should encourage deployment of increased number of skilled workers abroad.

I) Ensuing Health of Migrants

Migrants are exposed to health related vulnerabilities espials HIV-AIDS. Government should put in place special programs for dealing with health services of both outgoing-migrants and returnees including their families.

J) Collaboration with NGOs and Role of Civil Society

Non-Government organizations, duly recognized as legitimate, are partners in the protection of migrant workers and in the promotion of their welfare. The Government should further encourage their activities in spirit of trust and mutual respect.

Labor recruiting agency (BAIRA) may consider identifying fake agencies and may take appropriate actions against those who are not running the business in a socially responsible manner. The Non-governmental agencies and migrant support groups should develop appropriate strategies to help migrant communities in making migration “safe and orderly”. Media also has a critical role to play in making both the government agencies and the recruiting agents accountable and transparent.

K) Establishment of a Funding Institutions for Migrant Workers

A funding institution such as Bank may be established to providing loans to the out-migrants. Government may set up a task force to explore such possibilities.

L) Solidarity with Other Origin Countries

As a major labour originating country the government should take initiative to link up with other sending countries of Asia and develop and interact in a collaborative forum to find minimum common grounds. Eventually the forum may lay the ground to set up an organization to counter-balance the market power of the labour receiving countries.

M) Follow up on IOM Studies

Benefits can be derived from the IOM programs and activities including the set of five studies by developing a sound sequential scheme that identifies what are the urgent government programs to manage migration efficiently. Of course, these have to be located within the sound over-all development policies of the country and matched by a favourable overall conjuncture in the world at large. The Ministry should identify its priority areas and if needed may seek technical assistance from IOM and other international agencies for developing its capacity.

3. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROGRAMMES

A. RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is an important and a complex facet of labour migration process, encompassing a host of individuals, agencies and institutions. The institutions are both governmental and private, on the one hand, and local and foreign, on the other. The process of recruitment is often marshaled through a host of intermediaries, some official and formal, while others, clandestine and dubious. At least at the formal level there is plethora of formal rules and regulations, implementing and overseeing authorities and bodies.

i. POLICY AND STRATEGY

- a) Strengthening of Ministry and BMET:** The Ministry and the BMET should strive to strengthen their organizational capacity to organize the international labor migration system in the most efficient and effective manner in order to minimize situations that could put Bangladesh migrant workers in compromising or unwanted situations. The supervision of private recruitment agencies needs the most emphasis particularly in the area of workers' protection. Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET)'s role as the regulatory body should be further strengthened. This is essential to curb the activities of unscrupulous agencies.
- b) Establishment of a Shared Government Information System for Migration:** An inter-agency committee composed of all ministries, departments and directorates concerned with labour migration be established to implement a shared government information system for migration. The inter-agency committee shall make available to itself the information contained in existing data bases/files. The committee shall convene to identify existing data bases which shall be declassified and shared among member agencies. These shared data bases shall initially include, but not to be limited to, the following information:

- Masterlists of migrant workers classified according to occupation/job category, civil status, by country/state of destination including visa classification;
- Inventory of pending legal cases involving migrant workers, including those serving prison terms;
- Masterlists of departing/ arriving migrant workers
- Statistical profile on migrant workers
- Basic data on legal system, immigration policies. Marriage laws and civil and criminal codes in receiving countries particularly those with the large numbers of Bangladeshi;
- List of labour other human rights instruments where receiving countries are signatories;
- A tracking system of past and present gender disaggregated cases involving male and female migrants workers; and
- Listing of overseas posts which may render assistance to overseas Bangladeshis, in general, and migrant workers, in particular.
- Information on upcoming major projects in the receiving countries that are likely to create substantial number of jobs may be collected and disseminated through government agencies, training institutions and recruiting agencies.

c) *Development of Credible Sources of Information for migrants and aspirant migrants:*

In order to wean away the potential migrant workers from unreliable informal sources of information, credible alternative easily accessible formal sources of information should be created to provide information on labour migration process. Such a source should not only provide information about job opportunities, wages and conditions of employment of the host country and methods of securing work, but also should address the needs of the recruited migrant and help him/her orient about the culture, customs, climate and duties and obligations in the host country. A nationwide information campaign may be launched to disseminate migration-related information. Strict enforcement of the rule to attend BMET's pre-departure orientation session should be enforced.

d) *Financing Migration through Formal Sources:* Avenues should be created so that migrant workers have easy access to formal sources to finance their migration and not fall victim to high interest charging informal sources. Banks should engage in financing migration, at least on an experimental basis. Micro finance institutions (MFIs) with their wide national network may also be motivated to provide loans to the migrant workers.

e) *Use of Wage Earners' Welfare Fund:* Measures must be taken for proper use of the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund for the direct benefit of migrant workers and their families. A thorough study may be initiated to examine the effective use of this Fund.

ii. CAPACITY BUILDING

a) *Capacity Building of Government Machineries:* There is an urgent need for capacity development of the government machineries for improving the administration of labour migration process. This stems from the line of reasoning that the ability to create and sustain institutions is as important to the successful management of an international labour migration institution as the formulation of appropriate policies and procedures and that the issue of institutional capacity be included as an important component of a framework for the protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers.

- b) **Capacity Building of Training Institutions:** The training institutions should be made more responsive to the changing needs of labour markets in the receiving countries. This may be done through a flexible curricula and a sound knowledge of the projected labour needs in various sectors of the receiving countries. A more functionally autonomous management apparatus, will help improve effectiveness and output of the training institutions.
- c) **Capacity Building of BAIRA:** The recruitment industry should be encouraged and supported by the government. As the caucus body of the recruiting agencies, Bangladesh Association for International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) should gear itself adequately to influence government policy and guidelines for better accessing the increasingly competitive international market. BAIRA should also take effective measures so that none could tarnish reputation of the Association by engaging in unethical practices that often lead to over-charging, cheating and harassment of migrant workers or members of their families. To make the recruiting agencies more accountable a system may be established. The medical centres, which issue health certificates to the migrants, should also be sensitive to raise the standards.
- d) **Engaging NGOs in Advocacy Work:** Various credit and service delivery and rights promoting Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) should be encouraged to develop and incorporate messages of safe migration in their advocacy work. This will help reach a wider community with proper messages.

iii. LEGAL MEASURES

- a) **Updating the Emigration Ordinance:** The 1982 Emigration Ordinance should be amended with focus on promotion and protection of rights of migrant workers. Necessary rules for enforcement of the law should also be made expeditiously. (The forward-looking rights oriented legislations of the Philippines and Sri Lanka could serve as important reference in this regard).
- b) **Simplifying Procedures for Prosecution:** The legal provision that only BMET may file cases in the Labour Court regarding offences under the Emigration Ordinance needs to change. Also the cumbersome procedure of BMET having to seek the Ministry's clearance to initiate action against an errant agency should be simplified. This may be done by conferring authority on BMET to impose punitive measures on recruiting agents, if found guilty could suffice, with provisions of appeal to the Labour Court against measures taken by BMET.
- c) **Lifting the Restriction/Ban on Women Migrants:** Empirical research has drawn attention to the fact that despite the ban, migration of unskilled women is taking place. Therefore, existence of the ban contributes to irregular status of the women who otherwise have valid work permit. In order to secure a niche in the burgeoning international market for women labour the ban on migration of women for unskilled should be lifted. However, measures must be taken so that women can make informed choice and in distress situations can access the services of the Bangladeshi mission.

B. SUPPORT AND CARE IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Migrant workers may face a series of problems in the destination countries. Often their contracts are substituted on arrival. They are also subjected to non-payment or delayed payment of wages, harsh working conditions, long working hours without provision for extra payment, lack of access to drinking water and health care, restriction on freedom of movement and leisure activities. In many countries, workers do not have access to union activities and formal avenues to register their genuine grievances. They also receive very little service from the Bangladesh missions. The mission staff, on their turn, lack necessary resources, information and training.

i) POLICY AND STRATEGY

a) *According Priority to Migrant Workers' Rights in Deployment:* In its search for fresh markets for Bangladesh labour, the Government should give priority to countries where rights of migrant workers are protected, recognizing any of the following as a guarantee for the protection of their rights of migrant workers:

- The country has existing labour and social laws protecting the rights of migrant workers;
- The country is a signatory to multilateral conventions, declarations or resolutions relating to the protection of migrant workers;
- The country has concluded a bilateral agreement or arrangement with the Bangladesh Government on the protection of the rights of Bangladeshi workers; and
- The host country is taking positive, concrete measures to protect the rights of migrant workers.

b) *Strengthening Bangladesh Mission Abroad:* The country-team approach shall be the mode under which Bangladesh Embassies or their personnel may operate in the protection of the migrant workers as well as in the promotion of their welfare. The protection of the dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms of the Bangladeshi citizen abroad, in general, shall be the highest priority concerns of the Ministries of the Foreign Affairs and the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. The Head of the Mission should be made accountable for ensuring welfare of migration.

c) *Labor Attaches Role:* Labor attaches in the Bangladesh missions overseas should make themselves more accessible to migrant workers. Ensuring the well being of the workers deployed in the country should be his/her most important preoccupation. This would necessitate periodic visits to work sites, such as garments factories, and follow up on complaints received from the workers. The missions should also facilitate workers with legal support in cases that they deem the employers did the workers wrong.

d) *Establishment of Migrant Workers Resource Centre:* Taking cue from the Filipino example, within the premises and under the administrative jurisdiction of the embassy in countries where there are large concentrations of Bangladeshi migrant workers, Migrant Workers Resource Centres may be established to perform the following tasks:

- Registration of migrant workers abroad;
- Counseling and legal services;

- Welfare assistance including the procurement of medical and hospitalization services;
 - Support services for children of migrant workers;
 - Information, advisory and programme to promote social integration such as post-arrival orientation, settlement and community networking services and activities for social interaction;
 - Institute a scheme of registration of undocumented workers to bring them within the purview of the government's reach;
 - Human resource development such as training and skills upgrading;
 - Gender sensitive programmes and activities to assist particular needs of women migrant workers;
 - Orientation programme for returnee migrant workers and other migrants; and
 - Monitoring of daily situations, circumstance and activities affecting migrant workers.
- e) ***Bilateral Labor Agreements:*** The government should strive to negotiate bilateral labour agreements with labour receiving countries to provide protection to migrants' rights, particularly working in harsh conditions in the non-corporate sectors. BLA should be viewed as an advantageous instrument for strengthening and enhancing the rights and welfare of overseas contract workers because of its adaptability to particular situations and conditions of specific groups and circumstances. Both sending and receiving countries can decide among themselves what activities they would like to be involved in, how to share the burden of responsibilities and what stages of the migration process to manage and monitor.
- f) ***Travel Advisory/Information Dissemination:*** To give utmost priority to the establishment of programmes and services to prevent illegal recruitment, fraud and exploitation or abuse of migrant workers, all embassies and consular offices shall issue travel advisories or disseminate information on labour and employment conditions, migration realities and other facts; and adherences of particular countries to international standards on human and workers' rights which will adequately prepare individuals into making informed and intelligent decision about overseas employment. Such advisory or information shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation at least three (3) times in every quarter.
- g) ***Migrant's Health:*** In many instances migrants are not covered under health insurance scheme and may often have to endure physical and financial hardships for not accessing health care services in time. Measures should be taken so that health insurance is incorporated in the migrants' contracts with the employers. Widespread dissemination of messages in Bangla, both printed form, as well as electronically, on preventive health-care, including sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS should be organized before migration as well as in the destination countries.
- h) ***Female Labor:*** Bangladesh missions should develop mechanisms to periodically assess the condition of the women labour force.. Measures must be taken to facilitate women's easy access to consular support in distress situations.
- i) ***Obligations of Migrant Workers to the Host Country:*** In many instances migrant workers are not aware of the customs, practices, norms and cultural sensitivities of the host communities and as such may get into major difficulties. The concerned agencies of the government should develop reader friendly brochures and other forms of

communication messages to fill this gap. Also migrants should be explicitly informed about the security concerns of the host state.

ii) CAPACITY BUILDING

- a) **Market Exploration:** The Ministries of EWOE and Foreign Affairs may undertake proactive programmes for market exploration. Experts' support may be solicited for developing appropriate tools and guidelines in this regard.
- b) **Training Personnel:** Given the importance of labour migration for the national economy special attention needs to be given to incorporate migratory issues in the curricula of the Foreign Service Academy and the Civil Science Academy for training of new recruits. There is also the need for developing specific training modules for officials entrusted with the responsibility to promote export of manpower and look after other matters relating to welfare of Bangladeshi workers. Short term orientation course may be organised at the Foreign Service Academy to train officials posted in the labour receiving countries.
- c) **Mechanism to Initiate Complaints:** The missions should initiate a mechanism to file complaints in cases of fraudulence and malpractice on the part of the recruiting agencies and government functionaries so that appropriate procedures can be instituted against them.

iii) LEGAL MEASURES

- a) **Familiarization with Local Laws:** Bangladesh missions, particularly those in the labour receiving countries, should embark on gathering information on local laws and cases affecting labour, particularly migrant labour issues. They should also collect information on rights activists, migrant labour support groups and human rights organizations. Workers who may require their services can be directed to those individuals or organizations.
- b) **Legal Support:** The matters that involve litigation, has to be pursued effectively. If necessary, legal advisors are to be appointed to contest cases in the labor or sharia courts. The missions should also encourage workers to avail interpreter's services in countries that offer such services.

C. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Migrant workers remittances now constitute the single largest source of foreign exchange earnings and play a critical role in alleviating the foreign-exchange constraint and supporting the balance of payments, enabling the import of capital goods and raw materials for industrial development. Moreover, it also increased the supply of savings and investment for capital formation and development. At the micro-level, remittances have resulted in the improved living standards of workers' families and helped in improving the income distribution in favour of poorer and less skilled workers. However, despite the importance of the remittances, a large segment flows in through the unofficial channel. Major intervention is required to harness the remittance and skills of migrant workers.

i) **POLICY AND STRATEGY**

- a) **Reduce Migration Cost:** The existing cost of migration is exorbitant. Effort should be made to bring down the cost to a reasonable level. Government should take special measures including issuance of special passports to migrant workers to reduce cost. The cost of medical check also needs to be brought down through proper Govt. monitoring.
- b) **Reorienting the Banking Sector:** In order to increase the flow of remittance through formal official channels, banks should be made more efficient and attractive so that Bangladesh communities abroad send money through these institutions. This, in turn, requires making the Bangladeshi banks adequately computerized, cost effective and flexible in order to compete with other banks and money exchange bureaus. Meeting the challenge with other banks also entails flexibility in determining the exchange rate, with a guideline from the Bangladesh Bank indicating the broad range to be followed.
- c) **Financial Incentives:** The Government may consider providing certain special privileges to those who send money through the formal channels, may be on an experimental basis. This may include tax exemption on import of taxable items and preferential treatment to secure loan for productive venture upon their return.
- d) **Making Recruiting Agencies Accountable:** Despite existing government rules, the recruiting agencies charge exorbitant fees for their services. The high charge is the result of a nexus of malpractice that exists among the government functionaries and employers of the host country, a section of employees of the Bangladeshi missions overseas and the recruiting agencies. In order to curb the malpractice, recruiting agencies should be allowed to charge Tk. 25,000 more than the current amount they are currently entitled to. This should be made conditional to making direct deals with the employers of the host country.
- e) **Access to Loans:** The Government may consider providing return migrants access to loans on concessionary rates. It may also consider taking up projects for low cost cooperative housing projects for returnees. Both these facilities may be made conditional to the returnee migrants producing evidence of remitting money through the formal channel. Quotas may be reserved for return migrants who became disabled while working abroad.
- f) **Popularizing Migration through Proper Channel**
In order to facilitate flow of remittance through the official channels and productive use of this scarce resource, government, particularly BMET, financial institutions and recruiting agencies should help create enabling environment for labor migration. To this end measures should be taken for dissemination of information pertaining to existing facilities and opportunities in remitting money through official channels (for sending money, investing in savings instruments or in other productive areas). The government agencies and recruiting agencies could engage in motivational work through the pre-departure orientation programmes. Likewise, the non-governmental organizations can incorporate dissemination of reliable information on migration in their existing training and awareness programmes.
- g) **Attractive Schemes:** To harness the migrants remittance government should consider sale of shares of de-nationalized industries, creation of dollar bond for designated market and setting up of Wage Earners' Bank. Technical assistance in the form of training in

management, accounting, technology and marketing to run small and medium enterprises should be undertaken. In this regard, a model project may be developed to link development assistance to returnee migrants' enterprise development initiatives.

- h) Dissemination of Information on New Products:* New financial products and schemes with special rates and easy access may be designed addressing the needs and expectations of the migrants. Special drives should be planned to promote these products and schemes in geographical areas that are hundi prone.

ii) CAPACITY BUILDING

- a) Re-orienting the Bank Personnel:* The staff of commercial banks should be adequately informed of the importance of remittances to the national economy. They should be motivated and trained to provide efficient and respectful services to the migrant workers in the countries of destination and to the members of their families in Bangladesh.
- b) Training to Meet Current Needs:* Concerted efforts must be directed so that Bangladeshi migrant workers can acquire skills to help them secure better working and living conditions. BMET and Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) should offer short term and flexible courses, particularly for jobs in the construction, metal work, maintenance and manufacturing sectors. The boom in the Information Technology sector has also created demands for training in this sector. The private sector should also set up training facilities.
- c) Training of NGO Personnel:* Staff of credit and other service delivery NGOs may be motivated to disseminate message on advantages for channeling remittances through the formal channels.

D. RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

There has been a general absence of a concrete framework for facilitating the re-integration of the returnee migrant workers. In that respect, reintegration is perhaps the least explored area in migration management in Bangladesh. In the absence of any formal support mechanism for the returnee migrants with mainstream economic activities, the capital and skills brought in may not be put to effective use.

i) POLICY AND STRATEGY

- a) Understanding Needs of Returnee Migrants:* Reintegration of return migrants has been one of the least explored areas. To fill the gap the government, private and non-government sectors need to develop their understanding about the needs of returnees and develop appropriate programmes for them. BAIRA should also take up pilot projects on experimental basis.
- b) Need for Advanced Planning on Return:* Measures should be taken so that migrant workers become aware of the importance of advance planning on return and reintegration. In this regard advisory services and information channels should be established that would provide an array of information about possible investment opportunities of their savings / remittances and also utilization of their skills.

- c) ***Establishment of Re-placement and Monitoring Centre:*** The Government should consider establishing a “Re-placement and Monitoring Centre” under the aegis of the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment for returning migrant workers which shall provide a mechanism for their reintegration into the Bangladeshi society, serve as a promotion house for their local employment, and tap their skills and potentials for national development. The Centre may formulate a programme that would motivate migrant workers to plan for productive option such as entry into highly technical jobs or undertakings, livelihood and entrepreneurial development, better wage employment, and investment of savings. For livelihood development of unskilled migrant workers, technical education and skills development initiatives may be undertaken.

The Centre may provide the following services:

- Develop livelihood programmes and projects for returning migrant workers in coordination with the private sector,
- Coordinate with appropriate private and government agencies in the promotion, development, re-placement and the full utilization of their potentials;
- Institute, in cooperation with other government agencies concerned, a computer based information system on skilled Bangladeshi migrant workers which shall be accessible to all local recruitment agencies and employers, both public and private;
- Provide a periodic study and assessment of job opportunities for returning migrant workers; and
- Develop and implement other appropriate programmes to promote the welfare of returning Bangladeshi migrant workers.

- d) ***Supplementing Efforts of Potential Returnees:*** The government and the financial institutions, including the micro-finance institutions, should actively support reintegration efforts of potential returnees who themselves are planning various options. Creative banking approach is required in harnessing the resource of migrant workers.

- e) ***Campaign on Judicious Use of Remittances:*** As bulk of the remittances of migrant workers are spent by their families, often in consumption, a campaign must be mounted so that the workers themselves can retain control over a major segment of their earnings. This campaign must be supplemented by developing proper financial schemes and instruments that would encourage the migrant workers to save and subsequently invest on their return. Following earlier examples to boost the private sector the government should consider underwriting certain percentage of loans granted to projects of returnee migrants provided by commercial banks. Such an arrangement will encourage the banks to provide financial support to schemes developed by returnee migrants in their efforts to reintegrate.

ii) CAPACITY BUILDING

- a) ***Incorporation of Information on Returnee Migrants in the Data-base:*** The proposed data-base on migration should cover incorporation of information on the types and patterns of return flow. The skills gathered by the migrant workers should also be incorporated in the data bank. This would help potential employers to find skilled persons from this source and help returnee migrant’s rehabilitation process.

- b) *Wage Earners' Welfare Fund for Returnee Migrants:*** The Wage Earners' Welfare Fund can provide basic source of funds for development of programmes for reintegration of returnee workers, including providing them with soft term credit opportunities. This fund may also be in making information available in the labour receiving countries with regard to various options available to returnee migrants.
- c) *Creation of an Enabling Environment:*** Creation of an enabling environment is one of the foremost conditions for return and rehabilitation of migrant workers. This included improvement of law and order situation, controlling extortion and rent-seeking, access to business information, and access to credit and technical assistance. The DEMOs may be entrusted with the task of counselling the returnee migrants on investment opportunities.

iii) LEGAL MEASURES

- a) *Fiscal Incentives:*** The fiscal rules and baggage rules for the returnee migrants could be relaxed further to provide them with additional incentives to plan their return in a more organised way.
- b) *Tax Incentive:*** Government may consider providing tax rebates for specified period for investments made by returnee migrants through remittance money.

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