PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEE MIGRANTS: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

There has been a general absence of a concrete framework for facilitating the reintegration 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. This article illustrates the specific problems faced by migrants returning to their home countries and families. It identifies the kinds of supports-logistical, legal, socio-psychological, employment, skills related and financial -- they need to enable them to achieve successful reintegration and avoid re-migration. It emphasizes opportunities for remunerative employment as key to successful reintegration. The final section provides some recommendations that may be adopted in social and economic reintegration process of returnee migrants.

Keywords: Remittance, return migration, returnee migrants, social and economic reintegration, policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration has been an important livelihood strategy for the people of Bangladesh. It has remarkable positive impact on social development and empowerment through skill transfer and by fostering many community development initiatives. Globalization, modern communications and transportation have greatly facilitated the migration. People move continuously seeking better economic opportunities, family reunion and humanitarian relief International

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migration gives a person an opportunity for higher income and better lives. The higher income of the migrated person not only changes his destiny, but has also improved the lives of his family in the home country.¹

The migrant workers stay in the overseas country for a limited period. Sustainable reintegration of migrant workers can be ensured with appropriate utilization of their income. The migrant workers come back with skill, work experience and savings. Lack of opportunity for investment and appropriate counseling mostly hamper the initiative of the migrant workers towards appropriate venture. Country’s development activities may get momentum with the active participation of returnee migrant workers.²

In the absence of any formal support mechanism for linking them with mainstream economic activities, the capital and skills brought by returnee migrants may not be put to effective use for national development. In that context the objective of the present article is to understand the return experience of migrants, identify the problems they face, assess the role of various government and civil society organizations in their reintegration process and the potentials of the returnees in contributing to the national economy.

2. PRESENT TRENDS OF MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is considered as a resourceful country of a huge labour-force. About 60 million people constitute this vast reservoir of active manpower; fortunately Bangladesh is steadily turning her manpower into an asset through training and skill development with a view to meeting the needs of overseas employment. It is not possible for Bangladesh to absorb the full range of available less-skilled, semi skilled, skilled and professional manpower within the country in an appropriate manner and hence it is needed to find employment opportunities abroad. There are also a number


of foreign countries who are in need of importing manpower from other countries.³

Currently two types of international migration occur from Bangladesh. One takes place mostly to the industrialized west and the other to Middle Eastern and South East Asian countries. Voluntary migration to the industrialized west includes permanent residents, immigrants, work permit holders and professionals. They are usually perceived as long term or permanent migrants. Migration to Middle East and South East Asia are usually for short term and that migrants return home after finishing their contracts of employment in the host countries.⁴

BMET⁵ data also shows that Bangladeshi workers are predominantly men. Along with the male overseas jobseekers, recent trend observes that the number of women overseas jobseekers has been increased remarkably. About 1,50,000 overseas women workers have been sent to different countries from 1991 to 2010.⁶ Unlike other labour surplus countries, in Bangladesh female migrants make up a low proportion of labour migrants - until 2004, only 1% of Bangladeshi labour migrants were female.⁷ During 1991-95, women constituted 0.98% of the total migrant flow. In 1997 it came down to 0.76%. However, the figure rose to .67% in 2003.⁸ The overseas women workers were 2.4% in 2008 which has been increased to 5% in 2010.⁹ IOM-INSTRAW¹⁰ and Siddiqui¹¹ estimated that the number of female migrants might be 10 to 50 times more than the official figure. Due to existence of government ban and strict restrictions on migration of unskilled and semi-skilled women till 2003, Women of the unskilled and semi-skilled

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³ Chowdhury, note 1
⁴ Chowdhury, note 1
⁵ Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
⁶ Chowdhury, note 1
⁹ Chowdhury, note 1
¹¹ Tasneem Siddiqui, 2001
categories used to migrate through unofficial channels. Their number is not accounted in any statistics.\textsuperscript{12} However women still represent a small minority in relation to overall Bangladeshi migrant flows.

Overseas employment from Bangladesh started officially in 1976 with a modest number (6,078) of workers. Presently about 7 million Bangladeshi workers are employed around 130 countries across the world, particularly in countries of the Middle-East and South Eastern countries. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Malaysia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Babrain, Libya, Singapore are major destinations for Bangladeshi worker. Today, Bangladesh is considered as a good source of manpower. Information on the short term labor migrants who officially go overseas for employment is available with BMET.\textsuperscript{13}

The following table captures the flow of migration over different periods:

\textit{Table-1: Flow of Migration from Bangladesh during 2001-2010}\textsuperscript{14}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Skilled</th>
<th>Semi-skilled</th>
<th>Less-skilled</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5,940</td>
<td>42,742</td>
<td>30,702</td>
<td>1,09,581</td>
<td>1,88,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>14,450</td>
<td>56,265</td>
<td>36,025</td>
<td>1,18,516</td>
<td>2,25,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>15,862</td>
<td>74,530</td>
<td>29,236</td>
<td>1,34,562</td>
<td>2,54,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>12,202</td>
<td>1,10,177</td>
<td>28,327</td>
<td>1,22,252</td>
<td>2,72,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,945</td>
<td>1,13,655</td>
<td>24,546</td>
<td>1,12,556</td>
<td>2,52,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1,15,468</td>
<td>33,965</td>
<td>2,31,158</td>
<td>3,81,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>1,65,338</td>
<td>1,83,673</td>
<td>4,82,922</td>
<td>8,32,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,864</td>
<td>2,92,364</td>
<td>1,32,825</td>
<td>4,48,002</td>
<td>8,75,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>1,34,265</td>
<td>84,517</td>
<td>2,55,070</td>
<td>4,75,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>90,621</td>
<td>20,016</td>
<td>2,79,678</td>
<td>3,90,702</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BMET has classified temporary migrant population into four categories. These are professional, skilled, semi-skilled, and

\textsuperscript{12} Siddiqui, note 8
\textsuperscript{13} Chowdhury, note 1
\textsuperscript{14} Prepared from Bureau of Manpower, Employment & Training (BMET) data (retrieved from http://www.bmet.org.bd)
unskilled. Doctors, engineers, nurses and teachers are considered as professionals. Manufacturing or garments workers are considered as skilled; while tailor, mason, etc. as semi-skilled workers; housemaid, cleaner, laborers are classified as less-skilled.\textsuperscript{15}

3. REMITTANCE FLOWS TO BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is considered as one of the major labour exporting countries of the world. Since independence over 07 (seven) million Bangladeshis went abroad. The cumulative receives from Bangladeshi migrants during 1976-2010 stood at around US$ 78.67 billion. Bangladesh maintained a healthy growth in remittances through the formal channel. The trend of remittance has accelerated in recent years from $2.07 billion in 2001 to $11.00 billion in 2010, an average growth of 43 percent per annum, even in the global financial meltdown. The oil-rich Middle Eastern countries with more than 80 percent of the total stock of Bangladesh migrants accounts for a lion’s share of remittances.\textsuperscript{16}

The principal features of the remittance flows are as follows:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the most important source of remittances. Its share is about 29 percent of the aggregate remittances received in Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{17} The US, which saw a large inflow of migrants in recent years, accounts for the second largest source nearly 15 percent of the total.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Remittance in million USS & Remittance in million BDT \\
\hline
2000-2001 & 1882.10 & 101700.10 \\
2001-2002 & 2501.13 & 143770.30 \\
2002-2003 & 3061.97 & 177288.20 \\
2003-2004 & 3371.97 & 198698.00 \\
2004-2005 & 3848.29 & 236469.70 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Year-wise remittance statistics\textsuperscript{19}}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{15} Chowdhury, note 1
\textsuperscript{16} ibid
\textsuperscript{17} ibid
\textsuperscript{18} ibid
\textsuperscript{19} Bangladesh Bank. 2012. The Central Bank of Bangladesh, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka (see at http://www.bangladesh-bank.org)
4. REMITTANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH:

The remittance and economic development in Bangladesh can be broadly explained in two ways; overall Macroeconomic benefits of remittance and Microeconomic benefits at household level.

4.1 Macroeconomic Benefits of Remittance

The major benefit arising from migration of workers has been the worker’s remittances. They have not only made a significant contribution towards the GDP (Gross Domestic Products) (13.56%), but also to meet the balance of payment’s deficit. The remittance of migrant workers stands at US$ 10.99b in 2010. Amount of remittance constitutes 6 times of ODA (Overseas Development Assistance) and 11 times of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment). It occupies the highest level of net foreign exchange earning sector of the country. Remittances play a crucial role in the Bangladesh economy today.²⁰

It has helped to ease our foreign exchange constraint, stabilizing the exchange rate and allowing Bangladesh to import much needed raw materials, intermediate goods and capital equipment. Comfortable reserves of foreign exchange have also contributed to overall macro stability and have reduced aid dependency, along with rapid growth of our export sector. Remittance increases with the expanding migration process and accelerating movement of people for overseas employment market. Some study predicts an ambitious achievement for the flow of USS 30b remittance by 2015 in Bangladesh. To attain this level of remittance,

²⁰ Ibid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Remittance</th>
<th>GDP %</th>
<th>GDP Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>4802.41</td>
<td></td>
<td>322756.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>5998.47</td>
<td></td>
<td>412985.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>7914.78</td>
<td></td>
<td>542951.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>9689.26</td>
<td></td>
<td>666758.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>10987.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>760109.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>11650.32</td>
<td></td>
<td>829928.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>12843.43</td>
<td></td>
<td>1019042.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
skill development training and more women participation in the migration process are two essential factors among others.\textsuperscript{21}

**Table-3: Socioeconomic Impact of Remittance at Community & Household Levels in Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{22}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Indicators</th>
<th>Positive Impact of Remittances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>Allow families of migrants to meet basic nutritional needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living condition and Housing</td>
<td>Living condition and housing improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Invest for education of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased investment for healthcare</td>
<td>Social security for elderly people increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Increased investment in business or income generating activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 **Microeconomic Benefit at Household Level:**

The remittance has significant microeconomic impact at household level. The macroeconomic impact of remittances at household level partially depends on the characteristics of the migrants and hence the recipients i.e. whether they constitute the rural poor, or the more educated sectors of the population generally residing in urban areas. The majority of Bangladeshi migrants abroad is unskilled, and originates from rural areas.\textsuperscript{23} Unskilled workers take jobs in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and to a lesser extent US and UK as domestic staff and labourers. Saudi Arabia alone accounts for around 43% of migrants out of Bangladesh. According to official statistics, from 1976 to 2004, 46% of migrants were unskilled, lacked access to land and resources. The poverty profile of migrants is looked at

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid
more closely in the social appraisal. However the evidence clearly shows that most short-term migrants abroad are poor and from rural areas. The poorer the household, the more impact or benefits remittance income can have on alleviating poverty. In the short-term remittances help loosen the budget constraints of their recipients, allowing them to increase expenditures on both durables and non-durables products, and provides them with protection against negative income shocks. Remittances are cited as making up around 60% to 70% of recipient poor households’ total income. Investment in health and education is valuable for long-term economic growth and poverty reduction. Studies conclusively found that migrant families invested more in these areas.

The most comprehensive review of the literature on remittances in Bangladesh lays out a number of benefits that are listed in the table below:

**Table-4: Utilization patterns of Remittances in Bangladesh.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Remittances used (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Clothes</td>
<td>20.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Treatment</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Education</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural land purchase</td>
<td>11.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestead land purchase</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home construction/repair</td>
<td>15.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release of mortgage land</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking mortgage of land</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repayment of loan (for migration)</td>
<td>10.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repayment of loan (other purpose)</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in Business</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings/Fixed deposit</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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24 Ibid
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social ceremonies</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift/donation to relatives</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send relatives for pilgrimage</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development activities</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending family members abroad</td>
<td>7.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OF RETURN MIGRATION

5.1 International Legal Instruments

The ILO pioneered the development of international labour standards to guide migration policy and protection of migrant workers. The ILO Conventions on Migration for Employment (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions), 1975 (No. 143) and Private Employment Agencies, 1997 (No. 181) are widely recognized as lead instruments for the protection of migrant workers in addition to the International (UN) Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, 1990.27

The 1990 UN Migrant Rights Convention ensures rights to both regular and irregular, and male female migrants. The human rights of migrant workers and their families are also universal, indivisible, interconnected and interdependent human rights. This convention asks the sending states to facilitate economic and social reintegration of the returnee migrants. Simultaneously, the instrument seeks to draw the attention of the international community to the growing trend of dehumanization of the migrant workers and members of their families as well. The Convention was strongly inspired by ILO principles and standards.28

27 Islam, note 2
Bangladesh has ratified the 1990 UN Migrant Rights Convention in 2011.²⁹

The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2006), a non-binding framework, spells out principles, guidelines and good practices for the development/improvement and implementation of sound labour migration policies. It addresses the crucial issues of labour migration-good governance of labour migration, protection of migrant workers, promotion of migration and development linkages and enhanced international cooperation.³⁰

5.2 National Instruments

After the independence of Bangladesh, emigration from the country was regulated and controlled under the 1922 Emigration Act that the country inherited from its British colonial past. With the gradual increase in the flow of temporary labour migrants from Bangladesh to the Middle Eastern countries, the inadequacy of the existing 1922 Act was felt and major policy changes were envisaged.³¹

At the initial stages when migration of shop-term workers to the Gulf states began in the mid 1970s, it was the government in Bangladesh which was actively engaged in facilitating the process. With the passage of time, as the demand for labour continued, the government handed over the recruitment responsibility to private recruiting agencies. It was in this context the Emigration Ordinance of 1982 was framed. The Ordinance was designed to set the rules for governing the labour migration sector. The Ordinance elaborates the licensing and monitoring mechanisms of recruiting agencies. It also explicitly describes the punishment of individuals and private recruiting agencies involved in fraudulent practices. Gradually in 2002 rules were framed on the basis of the 1982 ordinance. Besides the Ordinance and rules, a policy has

²⁹ People(ELCOP) & Palal Prokashoni, ,pp.237-256.
³⁰ Islam, note 2
³¹ Migrant Forum Asia, note 7
also been framed in 2006 entitled ‘Overseas Employment Policy.’\textsuperscript{32}

Bangladesh government finalized the Overseas Employment Policy (OEP) on November, 2006 to accelerate manpower export, make it profitable and hassle-free, and ensure welfare of the expatriate workers. This policy was grounded on the constitutional rights of work as a right and duty under Article 20 and freedom of profession or occupation under Article 40. The policy is focused on protecting rights of the expatriate workers at home and abroad, preserving the existing market and exploring newer job markets, and welfare of the expatriates. Besides, the policy stressed enhancing professional skills of the workers going abroad, transparency in recruitment process, sending remittances through legal process and maintaining good behavior and discipline on part of the expatriate workers.\textsuperscript{33}

The scope of the policy includes both males and females, short-term labour migrants and long-term Diaspora populations. In order to ensure protection in the destination countries, the OEP stresses signing of Memorandums of Understanding with labour receiving states, providing legal assistance and ensuring welfare of migrants through Bangladesh missions abroad. Increasing the flow and better use of remittances as investment is another major issue covered by the OEP. The social and economic reintegration of migrants upon their return home is also an important concern of the OEP. In addition to the Bangladeshi migrant workers who go on short-term contracts, the OEP underscores the welfare needs of the long-term migrants. The responsibilities of various government agencies such as Ministry of EWOE,\textsuperscript{34} the BMET, the DEMOs and TTCs and also those of BAIRA have been elaborated in the annexure of OEP.\textsuperscript{35}

Furthermore, the government is going to enact a new law titled ‘Migration and Overseas Employment Act’ which aims to govern migration by ensuring migrant rights. It upholds

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid
\textsuperscript{34} Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment
\textsuperscript{35} Migrant Forum Asia, note 7
the principle of non-discrimination and makes provisions for emergency return of migrants in case of crisis in destination countries.\textsuperscript{36}

6. PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES

6.1 Conditions of Workers after Return and Opportunities for Employment

A IOM\textsuperscript{37} study found that most of the returnees did not have any specific idea about their rehabilitation plan.\textsuperscript{38} The bulk of the remittance of the returnee migrants was used by their families in their absence and very little amount was left for their economic rehabilitation. Only a small portion of the remittance was used in productive purpose. Returnee migrants also faced enormous pressure to part with resources that they still commanded. A section of them managed to engage in economic activities on their own initiatives, without any institutional support. However, a good number of them were still unemployed. Some were left with no choice but to explore options for fresh migration.\textsuperscript{39}

The IOM study also shows that migrants tend to lose contact with the agents that may be very useful to connect themselves with any kind of livelihood earning activities. Some returnees expressed the view that during their absence new agents had come about with whom they had no contact. They felt there had been major changes in the social and economic environment since they had left for overseas. Returnees also identified a host of other economic problems that they had to reckon with on return. These include, lack of information on current business trends, lack of advisory services, lack of job opportunity.\textsuperscript{40} However, a large number


\textsuperscript{37} International Organization of Migration


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid
of them identified lack of access to formal credit as one of the major impediments for reintegration. Most of the migrant workers knew that part of their remittance would be used for consumption purposes by their families. However, they expected that some amount would be kept aside for them for their use once they returned. Unfortunately on return some migrants found that their families had spent the entire amount, others had kept very insignificant portion.\textsuperscript{41}

The social problems identified by returnee migrants constitute major impediments in their reintegration process. They reported that friends and relatives considered them to be fortunate ones among them and made different types of claim on their resource that are very difficult to withstand. Pressure for investment in business, pressure to arrange migrant visa and clear outstanding debt, pressure for expenditure in social ceremonies and help for weddings are some of common social pressures what returnee migrants often experience. Some returnees stated that all these have contributed to a sense of distrust towards surrounding environment. Problems such as those stated above encountered by the migrant workers on return stifle their initiative to start afresh and make them yearn for the life they left behind overseas.\textsuperscript{42}

The study also traced the changing pattern of employment of the migrants. It found that most of the migrant workers were unskilled when they went overseas. A good number of them had acquired new skills. However, a large segment of the skilled returnee migrants are currently engaged in occupations that do not have any relevance to the skills they acquired overseas. Only a handful was earning their livelihood by utilising their skills. The study also noted that while staying overseas the migrants were amenable to take up menial jobs, but at home there was a general reticence to do such job. The study also found that the level of unemployment among returnees was more than twenty-five percent as compared to fourteen percent before migration.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid
For their effective reintegration the returnees underscored the need for business support and creation of enabling environment so that they could invest. This included improvement in law and order situation, controlling of extortion, access to business information, access to credit and technical assistance. Those returnees interested in setting up of manufacturing enterprises wanted the government to allot plots of land while others emphasised the need for access to capital, training on business organization and management, accounts book-keeping and marketing. Some of the returnees expressed their desire to migrate again. Others wanted the migrants associations to take up new service oriented roles such as business advisory service and co operatives for safe investment and facilitating credit.\footnote{44}{Ibid}

\section*{6.2 Reintegration of Women}

A recent IINSTRAW/IOM study threw some light on the economic impact of migration of women from Bangladesh, including their reintegration. The study categorized economic impact under three broad heads: families where overall economic impact of the migration was positive; families where economic impacts were negative and families that had experienced mixed economic impact.\footnote{45}{Ibid}

With regard to employment it was found that although 45.5\% of the total numbers of women migrants were working before migration, only 23.3\% resumed work after return. Of course, a section of them were still undecided if they would seek employment at home or try to go abroad again. The garments workers and nurses did not have much of a problem in getting jobs after their return; however, those who were involved in other manufacturing and processing industries found it difficult to get jobs where they could use the skills learnt abroad. It may be worthwhile to note that those who worked as domestic aides before going abroad did not want to take up such positions any more.\footnote{46}{Ibid}

An important element in effective reintegration process is the amount of remittance that woman migrants would have

\footnote{44}{Ibid}
\footnote{45}{Ibid}
\footnote{46}{Ibid}
at their disposal on return. The INSTRAW/IOM study found that 5 5.65% of the total remittance was used in consumption, health care and education purposes of their families. Loan repayment constituted another 18.54%. If one takes into account savings, land purchase and investments in economic ventures then one would find that only 12.3 3% of remittance was used on these avenues. This is only a fraction of the total amount sent. And it may very well be that even this amount may not be under the control of female migrants themselves as their male relatives (father, husband or brother) are likely to have them under their disposition. 47

Reintegration process becomes difficult if debts incurred during migration are not cleared. The INSTRAW/IOM study reported that 68.15% of the respondents could pay off their debts and 23.56% could partially pay off. Only 8.25% constituted the hardship cases who could not service their debts as their migration plan suffered setback. 48 From the above discussion one may suggest that reintegration process of the female migrants is contingent upon a host of factors. Major among them are the scope and opportunity for use of skills acquired abroad, resources available to them and the ability of the women migrant workers to establish their command over such resources. It was also noted that the prospects for reintegration also differed on the occupational pattern of the respondents.

In certain cases women’s migration may adversely affect the children. Very often effective substitutes are not found to fill the absence of mother. The male household head is unlikely to take up the role of his spouse in caring for the children. Often elder members of extended households are brought in to take care of the children, but they may not necessarily be successful in performing the task. This may result in children performing poorly in studies to drop out from schools. Sometime due to lack of adequate monitoring and supervision, children may mix with ‘wrong crowd’, get addicted to drugs and become social outcasts. In the absence of mother, the smaller children’s immunisation schedule and attendance to health care clinics suffered. In other cases,
the education of the girl child who took over the role of her mother suffered. Women migration has also led to break down of marriages. The INSTRAW/IOM study reported a few cases where husband of the women migrant married for the second time in her absence; in other cases, their husband divorced them.  

Obviously, the above scenario makes women returnees more vulnerable than their male counterparts. Not only they have to look for ways to economically reintegrate themselves, they would also need to cope with tremendous psychological stress. Sometime they suffer from guilt feeling of causing harm to their children, and perhaps their marriage, for pursuing material well being.

7. ASSESSMENT OF RETURN MIGRATION AND LEVEL OF REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE

It is a common knowledge that there does not exist any systematic database on the migrant workers of Bangladesh. The BMET’s Statistical Division keeps records of (i) yearly flow of migration by country of employment, (ii) yearly overseas employment statistics by categories of workers and institutions that sent them, and (iii) countrywise and year-wise remittance earned through the Wage Earners’ Scheme. There is however, no record on returnee migrants. No other private or non-governmental body keeps record of returnee migrants. This leads to conclude that it is difficult to get accurate statistics on the return flow of migrants to Bangladesh.

7.1. Reintegration Assistance: Support Availability in the Home Country:

A IOM study suggests that economic reintegration in the home country is a major problem for the returnee migrants. The problem is particularly compounded by the absence of any effective policy framework and support mechanism of the government institutions, or of any meaningful civil society initiative in this respect.

49 Ibid
50 Ibid
51 Siddiqui and Abrar, note 38.
52 Ibid
The existing level of support and reintegration assistance provided to the returnee migrants of Bangladesh suggests that none of the major actors in the migration process - the Government, the BMET; the private sector, particularly BAIRA,\(^53\) or the non-governmental organisations, including the migrant workers associations have not developed any programme to have visible impact on reintegration of migrant workers.\(^54\)

BMET is the lead government agency in the labour migration process. It co-ordinates and regulates the migration flow and is the enforcing organisation of Emigration Ordinance 1982. Despite the fact that the agency’s role is pivotal from the government’s side in sending migrants abroad, it has done little on their return. There is no mechanism to record their return flow back to the country. Neither there is any concerted effort to provide guidance and support to the returnees, who in a way have to make a fresh start for economic and social reintegration. Perhaps the only way returnees can make use of BMET’s service is by registering them with the district offices, like any other person seeking job in the country. There is also lack of effort for harnessing skills and insights gained by migrants during their deployment overseas. The returnees are not involved either in the briefing sessions or at the Technical Training Centers runs by BMET.\(^55\)

Of the private sector institutions BAIRA has been actively involved in suggesting policies for the sector and lobbying for the recruiting agencies. As BMET took up more of a regulatory role, BAIRA members have secured an overwhelming segment of the recruitment market. Reintegration of the returnee migrant workers is not high on the agenda of BAIRA. The twenty-two objectives of the Association do not include returnee migrant workers. Only two objectives make references to encouraging and advising Bangladeshi workers abroad to send money through official channels and them through “their beneficiaries at home for investments of their earnings in the productive pursuits

\(^{53}\) Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
\(^{54}\) Siddiqui and Abrar, note 38
\(^{55}\) Ibid
in the country”. So far, there has not been any concrete initiative of BAIRA with regard to the capacity building of the migrants.\textsuperscript{56}

In 2011, 39,401 workers were deported with passport or outpass. 16,017 of them were deported from Saudi Arabia alone. Outside this figure are the returnees from Libya. One of the most important challenges that the government faced in 2011 was ensuring security of its workers in the Gulf and North African countries where movements for democratization began. 60,000 to 70,000 workers in Libya for all practical purposes became refugees or internally displaced during the people’s uprising there. Once the media, particularly the Bangladeshi media, started transmitting the hardship of the workers, within a short span of time the government of Bangladesh successfully repatriated 36,656 workers with the help of international community. By taking loan from the World Bank the government has also provided 11.50,000 to each of the returnees as one time grant. It took assistance of IOM in distributing grant. RMMRU\textsuperscript{57} survey conducted on 10,000 returnees from Libya demonstrates that 92 percent of the workers on an average have Tk. 165,000 as debt. Only 13 percent of them could secure reemployment until August 2011 and a majority of them urgently needs job. National trade bodies such as FBCCI, BUMEA, BKMEA, and REHAB expressed their commitment However, their statements were not followed up by action. In order to create opportunities to employ returnees RMMRU has created a website (libya.rnmiru.org) where profiles of returnees are available that includes gender, education, skill and work experience. This may be treated as the first complete database with skills of jobseekers. After the regime change in Libya infrastructural development projects will soon commence. A small number of companies have already called back 100 workers. The government needs to prepare a concrete plan of action for reemployment as well as clearance of due salaries and compensation to the affected workers.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid
\textsuperscript{57} Refugees and Migratory Movement Research Unit
\textsuperscript{58} Siddiqui and Billah, note note 29
Some NGOs, like BRAC,59 Manusher Jonyo Foundation, BOMSA, WARBE,60 SSKS,61 OKUP62 etc. are operating some projects regarding awareness raising projects. Even that all these approaches are insufficient in comparison to the required ones. They don’t have any significant investment also.63

BNWLA64 and BSEHR65 have taken up cases of the returnees who have been dealt unfairly in the host countries. ASK has a close working relationship with Tenaganita, a Kuala Lumpur based NGO. It has undertaken research, placed Demand for Justice Notice and wrote protest letters a number of times to the concerned government officials. ASK is currently engaged in documenting cases of women migrant workers who are back from the Middle East.66

The Dhaka University based Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) has been involved in a number of research initiatives on migrant workers. The Unit also organises seminar and conferences to highlight the importance of the sector and draw attention of the policy makers on issues such as the need for a legal framework upholding the dignity of migrant workers.67

BRAC, the world’s biggest nongovernmental organization was working with Bangladesh BMET to create a database comprising the skills, experiences and contact information of the workers. With the help of 10 volunteers, BRAC staffs had already completed data entry for almost a third of the 30,000 workers. BRAC staffs in 36 districts visited households of the returnees and counselling them. The organization has been making appeals for funds from donors and non-resident Bangladeshis to rehabilitate 500 of such workers in

59 Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
60 Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees working in relation to migration
61 SSKS is Shosti Samaj Kalyan Shanstha
62 Ovibashi kalyan Unyan Parishad
63 Islam, note 2
64 Bangladesh National Women Lawyer Association
65 Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights
66 Siddiqui and Abrar, note 38
67 Ibid
these areas. BRAC now plans to link the workers to future opportunities so that they can earn their own living. In 2011, BRAC launched a pilot project named “Rehabilitation, Repatriation, Re-Integration and Re-Migration” aiming at smooth re-absorption of Libya-returnees into the economy. The local NGO worked round the clock for more than a week at Shahjalal International Airport providing emergency relief support to Libya-returnees. The NGO had done so at the request of the government and in partnership with the International Organization for Migration. It had also deployed Bengali-speaking team from its programme in Sierra Leone to assist in coordinating the evacuation of Bangladeshi workers from Libya.68

There has been a general lack of interest of trade unions on migrant workers. The mainstream trade union movement in Bangladesh has not considered migrant workers as one of their own constituencies. A survey of thirteen trade unions and their federating bodies reports that none of these organizations had any meaningful involvement with the migrant workers, let alone returnees. However, all the trade unions surveyed felt strongly about the undocumented migrant workers of Bangladesh.69 Over the last few years, a section of returnee migrant workers have taken initiative to form organizations of their own. WARBE was formed in 1997. The objectives of WARBE include (i) empowering migrant workers to become an effective advocacy group in influencing policies of the government for the welfare activities of migrant workers; (ii) hold pre and post departure AIDS awareness programme; and (iii) work as an information pool on returnee migrants. WARBE organizes numerous activities including lobbying for the ratification of the U.N. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and for more effective reintegration programs for returning migrants. On International Migrants Day, December 18, WARBE organizes rallies in support of returned migrants, including producing street dramas, etc.70


69 Siddiqui and Abrar, note 38

70 Ibid
7.2 Ranks and Migrant Workers

Bangladeshi migrant workers face innumerable problems in the host country in managing and remitting their earnings. As the bulk of the work force is not exposed to banking system before their departure for overseas, there is a general ignorance of formal banking procedure. Even those who are interested in opening accounts face problems in doing so for lack of education, confidence and meeting the bank’s condition of securing an introducer. Sometime their work conditions do not allow them to access bank at regular hours. They also face problems in remitting their money. Filling up the forms properly is a major hurdle for them. Delay in transferring the money, non-availability of information about transaction, rent seeking by bank and postal department functionaries in the home country are some of the routine problems that migrant workers face.\textsuperscript{71}

Little effort has been directed to address these problems and to harness the resources if migrant workers in an organized way. Some state owned commercial banks have branches in the Middle-eastern and Gulf states. Their method of banking, however, continues to be traditional and not geared to the particular needs of the migrant workers. A good number of banks have facilities under which migrant workers can open Foreign Currency accounts and enjoy certain advantages that common account holders are not entitled to. Few commercial banks have introduced bonds and term deposits targeting the wage earners, while Sonali Bank has undertaken an industrial investment project worth US$130m. These initiatives have mainly attracted the professional category of Bangladesh work force abroad. Small savings of migrant workers are yet to be drawn in by these institutions.\textsuperscript{72}

In this context the experience of the Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL) has been unique and noteworthy. In order to effectively link up with its potential clients IBBL has established contacts with different exchange houses that are used by the Bangladeshi migrant workers to remit money. Intensive campaign about the advantages of sending

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid
money through official channels (income tax rebate, future investment opportunities etc.) has been a major factor behind IBBL’s success in earning the confidence of the migrant workers.\footnote{Ibid}

IBBL has also developed client friendly forms and simplified the system of opening accounts. Under such simplified procedure even those who lack valid documentation can also open account and remit money. Efforts have been made to keep the account holder regularly informed about the status of his account and individual transaction. The bank has also facilitated opening of accounts of various groups of migrant workers: clubs, association, savings cooperatives and professional cooperatives.\footnote{Ibid}

Efforts in the host countries were matched by the bank’s extension of services to areas where the migrant workers originate. In order to provide effective service branches were opened in strategic locations so that beneficiaries of migrant workers and migrant workers themselves on return can access these accounts with relative ease.\footnote{Ibid}

Government has recently set up the Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) in April 2011 with a view to ensuring smooth transfer of remittance, financing migration cost and providing capital support to returnee migrants and their families to help productive utilization of remittance.\footnote{Ibid} The aggregate capital of the bank is BDT 100 million. The bank received 95\% of its capital from the subscription of departing migrants; in other words from the Wage Earner’s Welfare Fund. In 2011-12 fiscal years, the bank secured Tk. 21 crore as allocation for migration loan programme. In the last 8 months, the bank provided Tk. 1 crore as migration loan to 175 potential migrants at 9\% interest rate. The bank also provided 18 lakhs taka to 10 small entrepreneurs from its 10 crore taka investment loan allocations. In this regard, the interest rate for commercial sector is 12\% and non-commercial sector is 10\%.\footnote{Ibid}
7.3 Glimpses of Saving Schemes and Account Facilities for Migrant Workers

Non-Resident Foreign Currency Deposit (NFCD)

Migrants can have a NFCD account in any branch of Bangladeshi and foreign banks. The account can be opened for different periods: one month, three months, six months or one year in foreign currency. This account can be maintained for an indefinite period even after the return of the wage earner (migrants). One is also eligible to open an NFCD account with his/her savings within six months of one’s return to Bangladesh.78

Wage Earners’ Development Bond

The remittance of Bangladeshi migrants abroad can be invested in Bangladeshi currency in five-year Wage Earners’ Development Bond. The profits are investable in Bangladesh and the bonds accrue an annual interest rate of 12%.79

Non-resident Investor’s Taka Account

One can open a NITA by the money remitted for investment in the share and securities of the capital market of Bangladesh. Such an account may be opened in any dealer branch of an authorized bank. The central bank also allows investment of funds in remunerative business projects to the account holders.80

Most of the commercial banks, nationalised and private, offer the Bangladesh Bank facilities and instruments to Bangladeshi wage earners. These include the NFCD account, Wage Earner’s Welfare Bond and Non-resident Investor’s Taka Account.81

US Dollar Investment Bond, 2002

The IRD of the MoF (Ministry of Finance) introduced the US Dollar Investment Bond, 2002 in 6 October 2002 as an investment instrument in foreign currency for Bangladeshi

79 Ibid
80 Ibid
81 Ibid
emigrants.\textsuperscript{82} It provisions for issuing US Dollar Bond in the name of a holder of a non-resident account against remittances from abroad to the account.

The US Dollar Investment Bond(s) shall be matured for payment after completion of three years from the date of its issue. The Bond holder will be entitled to draw interest on half-yearly basis at 6.5% fixed rate per annum in US Dollar. However, the Bond holder may surrender the Bond(s) before maturity and encash the same at the paying office in which case interest will be paid as under:

i) No interest for encashment within 1 year of issue;

ii) 5.5% interest for encashment after completion of 1 year but within 2 years;

iii) 6% interest for encashment after completion of 2 years but within 3 years; and

iv) 6.5% interest for encashment after completion of 3 years.

\textbf{US Dollar Premium Bond, 2002}

The US Dollar Premium Bond is one of recent investment instruments in foreign currency introduced for Bangladeshi emigrants by the IRJJ, MoF. It was announced in October, 2002 and became applicable from the next month.\textsuperscript{83}

The US Dollar Premium Bond(s) shall be matured for payment after completion of 3 years from the date of its issue. The Bond holder will be entitled to thaw interest on half-yearly basis at 7.5% fixed rate per annum in Bangladesh currency at the USD/BDT rate. However, the Bond holder may surrender the Bond(s) before maturity and encash the same at the paying office in which case interest will be paid as under:

i) No interest for encashment within 1 year from the date of issue;

\textsuperscript{82} The US Dollar Investment Bond Rules, 2002, Internal Resources Division, Ministry of Finance, Dhaka.

\textsuperscript{83} The US Dollar Premium Bond Rules, 2002, Internal Resources Division, Ministry of Finance, Dhaka
ii) 6.5% interest for encashment after completion of 1 year but within 2 years;

iii) 7% interest for encashment after completion of 2 years but within 3 years; and,

iv) 7.5% interest after completion of 3 years.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Short-term Strategies for Re-integration of Returnee-migrants

Awareness Campaign of Migrant Workers

Awareness campaign and information dissemination are two major contributors towards establishment of returnee migrants in the country of origin. These will facilitate the self-employment initiatives of the returnee migrant workers. A continuous basis program may be adopted to implement the following activities in particular:

i) Mass awareness raising for the returnee migrant workers and general masses including all stakeholders.

ii) Preparation of Leaflets, Posters, Brochure, Information-booklets, etc. for awareness raising and information dissemination.

iii) Preparation of short docudrama for TV publicity and awareness through Radio.

iv) Counseling workshops at district level for proper utilization of remittances. Awareness may also be extended to address the health issues of the migrant welfare particularly STDs, HIV and AIDS.

Creation of Facilities

A resource center has been established in BOESL with the assistance of TOM and another resource center has been set up in BMET under a project assisted by UNIFEM which is meant for extending all sorts of cooperation and information dissemination for women migrant workers.

84 Islam, note 2
85 Ibid
Similar type comprehensive resource center may be established for dissemination of required information for the returned migrants to advise all sorts of assistance towards successful reintegration.

ILO\textsuperscript{86} may arrange awareness campaign and other promotional activities in relation to stimulate the conception regarding returning safe migration. Following components may specifically be addressed in these programs:

i) Capacity building of District Employment and Manpower Offices and Probashi Kalyan Desks at DC Offices to deliver services to the returnee migrants more efficiently.

ii) Another approach may be the introduction of services through establishment of Migrant Resource Centre both centrally at BMET and at the district level offices for returned migrants to provide all sorts of information regarding successful reintegration.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{Skill Training Program}

The issues of poverty alleviation and sustained economic growth emphasize the human capability development of the country. In the context of globalization process, it is felt necessary to develop appropriate human resources to meet the demand of international market aiming at improving effective skill and knowledge. There exists significantly excess supply of unskilled labour in the overseas employment market on the other hand there is a serious dearth of labour with specific skills. Utilization of returnee migrants may be adopted as a development strategy to use the real resources for Improvement of productivity. Skill development training is an essential approach toward improving the efficiency of the returned migrants. Its ultimate effect will result in higher level of productivity, earning of remittance and ensures better and improved standard of living.\textsuperscript{88}

Training to the returnee migrants would establish a better image of Bangladesh to create base for the potential skill

\textsuperscript{86} International Labour Office;
\textsuperscript{87} Islam, note 2
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid
re-migration. If it can be made possible to export more skilled workers instead of unskilled labour, foreign currency earning would be much more. Ensuring employment of more skilled workers, remittance can be enhanced to a great extent through their higher wages. Wages of a skilled worker is three to four times than that of an unskilled one. The need for skilled manpower both at home & abroad is increasing day by day and in the context of this ever-increasing need, vocational training activities should be expanded to face competitiveness in the world market. To create more employability, Language and soft skills of returnee migrants also need to be improved to prepare them for remigration.\textsuperscript{89}

Training may be operated in line with the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) recently developed in TVET reform project under implementation by EC-ILO. Skill training program may be operated in Technical Training Centers under BMET and also in other training institutes under the department of Youth Development. Trades of training may be selected on the basis of the choice of the returnee and their interest.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{Loan and Micro Credit}

Micro Finance Institutions (MFI\textregistered) has emerged as major actors in savings mobilization and credit disbursement at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. Their success in mobilization of savings and collateral free credit delivery system and door-to-door services through contacts at the grassroots make them potential institutions for encouraging savings and investment of remittance in Bangladesh. The major chunk of returnee migrants and their family members are interested to engage them in small business, agro-based farming like poultry, cow rearing, fish culture, improved cultivation, small transport vehicle, setting up shops, etc. Bank finance and credit facilities definitely augment their initiatives along with their own collateral and equity in investment. What they need is proper counseling in regard to appropriate

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid
place of investment and to attain the small entrepreneurship quality.\textsuperscript{91}

**Counseling Program for the Returnee Migrants**

Most effective and needful service is counseling on how to invest and utilize the savings from remittances. Sometimes it is recognized that appropriate consumption strategy is much more difficult than. Improper use of remittance may compel them in unsuccessful migration and lead the returnee migrants to a worse situation on than before. Migrant workers are coming back with skill, knowledge and some savings. But without having proper guidance and information, they cannot invest the expertise and money in a productive venture. There should be program and plan aiming to contribute to provide orientation to the returnee migrant workers about all necessary information, knowledge and skills essential for the better management of their re-integration with a series of activities.\textsuperscript{92} It is necessary to provide various info services to the returnee migrants through various project activities.

A counseling cell may be established to provide the following services:

i) Counseling for investment facilities.

ii) Orientation on the entrepreneurship development.

iii) Counseling on utilization of remittance and savings, etc.

iv) Advice on training on new skills in demand.

Presently the services through mobile phone operators become very much popular and effective to reach the target groups. Information dissemination on different programs for the returned migrants can be facilitated through mobile phone operators, SMS call center or helpline services. It would be an automated, quick and efficient info service.\textsuperscript{93}

**Special Efforts for the Women Migrants in Distress**

Sometimes women migrant workers face a multiple forms of

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid
discrimination. Workplace and return to home may expose women migrant workers in the following situations: 94

i) As a low skilled worker in an isolated work environment

ii) Exploitation on return at home country

iii) Gender-based violence at workplace

iv) Problem in social reintegration

v) Limited opportunities for investment at home

vi) Lack of facilities in market oriented skills development for women

vii) Less access to information, education and training than men

Concentration of employment opportunities in a few low paid and unskilled conventional jobs limits their opportunity for further overseas employment. Most of the female migrant workers are illiterate or less educated which lead them to more vulnerability of exploitation. The workers are not aware about the proper use of the remittance through savings and investment, which direct them towards similar economic conditions as previous status or sometimes worse than before. To rehabilitate and re-integrate the women migrant workers a special program may be designed in an appropriate manner for the women workers who experienced physical and psychological trauma during their stay abroad. 95

For the returnee women migrants, those faced problems in the country of workplace; assistance may be provided for reporting to police, filing complaints to BMET & special courts and liaison with law agencies. Returnee women can play a pivotal role in the development of human resources with appropriate training. It needs special emphasis to dedicate skill development of the workers. To meet the demand for skill training private sector and NGOs may be engaged in a big way in the vocational training field. The focus of world economy has been changed from the cheap unskilled labor to highly skilled and organized workforces.

94 Ibid
95 Ibid
Developing human resources through institutional and informal training should get priority. With these views, skill development training program of women workers should be strengthened and be made effective to cater to the needs of the overseas market. Specific demand may be explored for women workers in different trades other than housekeeping trade for returnee migrants. Counseling program will be most suitable and necessary for female migrant returned.96

**Probashi Kalyan Bank (PKB)**

PKB can be a viable approach to cooperate in the reintegration process. On 28 June 2012, Bangladesh Migrants Foundation, a migrant rights body alleged in a press conference that PKB grants loan of BDT 84000 in the maximum to an aspirant migrant who wishes to work in labour receiving countries situated in Middle East Asia whereas an aspirant migrant who eyes on Europe may receive a loan of BDT 120000 from PKB to finance his migration. As a matter of fact, the actual migration expense is found to be 3-4 times higher than the loan sanctioned to prospective labor migrants. Present approach of PKB is considerably maximizing propensity of prospective worker and returnees to take informal loans at high rates of interest and mortgage property to moneylenders. Thus migration expenditure is unreasonably mounting every year endangering the financial stability of prospective migrants workers and their families.97 Not only that, PKB is yet to take effective steps with regard to economic reintegration of returnees. PKB should come up with more easily accessible credit facilities for returnees and their family members to ensure successful economic reintegration of returnees. As a specialized financial institution, this bank must forge partnerships with commercial banks and non-government organizations in processing, disbursement and recovery of loans. It can also use the extensive network of post offices in remittance transfer. Most importantly the operation of the banking should be completely automated.98

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96 Ibid


98 Siddiqi and Farah, note 36

AIJJS; 30
Government should frame a policy keeping 20 per cent of total posts in Probashi Kallyan Bank reserved for the expatriate Bangladeshi.

**Logistical Assistance**

Logistical assistance tends to be reactive rather than proactive. It is usually only in response to a crisis on a large scale - e.g. on account of war, natural or economic disasters - or a crisis at the level of the individual migrant who has been abandoned by her/his employer or agent, who is escaping from physical or sexual harassment or threats, or who has a medical emergency not covered by the employer. Bangladesh has to develop bilateral and multilateral agreements with labour receiving countries to ensure the safe return of migrants and victims of abuse and exploitation. Labour attaches in consulates or embassies have to play an increasingly important role in negotiating for the release of undocumented workers, those in jail or stranded in embassies. In crisis or emergency situations, government has to ensure that an emergency plan is in place to cope with any sudden large-scale repatriation/deportation of migrant workers from abroad. Such plans should coordinate the efforts of various government and non-government agencies to ensure that the returnees have the necessary humanitarian, shelter, transport, monetary and other assistance needed.

**Legal Assistance**

Returning migrants often need legal assistance for a variety of reasons relating to, for example, the original recruitment process, and violations by employers, unpaid wages, illegal termination, contractual problems, violations committed by the migrants themselves, and other legal problems. Government and non-government organizations have a crucial role to play in providing such legal counselling and access to legal aid and conducting training on legal literacy, so that returnees can demand restitution for any abuse or exploitation that occurred during the migration process.

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The government should ensure that legal aid is available for returnees who wish to take action against exploitative employers or recruitment agencies. As far as possible, the legal aid should be free - since those most in need of it are not likely to be able to afford to pay; Legal assistance should be gender-sensitive.\textsuperscript{100}

8.2 Long-Term Strategy

Strategies for reintegration may be adopted both in the short and long term for returnee migrants. Sustainable reintegration program for the returnee migrants needs a long term perspective plan, which is to be implemented in phases in successive projects. The implementation program will be planned on long term and short-term basis.

Some long-term programs may be adopted to encourage a sustainable return of the migrant workers. This program is to associate with phase-wise implementation starting from data collection to solutions towards economic stability.\textsuperscript{101}

Phases may be designed as follows:

\textbf{Data collection and Analysis}

i) Collection of data on return migration should be done in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

ii) The ways through which the individual skilled migrants can most professionally utilize their skill after return should be examined.

iii) Best practices of the returnee migrants to facilitate successful re-integration are to be studied and explored.

iv) More information on the factors that contribute to successful re-integration should be secured.

v) Analysis should be done on the ease and difficulty of setting up new initiatives and the socio-cultural context, particularly in terms of gender role.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid
\textsuperscript{101} Islam, note 2
ICT Application

i) An Internet based network of illustration of successful return should be established.

ii) An informal network of skilled returnees who have set up business could offer a forum for idea sharing, support, advice and the provision of mentors for new returnees willing to establish business.

iii) Links with Bangladeshi networks abroad may be promoted and supported.

iv) Web based information about job opportunities in Bangladesh should be made available.

Institutional Support

i) There should be national consulting services for connecting returnees to jobs or social networks to help in setting back.

ii) Government has to explore the appropriate institutions to facilitate the reintegration of skilled migrants.

iii) Entrepreneurship program for returnee migrant may be designed specially.

iv) Suitable arrangement for the education of returnee migrants’ children should be made.

Policy Support

i) Appropriate re-integration assistance programs need to be introduced including financial packages, information dissemination, reintegration advice, long-term support for employment, microenterprise activities involving institutional support and business assistance.

ii) Incentive package may be offered to the Diaspora for better achievement.

iii) Dual citizenship may be offered to encourage productive investment.

iv) Private sector entrepreneurship should be facilitated to create more opportunities for skilled returned migrants in a) IT, b) Health, c) Services sector, etc

8.3 Adopting a comprehensive project

With a view to achieving the objective of getting the end result from the migration, it is necessary to ensure economic and social re-integration of the returnee migrants. This is a profound issue in the complete migration discourse particularly for the returnee migrant workers. In this regard a project may be taken for implementation of all the relevant activities.¹⁰²

Stakeholders in migration process need to be involved in this project including government functionaries, local government bodies some relevant ministries and departments, Banks, Financial institutions, civil society and commercial corporate to make the project a success. Government and local Government bodies will facilitate the services with necessary guidance and monitoring Among other involved parties, civil society, media and press will play the lead role to maintain and uphold the motivational foundation and information base. It will disperse the cultural wave of the project to provide orientation to the target group.¹⁰³

The project may be taken to implement the following activities:

i) Training on new skills in demand in the local market (computer training, garments machine operation, etc.)

ii) Refresher training in some specific trades to upgrade the skills.

iii) Entrepreneurship development training.

iv) Community Based training (CBT) for women returnees

Community Based training is a successful project implemented by ILO with BMET addressing economic empowerment rural women. The selected women from village areas had

¹⁰² Ibid
¹⁰³ Ibid
been trained in various trades in different modules, which ultimately lead them to facilitate in self-employment. This type of training program may be replicated for returnee women migrant workers for their economic reintegration. It will facilitate to provide adequate personalized support for returnee women migrants to be an entrepreneur.

CEDAW\textsuperscript{104} is an international tool to ensure women rights in their overall working life. Provisions of CEDAW may also be useful in protecting the rights of migrant workers particularly in case of re-integration program.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

The reintegration of returnee migrant workers demands development of a well-defined reintegration program with a concrete plan of action. Reintegration should be conceptualized as a process that begins in the receiving countries much before the actual return of the migrant worker. Such a program would help the migrant worker prepare for return and reintegration while still working abroad. Moreover, some manpower sending countries created very effective practices to establish sustainable re-integration of migrant workers to accrue the fruits of migration. These are Philippine, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, etc.\textsuperscript{105} These programs can be replicated and be successfully implemented in Bangladesh with a view to promoting sustainable economic and social reintegration of returnee Migrants.

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\textsuperscript{104} Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

\textsuperscript{105} Islam, note 2