

A Report on the Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on Key Functions and Services of MoEWOE, BMET, and WEWB for Enhancing Better Coordination and Efficiency

Organized by: WARBE Development Foundation in Partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Supported by: The Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh

Date: 30 September 2025 (Tuesday)

Venue: Hotel InterContinental (Pearl Hall), Dhaka

Executive Summary

The multi-stakeholder consultation on “Key Functions and Services of MoEWOE, BMET and WEWB for Enhancing Better Coordination and Efficiency,” held on 30 September 2025 at Hotel InterContinental, Dhaka, brought together government representatives, civil society organizations, trade unions, private sector actors, academia, returnee migrants, media, and development partners to reflect on migration governance in Bangladesh. Organized by the WARBE Development Foundation in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and supported by the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, the consultation highlighted the critical need for better coordination among the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), and the Wage Earners’ Welfare Board (WEWB). While Bangladesh has recently introduced the National Reintegration Policy 2025, discussions have revealed persistent overlaps in institutional mandates, particularly between BMET and WEWB in training services, a lack of systematic data on returnee migrants, inadequate grievance redress mechanisms, and insufficient transparency in the governance of the WEWB fund. Stakeholders emphasized that the WEWB fund must remain dedicated to migrant welfare and reintegration support, with strong calls for independent audits and public reporting to ensure accountability. Concerns were also raised about Bangladesh’s dependence on only seven destination countries for 93 percent of migrant employment, underscoring the urgent need for market diversification. The consultation further stressed the importance of strengthening pre-departure orientation, increasing embassy capacity abroad, and fostering public–private partnerships for more efficient service delivery. Despite differences, there was consensus that greater institutional clarity, stronger inter-agency coordination, and transparent governance are essential to safeguard the rights of migrant workers, improve reintegration, and promote sustainable migration governance.

Background

Migrant workers contribute significantly to Bangladesh’s economy through remittances. However, they continue to face systemic challenges across the migration cycle, including a lack of access to information, weak legal protections, wage theft, abuse, and inadequate reintegration support. Despite initiatives by the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), including the enactment of the National Reintegration Policy 2025, coordination gaps between MoEWOE, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), and the Wage Earners’ Welfare Board (WEWB) hinder efficient service delivery. These gaps often result in overlapping responsibilities, delayed services, and fragmented data management, ultimately affecting the protection and welfare of migrant workers.

In this context, WARBE Development Foundation, in partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and with support from the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, convened

a multi-stakeholder consultation to review institutional mandates, reduce functional overlaps and propose reforms for enhanced efficiency, accountability, and service delivery for migrant workers and their families. This initiative aligns with Bangladesh's commitments under the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Objectives of the Consultation

- Identify overlaps and gaps in institutional mandates.
- Strengthen coordination and synergies among MoEWOE, BMET, and WEWB.
- Propose a revised business allocation framework.
- Review existing fund management and governance of WEWB.
- Address inefficiencies and bottlenecks in service delivery.
- Recommend reforms to ensure transparency, accountability, and improved welfare outcomes for migrant workers.

Opening Session

The consultation commenced with **Mr. Syed Saiful Haque**, Chairman, WARBE Development Foundation, welcoming participants. He recalled the government's recent commitment to labour commission reforms, recognizing it as a positive step for migrant rights. He expressed gratitude to members of the Labor Reform Commission present at the event and highlighted the strong engagement of trade unions, CSOs, NGOs, and private sector actors in safeguarding migrant rights. Reflecting on the outcomes of the recent Colombia GFMD Summit, he noted that global dialogues continue to reaffirm the importance of centering migrants' voices in policymaking and protection frameworks. He stressed that ***"this is the time to reclaim the rights of migrants and ensure that every institution works hand in hand to serve those who sustain our economy through their hard work abroad."*** He emphasized the need to identify institutional gaps, enhance accountability, and strengthen the implementation of existing laws and treaties to ensure a fair, transparent, and rights-based migration governance system in Bangladesh.

Keynote Presentation

Ms. Jasiya Khatoon, Director, WARBE Development Foundation, delivered the keynote presentation and set the context for the consultation by highlighting key institutional challenges and opportunities in improving coordination among MoEWOE, BMET, and WEWB. Her main points included:

She began by briefly introducing the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) and explaining its objectives in promoting migrant welfare, reintegration, and social protection. She underscored the urgent need to ensure proper coordination among service-providing ministries and departments, emphasizing that the efficiency of migration governance depends on how well these institutions collaborate under a common framework. She remarked, ***"Coordination is not optional; it is the lifeline of migrant protection and service delivery."***

- **Duplication of Institutional Roles:** She identified overlaps between BMET and WEWB, particularly in training and skills development programs. Both institutions conduct similar capacity-building activities for migrant workers, often targeting the same beneficiaries, which results in inefficiency and confusion in service delivery.
- **Data Gaps on Returnee Migrants:** While BMET maintains comprehensive records of migrant departures, there is a critical lack of consolidated data on returnee migrants. This absence of reliable data hinders evidence-based policymaking and the design of

effective reintegration strategies.

- **Need for Stronger Coordination Mechanisms:** Ms. Khatoon underscored the importance of improved coordination among MoEWOE, BMET, and WEWB to eliminate service overlaps and ensure that institutional mandates are clearly delineated. Enhanced collaboration, she emphasized, would lead to better efficiency, transparency, and accountability.
- **Centralised Grievance Redress System:** She advocated for a unified and accessible grievance management system to ensure that migrants' complaints are handled efficiently and equitably. Such a mechanism, she noted, would strengthen institutional trust and responsiveness.
- **Policy Alignment and Reform Opportunities:** Referring to the recently enacted National Reintegration Policy 2025 and the Labour Reform Commission's recommendations, Ms Khatoon noted that these policy instruments offer an important opportunity to redefine institutional roles, promote synergy, and address long-standing inefficiencies in labour migration governance.
- **Commitment to Collaboration:** She reaffirmed WARBE Development Foundation's commitment to fostering dialogue among government bodies, CSOs, and international partners to ensure migrant-centered reforms that enhance coordination, efficiency, and service quality.

Mr Shaquib Qureshi, an independent Consultant, took over the floor to present a set of six critical and thought-provoking questions aimed at stimulating a deeper dialogue on institutional responsibilities, policy coordination, and the overall governance structure of the labour migration sector. His intervention emphasized the importance of clearly defining roles among key stakeholders — including the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), and the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) — to minimize overlaps, reduce duplication, and strengthen accountability.

The six questions were designed to provide the audience with a reflective perspective on current coordination practices, prompting introspection on gaps, challenges, and opportunities for reform. Mr. Qureshi's approach set the tone for an introspective, solution-oriented discussion aimed at enhancing the coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness of migration governance in Bangladesh.

Reflections

Mr. Zia Hassan, Policy Advisor, MoEWOE, reflected on these questions by proposing the development of a unified institutional framework that would bring MoEWOE, BMET, and WEWB under one umbrella to strengthen coordination and strategic alignment. He noted ***"With 93% of our workforce in just seven countries, we cannot afford isolated efforts; we need one coordinated system to secure new markets and protect our migrants."*** This poses risks of overdependence and vulnerability to market fluctuations. Mr. Hassan therefore underscored the urgent need for market diversification to reduce such risks. He also suggested exploring the possibility of allocating a portion of WEWB funds for market research, innovation, and development activities that could help identify new labour destinations and emerging employment opportunities for Bangladeshi workers.

In addition, he highlighted the ongoing efforts, such as BMET's online GMC platform developed with ILO, which is actively resolving grievances through its enforcement wing, but emphasised that it should be expanded under direct ministerial supervision to ensure broader institutional

accountability. Referring to BOESL's potential in the Malaysian labour market, he stressed that corporate employers must be held responsible when migrants incur excessive migration costs. He further proposed the establishment of a shared coordination cell with BAIRA to jointly explore new markets and enhance labour diplomacy.

Mr. Hassan concluded by stating that policy frameworks must remain people-centric while being feasible for business actors, calling for greater engagement of private sector stakeholders and native CEOs in market networking and reform initiatives.

Mr Shakil Akhter Chowdhury, member of Labour Reform Commission, clarified that the WEWB funds are workers' welfare funds, contributed directly by migrants themselves, and must remain exclusively dedicated to their welfare and protection. He emphasized that diverting these resources for market expansion or promotional activities would contradict their fundamental purpose, noting, ***"If a migrant's money does not serve another migrant, we cannot call it welfare."*** Mr. Chowdhury appreciated the discussions on conflict resolution mechanisms and database management, but expressed concern that the current institutional structure remains overly bureaucratic and not fully inclusive, particularly due to the absence of trade union representation on the board. He further stressed that policy reform must undergo proper analysis, with a clear focus on implementation impact and real convenience for migrants.

Mr. Naimul Hasan Jewel, leader of the Bangladesh Workers' Federation, raised a question: ***"What are the exact responsibilities of the labour attachés?"*** He also noted that assigning additional manpower to these roles is time-consuming but necessary for effective performance. He highlighted the persistent problem of overcharging and lack of transparency in recruitment processes, emphasizing the need for a standardized mechanism to monitor and prevent excessive recruitment fees, including fixed migration costs and stronger enforcement of existing regulations. Furthermore, he suggested that WEWB funds could be strategically utilised for skill development initiatives and the establishment of one-stop migrant support centres to streamline services such as counselling, documentation, and grievance handling, thereby making migration safer and more efficient.

Dr. A. T. M. Mahbub-Ul-Karim, Joint Secretary, WEWB, emphasized the pressing need to bridge data gaps and resolve policy incoherence between WEWB and BMET. He pointed out, ***"Without harmonized data and coordinated policies, our programs will remain inefficient and fail the migrants we serve."*** He stressed that improving data integration and institutional synergy is essential to evidence-based policymaking and the effective delivery of migrant welfare services.

Ms. Sheepa Hafiza, Chair, Films4Peace Foundation, brought critical attention to the gaps in accountability and quality within Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) programs, noting that although PDOs are mandatory, their content and delivery vary widely. She emphasized that training and orientation must be consistent, rights-based, and rigorously monitored, especially as BMET, despite being the key overseas authority, currently lacks a clear mandate on training quality and oversight.

She stressed that real progress demands evaluation of outcomes and assessment of people's participation, questioning why recommendations made by migrant alliances over the years have not been implemented. Highlighting the deeply rooted issue of dignity and care, she pointed out that service providers and embassy officials often fail to treat migrants as human beings, calling for empathy and active listening to their stories and struggles. She stated, ***"If our systems cannot listen to migrants as humans, no reform will ever be meaningful."***

Ms. Hafiza further underlined that if we are to address violence within migration, we must begin with women, as they are the most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. She proposed deploying independent grievance representatives in destination countries to ensure migrants have access to impartial support.

Mr. Asif Ayub, Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF), called for evidence-based and transparent policymaking in managing migrant welfare funds. ***"Transparent fund management and strategic planning are essential to secure migrants' welfare and open new opportunities."*** He advocated for comprehensive audits of WEWB funds and for making audit reports publicly accessible to build trust and transparency. Additionally, he recommended channelling resources into productive and sustainable initiatives, such as affordable housing projects for low-income migrant workers, which could enhance their long-term security and reintegration prospects.

Mr. Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, Former Secretary General, BAIRA, offered several practical recommendations aimed at improving service delivery and migrant protection. He emphasized the need to strengthen staffing in Bangladeshi embassies abroad to better address migrant grievances and support welfare cases efficiently, noting that gaps in embassy capacities must be addressed. He also identified data mismatches between National ID (NID) and passport information as a critical administrative barrier that must be resolved to improve service access. Additionally, Mr. Noman recommended joint government-worker contributions to the WEWB to ensure sustainability, suggesting that the government should contribute BDT 3,500 per migrant as an equal share for welfare funding. He highlighted that employers must be held accountable for exploitation, pointing out that fines on recruiting agencies are often unfair and do not always target the actual perpetrators. He also stressed the need to clarify how much support or services migrants can access, considering their remittances are a significant economic pillar, noting, ***"If the systems don't hold employers accountable, migrants will continue to bear the cost of exploitation."***

Mr. Masud Rana, Director, BMET highlighted that while BOESL and other non-government actors have limited capacities, BMET functions as a government entity responsible for regulating and overseeing labour migration. The representative noted that vacancies in BMET cannot be filled due to strict rules and regulations, which negatively impacts overall manpower and efficiency. To improve service delivery, they proposed a one-stop service center where all migration-related services can be provided under a single roof, and that migrant registration be linked to the National ID (NID), making identification easier and ensuring migrants are accurately counted in official records. ***"Integrating services under one roof and linking registration to NID will make migration management efficient and accountable."*** The representative also stressed the importance of a proper review process after implementing recommendations to ensure effectiveness.

Open Floor Discussion: Several attendees expressed concern that despite frequent consultations and recommendations, implementation remains weak. A key issue highlighted was the persistently high cost of migration, with participants urging the need for a clear accountability mechanism to ensure that recruiting agencies cannot charge excessive fees and that migrants are not pushed into informal payments. Participants also stressed that the WEWB fund should be strategically utilized, not only for immediate welfare but also for skills development, market exploration, legal assistance, and the establishment of a one-stop service system to support migrants throughout the migration cycle.

Way Forward

Ms. Rahnuma Salam Khan, National Project Manager, ILO, highlighted the critical importance of maintaining the focus of the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) fund on the welfare and protection of migrant workers, emphasizing that it should not be diverted for market exploration or other purposes beyond its mandate. She observed that there has been a significant positive shift in the mindset of key stakeholders, including government officials, civil society

representatives, and recruiting agencies, toward greater accountability, transparency, and collaboration. Ms. Khan stressed the need for evidence-based policy-making, effective grievance management mechanisms, and strengthened coordination between MoEWOE, BMET, and WEWB to ensure efficient service delivery. She recommended that future interventions prioritize the protection, reintegration, and welfare of migrant workers, with an emphasis on sustainable and inclusive approaches that involve all stakeholders in the migration governance process.

Key Recommendations

- **GMC Centralization:** Establish a centralized system to streamline migration-related services and data management.
- **Skill Training:** Align BMET's skill development programs with market demand to ensure employability.
- **WEWB Fund Utilization:** Strategically use funds for welfare, reintegration, and skill development.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensure that migrants are included in all decisions affecting their welfare and services.
- **Defined Roles:** Clearly define the responsibilities of all parties involved in migration governance.
- **Coordination Among Stakeholders:** Although progress has been made with CSOs and BAIRA at the discussion table and a dedicated ministry established, proper coordination is still needed to optimize service delivery.
- **Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) Improvements:** Redesign PDOs as current sessions, conducted just before departure, do not effectively prepare migrants.
- **Addressing Returnee Challenges:** ILO research indicates many returnees face abuse and trauma; targeted initiatives are needed to support them and reduce repeat migration (23% migrate again).
- **Migration Cost Regulation:** Ensure women migrants, officially eligible for zero migration, are not charged excessive fees, as some currently pay over BDT 100,000.
- **Embassy Support:** Increase staffing and capacity of Bangladesh missions abroad to address migrant needs effectively.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster stronger collaboration between government, CSOs, trade unions, and private actors to ensure accountability and sustainability.

Closing Session

In his closing remarks, **Mr. Syed Saiful Haque** stressed the urgent need for public-private partnerships and stronger institutional collaboration to protect migrant workers and ensure efficient service delivery.

Outputs of the Consultation

- Shared understanding of institutional gaps and overlaps.
- Agreement on the need for better coordination among MoEWOE, BMET, and WEWB.
- Policy-level recommendations on fund management, accountability, and

transparency.

- Consensus on strengthening grievance management mechanisms.
- Reinforced commitment to uphold migrant workers' rights through inclusive reforms.