



Workshop Report on

“Workers’ Perspective on Working & Living Conditions in Garment Work Abroad”
13-14 February 2018 Hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon, Dhaka



Supported by: ILO-DFID partnership program on “Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East”.

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Abbreviation

BAIRA	: Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BILS	: Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies
BMET	: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BOESL	: Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited
CBO	: Community Based Organization
CI	: Chief Instructor
CSO	: Civil Society Organization
CTA	: Chief Technical Advisor
DFID	: Department For International Development
IBC	: IndustriAll Bangladesh Council
ILO	: International Labor Organization
INGO	: Inter Governmental Organization
MEWOE	: Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment
MOFA	: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	: Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
RMG	: Readymade Garment
SGSF	: Somnilito Garments Sromic Federation
TU	: Trade Union
WIF	: Work In Freedom

Overview

On 13-14 February 2018, Awaj Foundation, with support from ILO's Work in Freedom (WIF) program funded by DFID, organized a 2-day workshop on 'working and living conditions of women garment workers abroad'. The workshop brought together national and international experts from labour rights organizations, trade unions, printing & electronics media, CSOs, INGOs, academics, recruitment agency representatives, government representatives and policy makers. Testimony was heard from returnee women garment workers on their experience working in Jordan and Mauritius.

The discussions emphasized the need for more training and awareness among migrant workers on their rights abroad so that they are not vulnerable to abuse. Government agencies, such as high commissions, should play a more active role in ensuring the safety of workers. Participants also discussed the lack of benefits offered to migrant workers in destination countries, such as lack of unionization rights, decent accommodation and working conditions. Arbitrary dismissals and forced deportation were also common in the countries discussed.

Through group-work the participants identified a set of gaps and formulated recommendations to solve the problems facing migrant garment workers. These were submitted to the chief guest, Honorable Minister Mr. Nurul Islam BSc of the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment. The recommendations emphasized formulation of transparent MoUs between sending and receiving countries, better training for workers on rights and cultural adaptation and coordination between CSOs & trade union groups between sending and receiving countries.

Background and Rationality of the workshop:

Over Ten million Bangladeshis are currently working abroad, among which there is an increasing trend of female workers migrating for overseas employment.

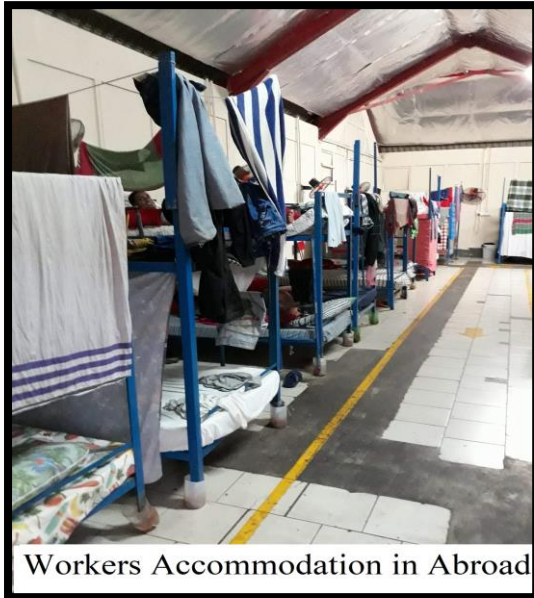
As per BMET data for the year 2016, a total of 118,088 Bangladeshi female workers secured overseas employment. Many of these females migrate for overseas garment work in countries such as Jordan, Mauritius, Qatar, and UAE, etc. However, a large proportion of females migrate in low wage occupations such as house-keeping and cleaning. BOESL has sent 44, 367 female workers to over 44 garments industries in Jordan up to 2017, data shows that in 2016-17 fiscal year a total of 8,354 garment workers migrated in Jordan.

Many women and girls, especially of indigenous or low income backgrounds, face deception by recruitment intermediaries or exploitation by employers – practices that amount to forced labour. As per ILO, some 55 per cent of all victims of forced labour are women and girls.

According to the testimonies of the returnee women workers, many times, migrant workers moving to various destinations both through regular and irregular channels, find themselves in vulnerable positions at several stages of their journey. This is mainly due to lack of information regarding migration and its formalities, cheating by some agencies handling migration and lack of professional skills and knowledge in the context of destination countries.

On the one hand, some Bangladeshi garments workers left the country through irregular channels, without valid travel and employment documents, requisite information on the working and living conditions, knowledge about the destination country and without having any idea regarding their protection and rights.

This, coupled with the lack of communication in the language exposes them to risks of exploitation and abuses in the destination country. Women migrants are more vulnerable and have difficulties in availing services and useful information regarding job security as well as emergency services in the overseas locations.



There is a high incidence of recruitment abuses affecting migrants' livelihood options. Side by side, migration can lead to abusive employment practices at the place of destination such as unpaid wages, confiscation of ID documents, and excessively long work hours without rest days, restrictions on freedom of movement, deception and intimidation. Trafficking and violence, including sexual violence, are common experiences faced by women migrant workers at sources and destination.

Lack of access to proper information makes the female migrants vulnerable to situations during recruitment as well as in employment at the destination countries, making them subject to economic exploitation and even cases of

violence, such as in regards to trafficking and forced labour. Awareness raising is therefore important in reducing women's vulnerability to exploitation and violence regarding overseas migration.

This report by Awaj Foundation aims to complement interventions of the "Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East" known as Work in Freedom programme of the ILO funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), to strengthen the capacity of community workers in cooperation with local governments to ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place so that women are able to access their rights.

Against this backdrop, the workshop will be organized to share information on working and living conditions in the garment sector abroad. This includes worker testimonies, ILO experience, and existing studies.



Day 1, sessions: Inaugural

This session was moderated by: Ms. Farzana Nawaz, advisor to the Awaj Foundation. Opening remarks by: Ms. Nazma Akter the General Secretary and Executive Director Awaj Foundation. Overview the workshops by: Mr. Igor Bosc the Chief Technical Advisor, Work in Freedom (WIF) project ILO. Paper presentation by: Ms. Therese Blanchet, the social anthropologist and director Drishti Research Center and public hearing by 4 returnee women migrant garment workers.

Opening remarks

Ms. Nazma Akter the General Secretary and Executive Director Awaj Foundation Bangladesh formally inaugurated the workshop session by welcoming all participants. She thanked the ILO Work in Freedom project for their help in putting together the workshop.



Ms. Nazma Akter, GS & ED, Awaj Foundation

Awaj has been working in the Ready Made Garments (RMG) sector since 2003. Women from this sector migrate abroad because they are not getting proper salaries and other benefits. However, women workers are still facing a lot of suffering when they are abroad due to lack of awareness their rights and negligence by sending and receiving countries. Ms. Akter invited the guests to share their ideas and thoughts over these two days so that solutions can be found to ensure decent working and living conditions for migrant women garment workers.

Introduction and Objectives of the workshop

Mr. Igor Bosc the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), Work in Freedom (WIF) project, ILO has briefed the audience for the goal of next 2days workshop.

RMG sector are creating employment opportunities for Bangladeshi women workers not only in Bangladesh, abroad also. But they are not well informed and aware about their working-living conditions and recruitment process.

Bangladesh and other countries build a network to improve working and living condition for women migrant workers under Work in Freedom (WIF) project. Under the project, lot of discussion has made in several countries; but all the problems will not be solved over the nights. Moreover, we have to try and hope to be improved in future.



Mr. Igor Bosc, CTA WIF Project, ILO, Delhi

Awaj's experience with migrant women garment workers

Ms. Farzana Nawaz said that Awaj's migration program was created because of the need for support from members who were going abroad for work. In recent years, an increasing number of women workers have been migrating for garment sector work as opposed to domestic work. The main destination countries for women are: Mauritius, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain and Japan. Awaj helps these workers by information dissemination, raising awareness about their rights, services provided by the government, creating passports, navigating bureaucracy & providing emergency repatriation & other services to the victims at home and abroad.



In Awaj's experience, some of the main drivers of migration are poor wages (purchasing power parity of average compensation in the RMG sector in Bangladesh falls below World Bank poverty line), prevalent gender-based violence (over half of women in the RMG sector face physical or verbal abuse at the workplace), low job security and socio-economic reasons, such as the financial pressure they often face as primary bread-winners of their families.

Obstacles faced by women garment workers in the migration process include:

- Illegal fees charged by recruitment agents that can be as high as 4 months' salary
- Lack of clarity on employment conditions before departure - majority of women only receive their contracts a few hours before departure. Even when they receive the contracts they are often not able to understand the contents.
- Discrepancy between promised salary and benefits and actual
- Health and safety concerns at factories (e.g. inadequate cooling systems) and at home (cramped accommodations)
- Discrimination – lower salary and benefits compared to locals and discrepancy in payment between migrant workers from different nations
- Abuse – verbal, physical, mental and sexual abuse at work and violent repression of protests.

Session 1: Why people migrate

This session examined the reasons behind women workers from Bangladesh migrating abroad for work in the garment sector. Ms. Farzana Nawaz, advisor to Awaj Foundation, presented an overview of Awaj's work with migrant garment workers. Ms. Nawaz's presentation was followed by public hearing from 4 returnee women migrant garment workers. In the last part of the session, Ms Therese Blanchet, social anthropologist and director of Drishti Research Center spoke about some of the drivers of women's labour migration and the social challenges that they face.

Returnee Women Migrant Garment Workers testimonies



01. Ms. Anu Begum (35) was a garment operator in Bangladesh. She had huge loan from several MFI. To repay those loans and change her luck, she took more loans to migrate Mauritius. Two years she was there; but could not change her fate and now decided to re-migrate. (See her full testimony in Annex-01, Case study-01)

02. Ms. Happy Akter (35 & Married) decided to go abroad for better future; but husband was not agreed. Middleman has taken 6 years to send her Jordan. By this time she worked in a garment. Her contact was not bad there; but husband has misused all the money. So, she has taken another step to re-migrate. (See her full testimony at Annex-01, case study-02)



03. Ms. Rojina (29, married) she had been working four years in a Garment factory in Bangladesh. For the betterment of her family, she went labor migration to Mauritius. Employer deprived her rights on accommodation, medical, under/non salary paid, contact violation etc like other testimonies. (Her testimony at annex-01, case study-03)



04. Ms. Minoti, (25 single) worked in RMG sector in Bangladesh for 5 years. She was only earning person of her 2 member's family. For better future of herself and widow mother, she decided to go garment work in Jordan; but lack of her awareness, migration was unsafe. (see her testimony at annex-01, case study-04).



Session 1 was followed by open discussion, suggestion & recommendation. Highlights of the session include the following:



Mr. Pervez Siddique, Film 4 Peace

- Mr. Pervez Siddique Chair of 'Film 4 Peace' asked how we could address the issue of living condition of migrant workers. The fact that migrant workers are not provided culturally appropriate food has been discussed since 2006, but nothing has been done to address it. The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) should take initiative to address this issue.

Dr. Wazed Ali of Dhaka Ahsania Mission: Women are more vulnerable. So, civil society should advocacy with government to take initiatives to prepare migrant women workers with the communication and cultural adaptation skill so that they are able to cope better with their lives abroad. The government should also provide more support for passport and visa processes to women workers.



Dr. Wazed Ali, Dhaka Ahsania Mission



Mr. Nilambar Bhuiayn, Paradigm Shift India

- *Mr. Nilambar Bhuiayn, Paradigm Shift India: There is serious discrimination in Mauritius between foreign and local workers, for example foreign workers accommodation is not good. Mauritius labor laws not permit Medical benefit, accidental benefit even union; but; testimony ensured it was only eye wash.*

- Mr. Reez Mohumad Chuttoo Chairman of Confederation of Private and Public Sector Unions (CPPSU), Mauritius: According to our constitution, no discrimination no abuse to foreign workers. Do you know, what rights Mauritius labor law has given you, he asked Mauritius returnees? Answer was "no". He asked Bangladeshi organizationsto work jointly to ensuring workers' rights, wellbeing and awareness development.



Mr. Reez Mahammad Chuttoo, Mauritius

- Mauritius returnees responded to Mr. Chuttoo “NO”, they didn’t know any union, they were threatening for job termination, if speak with any government official or Brand representative, even Bangladeshi leader didn’t take any action, they shared audience.

Social challenges faced by migrant women workers



Ms Therese Blanchet, director of the Drishti Research Center, spoke about the social challenges faced by migrant women workers. Migrating women face severe social stigma because they leave their families behind to go abroad. Their virtue and loyalty to their families can be called into question as they are seen to be too ‘independent’. As a result, migrant women workers don’t feel free to speak about the abuses they face at their workplace as it can add to the stigma and shame.

Women migrant workers also don’t feel ownership over their own earnings because of the stigma attached to migration. Testimonies from workers and their families show that unlike male migrant workers, women migrant workers are often reluctant to show their wealth, such as by constructing a nice house in their village, because the community might be suspicious of how this money was earned.

Women workers often also send their earnings back to their husbands, which puts them in a vulnerable position. There are numerous examples of husbands either squandering the money or taking that money and leaving the family to getting married again. In these cases, the women migrant workers are left with nothing once they return home after years of work abroad. Some of these women are then forced to go back to work as domestic servants or in the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

Continuation of open discussion, suggestion & recommendation:

- Mr. Reeaz Mohumad Chuttoo of CPPSU Mauritius: What types of services and how Awaj Foundation provides especially to women migrant workers?
- Answered by Mr. Nahidul Hasan Nayan, Operation Director, Awaj Foundation: ***Awaj Foundation a women lead worker rights based non-profit organization. Workers interest is our top priority.*** We disseminate information through our 20 worker centers name as ‘Women Café’ in different districts and on line too. For example, 2010-11 BOESL announced to recruit garment workers for overseas employment. We circulated to the workers, aware them and gave administrative



support to make their passport and others necessary papers. You may know, dalal (middleman) charge double money for passport and use false information there. Once unrest situation was created in a garment in Jordan, a sick Bangladeshi female worker was disappeared, they asked Awaj's support. In these situations, Awaj solve the problem through our international partners, INGOs and colleague organizations of those countries.



Ms. Umme Hasan Jhalmol, BILS (Far back)

- Ms. Umme Hasan Jhalmol, BILS: She suggested, empowering our women migrant workers on information and extending our government monitoring to abroad for safety and security of them.

Mr. Sopan, a Jordan returnee: I worked 13 years in Jordan, if any Bangladeshi goes to Embassy, embassy people treat them as dogs and cats, he shared his experiences.



Mr. Sopan a Jordan Returnee Migrant

Session 2: ILO findings on working and living conditions of migrant garment workers

In this session Mr Igor Bosc, Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO Work in Freedom project provided an overview of the ILO's work in Jordan.



Audience of Mr. Igor's presentation

The garment industry in Jordan employs over 65,000 workers most of whom are migrant men and women from South Asia. The majority of migrant workers are Bangladeshi women; other nationalities include Indians, Nepalese, Sri Lankans, Burmese, Pakistanis, Malagasy and Cambodians. Migrant workers

comprise nearly 75% of the total workforce in the sector. The Ministry of Labor oversees worker and employer organizations and monitors conditions in the sector. The General Trade Union of Workers in Textile, Garment and Clothing represents all workers in the apparel sector. However, migrant workers are not allowed to participate in elections or be represented in union committees.

The Better Work programme by the ILO in Jordan has been operational since 2009. All garment factories exporting from Jordan to the US are obligated to participate in the Better ***Better Work operates a workers' center in Irbid Qualifying Industrial Zone where workers***

can participate in basic computer skills and English courses and dance lessons. There is also a computer room for workers to Skype or use computers and outdoor and indoor facilities for recreational purposes. Workers can also access union support through the center. The Bangladesh Embassy in Amman also provides consular services through this center and organizes cultural activities in collaboration with local and international organizations. Work Jordan programme.

According to the experience of the Better Work Programme, challenges faced by migrant women garment workers include the following:

- ***Mandatory pregnancy tests:*** All female workers recruited from Bangladesh (as well as Sri Lanka) go through a pregnancy test prior to their arrival in Jordan. This is against the ILO's guidelines for fair recruitment which deems mandatory pregnancy tests as a discriminatory practice. Jordan also has strict restrictions on abortion which is only available to married women. As a result, if migrant women workers become pregnant then they have to resort to unsafe means, such as using abortion pills, in order to terminate unwanted pregnancies.
 - ***Inadequate food and housing:*** Employers are required to provide food and housing to migrant workers. While there are several legal provisions by the Ministry of Health for providing decent accommodation to worker but there remain gaps in implementation. Most workers have to live in really cramped quarters sharing rooms with up to 16 people. Inadequate ventilation and lack of space and privacy is a problem in 60% of the accommodations provided by factories.
 - ***With holding workers' personal documents:*** In 2016, Better Work Jordan documented seven factories where worker's personal documents such as passport, work permit or ID cards were forcibly withheld. One of the factories voluntarily shut down in 2016. Five of the 7 factories are subcontractors to exporting factories, and most are small or medium sized.
 - ***Payment:*** There is a significant gap between minimum wage of migrant workers and locals. Better Work also found that accurate payment of overtime hours is an issue for over 35% of all factories.
 - ***Severance pay:*** Unlawful termination of workers and lack of severance pay is a serious issue. When workers are terminated or when they resign they are often denied accurate payments. Since workers are forced to leave the country soon after termination it is not possible to challenge these types of situations. Unpaid amounts can include compensation for unused annual leave, pending salary dues and return ticket home. In 2016, Better Work Jordan reported 15 factories for not adequately compensating resigned workers.
- Q&A, Experience sharing, suggestion and recommendations:***
- Mr. Nilambar Bhuiayn: Raised issues to know the role of ILO in Jordan on passport holding by employer, longtime working hours and living condition of garment workers?



Ms. Arafat Ara, Sr. Staff Reporter, FE

- Ms. Arafat Ara sr. reporter of The Daily Financial Express: She raised issues of salary differentiate of Bangladeshi workers & Malagasi workers, worker's rights on freedom of Association and Collective bargaining issue.

- Ms. Nazma Akter: She raised the issues of workers basic rights on their Occupational Health and Safety, insufficient lighting and ventilation at living area, proper ways and regular payment. Women workers are contributing whole supply chain system, she added.

- Mr. Masum Billah Chief Instructor, Shekh Fazilatunnesa Mojib Mohila TTC: Most of our women migrant garments workers are exploited for their less education, lack of awareness and employers profit orientate attitudes. Whereas their migration driver is poverty. Employers should be workers friendly and we have to extend our solidarity to them.



Mr. Masum Billah, C.I, SFMMTTC

- Mr. Igor Bosc, CTA WIF project, ILO: A lots of quires answer are already have given in presentation of the findings. Moreover, ILO WIF program coordinate with relevant ministry of labor and health to solve those problems, he mentioned in responded of above quires.

Session 3: Experiences of trade unions in destination countries

This session was chaired by Mr. Md. Touhidur Rahman the secretary general of IndustriAll Bangladesh council and moderator was Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed the Executive Director of BILS (Bangladesh Institute Labor Studies). Presenters were Ms. Anannya Bhattacharjee & Mr. Ashim Roy of Asia Floor Wage Alliance and Ms. Jane Ragoo & Mr. Reez Mohammad Chuttoo of CTSP-CMCTEU Mauritius.



(R-L): Mr. R M Chuttoo & Ms. Jane Ragoo of Mauritius, Mr. Touhidur Rahman of IndustriAll, Ms. Bhattacharjee of India, Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed of BILS, Mr. Ashim Roy of India

In her presentation, Ms Anannya Bhattacharjee said that Asia is the largest producer of garments in the global market and as such Asia's garment producing countries should cooperate regionally to coordinate bargaining with global brands. They should also develop a cross-border definition of living wage. There should be a social alliance between trade

unions and human rights organizations and brands should be recognized as the principal employers. Over the years, prices that brands pay to the manufacturers in Asia have decreased, reducing the profit margins of Asian manufacturers, which depresses the low poverty wages production workers continue to get.

In order to mitigate the problems faced by migrant garment workers, regulation should be targeted towards recruiters and diverse recruitment practices to curtail informal recruitment practices. Pressure should also be put on brands to be accountable for their supply chains. Migrant workers are regularly denied the opportunity to unionize and these needs to be addressed.

She concluded her presentation by saying that visa and documentation schemes should not be used to terrorize workers and keep them silent. Law enforcement and visa enforcement should be de-linked so that workers are able to speak up about the problems they are facing without fear.



Ms. Anannya Bhattacharjee of AFWA

Mr. Ashim Roy of Asia Floor Wage; He focused on international migration trends and practices. No one country implements their labor law to the migrant/foreign workers. Raw goods of garments are importing from outside, the economy is losing and sending cheap labors to abroad. The Bangladeshis are internationally known as the cheapest labor; but in present market economy, labor's ways are increasing. He stressed that sending countries have a very important part to play. MOUs must be developed between sending and receiving countries. Migrant workers should be made aware of their lifestyle change they will face in the destination countries. Usually workers are excluded from international processes that determine migrant workers' rights, such as the Global Compact on Migration. National and international stakeholders, especially Trade Unions should play a bigger role in this space to ensure the rights of migrant workers.

Ms Jane Rago gave the trade union perspective in a destination country – Mauritius. Mauritius is a country of migrants. According to the Ministry of Labor there are currently 39,000 migrant workers in Mauritius, of whom 10,000 are women. 21,967 workers come from Bangladesh.

Migrant workers suffer from compulsory overtime although Mauritius has ratified ILO convention 29 on Forced Labor. Migrant workers are now allowed to join trade unions. They are obliged to HIV tests upon arrival. They also get very low salary compared to locals and they are not allowed to seek justice before a court of law for abuse or unjustified dismissal.

The CPPSU supports migrant workers in Mauritius by advocating for legal reforms. They succeeded in updating the lodging and accommodation regulations. They also helped to prepare the civil society statement for the 2012 Global Forum on Migration and Development.

The challenges they face their work include language barrier, lack of social protection for workers, contracts in countries of origin that supersede Mauritian law, and interference from recruitment agents. They demand that they have access to workers so that they can educate them about their rights, a Foreign Worker's Regulation to better protect workers, elimination of unscrupulous recruitment agents, MoUs between governments to ensure workers' rights and spaces where workers can meet and socialize with their peers.

Mr. Riaz Mohammad added that CTSP wants cooperation from trade unions & CSOs in Bangladesh so that they can work together. They want incoming workers to be properly educated about their working conditions and rights so that they are less vulnerable to abuse.

Mr. Touhidur Rahman of Industrial said that an ILO framework is needed to implement something like the Asia Floor Wage. Workers also need health insurance and adequate health plans in destination countries.

In the Q&A period after the session the following comments were raised by the audience:

- Ms Nazma Akter, Executive Director of Awaj: A business class capturing all money and power through exploitation of workers and workers are become marginalize. Bangladeshi workers need to not be seen as easily exploitable for the profit of powerful business interests. Globally supply change policy must be established.

- Mr. Sk. Abdullah Al Raji, Chairman, WARBE: Being a returnee migrant and migrant community organizer, he stressed on in-depth research on women migrant garments workers. He explained, lot of research has been done specially on domestic and overall migrant workers; but **women migrant garment workers issue is a new phenomenon. We always emphasis to migrate skill labor and these garment workers are skill labor. Moreover, women migrant garment workers vulnerabilities are less than women domestic workers and earning is better than them.**



Day 2 sessions

Session 4: Recruitment practices for garment work abroad

This session was chaired by Dr. Nurul Islam the Director of BMET (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training), Govt. of Bangladesh. Panel discussants were Mr. AKM Masud Ali the executive director of INCIDIN Bangladesh, Mr. Shamim Ahmed Chowdhury Noman the joint secretary-2 of BAIRA (Bangladesh Association of International Recruitment Agencies) and Mr. Nilambar Bhuiyan the Director Paradigm shift, India. The session was moderated by Mr. Igor Bosc.



Mr. Masud Ali of INCIDIN said that Bangladeshi garment workers are now being sent to a variety of countries such as Russia, Japan, Jordan, Mauritius, Bahrain, Egypt, etc. However, foreign government only show interest in women workers not men as women are much less likely to get involved in trade union activities. In the case of Jordan, women workers are only sent through official recruitment agency BOESL. There is an increasing interest in garment work because it is seen to be much more desirable than work as a housemaid.

Challenges faced by Bangladeshi workers in Mauritius include the threat of deportation, having their mobile phones confiscated, overcrowded and poorly furnished accommodations, unscrupulous middlemen that create situations of debt bondage for workers. Similarly, in Bahrain there are examples of workers being forcibly deported and workers' protests being violently disrupted by state forces.

Mr. Ali added, changes that are needed to improve the condition of migrant workers include: zero charges for the migration process, transparent contracts, no retention of passport and id papers, rights to join unions and representation, safe and decent living and working conditions, access to remedy and freedom to change employment and safe and timely return.

Mr. Shamim Ahmed Chowdhury of BAIRA said that MoUs between sending and receiving countries should be centered on workers' rights. The responsibilities of the private sector should be included in the MoUs. Training should be emphasized in the recruitment process. Changing government policy in Bangladesh should be a collaborative process between the government, civil society and the private sector.

Mr. Nilambar Bhuyian said that workers are often unaware of what conditions are actually in their contracts. They are also unaware of any MoUs between their country and country of destination. The High Commissions and Embassies should collaborate with trade unions to ensure that problems of lack of awareness are solved. The Indian High Commission is very proactive in this regard and can be used as an example of vigilance on behalf of workers.

Session 5: Group work for preparing recommendations

The whole group work was designed and facilitated by Ms. Suraia Banu the National Project Coordinator of ILO WIF (Work in Freedom Project) Dhaka office and moderated by Mr. Igor Bosc the Chief Technical Advisor of ILO Work in Freedom project.

In This session, the participants were divided in to six groups. They were tasked with finding the gaps and recommendations for

- i) Policy makers,
- ii) Practitioners/Civil Society Actors
- iii) Action taken by the MEWOE (Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment).

Photo Gallery on 'Group Work



Closing session

Group presentation on Gaps and recommendations

Group work recommendations were presented by individual group representatives to the Chief Guest.



Mr. Akib Bin Anwer, OKUP



Ms. Prof. Israt Sharmin, Chair CWCS



Ms. Humaira Ahmed, IBC



Mr. Golam Moula, DEMO, Dhaka

Identified gaps, recommendation & responsibility:

Bilateral Agreements and MoUs between countries are not transparent and not available to CSOs.

- Bilateral Agreements and MoUs should be made with all destination countries and disclosed to CSOs & private sectors in both the countries.
- Responsibility to both the countries of origin and destination.

01. Employment contracts are not in native/easy language

- Employment contracts should be in native language along with English translations and the terms and conditions of services should be explained in an easy way
- Responsibility to both the countries of origin and destinations.

02. Lack of awareness in training on rules & regulations, culture & customs in destination countries especially the type of remedies they can have access to in case of abuse

- Train workers on rules and regulations, culture & customs of destination countries, and should include all necessary information of the destination contracts.

- Responsibility to both the countries of Origin and Destination.
03. Inadequately trained and unfriendly labor attaché in mission
- Establish complaint mechanisms Provide adequate training, build capacity to easy communication among workers & labor attachés
 - Responsibility to the Country of origin and their foreign mission in respective countries.
04. Insufficient information in contract on emergency health services
- Provide contact information on
 - Comprehensive health service
 - Regular health check up
 - Treatment & medicines
 - Responsibility of Origin and destination countries
05. Lack of database
- Need to be current & returnee migrants' database
 - Responsibility of Origin countries
06. Gaps between policy and implementation
- Implementation of existing laws & policies
 - Responsibility of Origin and destination countries
07. Gaps on gender sensitivity
- Sensitize policy makers and other stakeholders on gender issues
 - Responsibility of Origin and destination countries
08. Lack of Brands involvement
- ILO Standard living conditions with:
 - Women friendly environments
 - Cooking facilities
 - Freedom of movement
 - Access to communication devices & facilities
 - Brands & destination countries.
09. Lack of coordination between all stakeholders
- Coordination between all stakeholders entrusted with care of migrants like MEWOE, MOFA, BMET, BAIRA, legal practitioner, CBOs, NGOs, TU, Rights base organization Insurance policy & social pension
 - Country of origin & destination
10. Lack of workers safety net
- Ensure workers Insurance, pension and social security policy,
 - In origin and destination countries.
11. Lack of monitoring at training, working and living place
- Regular unannounced visits to the training, working & living space, monitoring & supervision
 - At country of origin and destination.

12. Gaps of communication between CSOs and workers

- Create space for civil society engagement with migrant workers
- In destination countries.

Closing speech:



The chief guest was Honorable Minister Mr. Nurul Islam BSc the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment, the Special guest Mr. Gagan Rajbhandari the Deputy Country Director & Officer in Charge of ILO Dhaka office, the session was chaired & Moderated by the Professor C R Abrar Department of International Relation Dhaka University & Executive Director RMMRU, Overview the workshop by Mr. Igor Bosc the Chief Technical Advisor WIF project ILO and Vote of thanks by Ms. Nazma Akter the General Secretary & Executive Director Awaj Foundation.

Mr. Nurul Islam BSc the Honorable Minister, Ministry of Expatriates' welfare and overseas Employment said, the problems that were identified at the workshop will be addressed by his ministry. Stakeholders to be make concerted efforts to create a sustainable and safe migration from Bangladesh. A good part of the country's women workers going abroad were employed in apparel companies and the government was trying to solve their problems with help of the International Labor Organization and other stakeholders, he added.

Mr. Gagan Rajbhandari, deputy country director and officer in- charge of ILO Dhaka was the special guest. He said female migrant workers are not aware of their contract signed before migrating abroad. Combined efforts are necessary to protect their rights, he added.

Dr. C. R Abrar, executive director of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) Chair & moderating the programme said, coordination between foreign affairs and expatriates' welfare ministries is very important to secure workers' protection. He also stressed the need for ensuring representation of workers in the existing Wage Earners' Welfare Board for proper utilization of its fund for the wellbeing of workers.

Ms. Nazma Akter the General Secretary and Executive Director of Awaj Foundation has given vote of thanks to the chief Guest, special guest, chair of the secession, ILO WIF project, international resource persons, chair and moderators with presenters of the previous sessions and audience for spent their valuable times, suggestion.

Thank you