

# **Event Report**

## **Launching of the Trade Union–Civil Society Action Alliance (TUCSAA)**

**Organised by:** WARBE Development Foundation  
**In collaboration with:** NCCWE, BILS, ITUC-BC, BFTUC, SKOP, BOAF  
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The Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh.  
**Venue:** National Press Club, 18 Topkhana Road, Dhaka–1000.  
**Date:** Monday, 10 November 2025.

**Theme:** Migration for Prosperity: Ensuring Dignity, Protection, Welfare, and Reintegration of the Migrant Workers.

### **Background:**

The concept of TUCSAA emerged from a two-day ‘**Capacity Development Workshop on the Protection of Migrants’ Rights and to Foster Collaboration and Build Strategies for Effective Advocacy and Interventions**’ jointly organized by WARBE Development Foundation and the National Coordination Council for Workers’ Education (NCCWE) on 25–26 June 2025. During that event, participants recognized the need for a coordinated national platform that could bridge the gap between policy advocacy, worker representation, and rights-based service delivery.

With the vision of ensuring the rights, dignity, safety, welfare and reintegration of the Bangladeshi migrant workers, the Trade Union–Civil Society Action Alliance (TUCSAA) was officially launched on 10 November 2025 at the National Press Club, Dhaka. This alliance represents a joint initiative between the trade unions and civil society organizations, with the technical support of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The central objective of this alliance is to raise collective voices for the migrant workers’ rights and welfare. Additionally, it aims to strengthen the advocacy measures and address multidimensional challenges that the migrant workers face, starting from the application process, working abroad and upon their return to Bangladesh. The official launch of TUCSAA therefore, marks the beginning of a strategic partnership that seeks to unify the voices of trade unions and CSOs under a common agenda of protecting and empowering migrant workers.

### **Objectives:**

- Identify overlaps and gaps in mandates to understand where institutional roles conflict or remain unaddressed within migration governance.
- Strengthen institutional coordination by fostering collaboration among ministries, agencies, CSOs, trade unions, and private actors for more effective governance.

- Propose a revised business allocation framework that streamlines responsibilities and reduces duplication across institutions involved in labour migration.
- Review existing fund management and governance of WEWB to ensure its resources are used ethically, transparently, and strictly for migrant welfare.
- Identify inefficiencies and bottlenecks across recruitment, grievance redressal, embassy services, and data systems affecting timely migrant support.
- Recommend reforms for better transparency and accountability to enhance monitoring, public reporting, evaluation, and migrant-centered decision-making.

## Introduction:

Delivering the inaugural address, **Mr Naimul Ahsan Jewel**, Convening Committee Member of TUCSAA and representative from NCCWE, emphasised that TUCSAA is a collaborative platform where trade unions and civil society organisations will work together to improve the overall situation of migrant workers. He stated that the number of yearly migrants is around 10-13 lakhs. Alliance's initial focus would be on identifying key problems like economic barriers, reintegration problems and enhancing the skill levels of migrant workers to increase their competitiveness in the global labor market.

Highlighting wage disparities, Mr. Jewel noted: ***“Bangladeshi female workers earn only 14 cents per hour on average, whereas workers from India and Nepal earn up to 42 cents. This inequality calls for urgent action, and TUCSAA will strive to advocate for fair and decent wages.”*** He further emphasized that TUCSAA aims to become a well-planned and long-term initiative from the divisional level to promote rights, dignity, and decent work conditions for all Bangladeshi migrant workers.

## Welcome Remarks:

In the welcome speech, **Mr. Shakil Akhter Chowdhury**, Convener of TUCSAA, drew attention to the major contribution of migrant workers to the national economy and the reality of Bangladeshi migrant workers' living abroad. He mentioned persistent challenges such as passport-related complications, financial insecurity, and social marginalisation upon their return to Bangladesh. He acknowledged the efforts of both CSOs and Trade Unions work to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers. He emphasized the importance of TUCSAA in addressing the challenges faced by migrants and outlined its main objectives, including reducing workers' deprivation, supporting their reintegration, ensuring labour rights, and creating a space where migrant workers can freely share their experiences and concerns. He also drew attention to the issues of women workers' safety and the wage gap.

He highlighted that more than 13 million Bangladeshi workers currently employed overseas contribute approximately USD 30.33 billion in remittances each year, sustaining a major portion

of Bangladesh's economy. *"The country's economic foundation rests on the hard work and sacrifice of our migrant workers,"* he said. *"Therefore, any effort to improve their lives, protect their rights, and ensure their dignity is both timely and essential."* He further noted that TUCSAA will provide a collaborative space where trade unions and CSOs can work jointly to raise policy-level awareness, educate the workers about their rights, and ensure institutional accountability in the migration sector.

## **Key Paper:**

**Ms. Jasia Khatun**, Member Secretary of TUCSAA, read the Alliance's official declaration. She explained that TUCSAA is a collective platform of trade unions and civil society organisations dedicated to promoting coordination, accountability, and structural reforms in migration governance. She presented the inaugural convening committee list, noting that it is not the final structure and that a strategy paper will be released soon.

In her presentation, she pointed out that effective collaboration and collective goodwill among all stakeholders are essential beyond the formation of committees or structures. She also cited that in the quarter of January–March 2025, remittances contributed 6.96% to Bangladesh's GDP, underscoring their importance to national development.

However, she noted that a large segment of Bangladeshi migrant workers are from the grassroots level and are poorly educated and low-skilled, making them vulnerable to exploitation and unable to defend their rights. She also underscored that structural solutions are necessary but not sufficient; holistic engagement, spanning skill development, certification support, reintegration planning, and stronger district-level coordination, is critical for the Alliance to function effectively. She further highlighted the importance of addressing gaps in labour migration governance through mapping at district and upazila levels, supporting climate-induced migrants, facilitating fair remittance systems, advocating reforms in the Probashi Kallyan Bank, and preventing trafficking, noting that 3400 people (TIB-2025 October) fell victim last year due to a lack of awareness. Therefore, besides this structural step, a holistic support and engagement are also required for the smooth and effective working of the alliance. *"This is precisely where TUCSAA will focus its work in ensuring a rights-based framework that empowers migrant workers to demand fair recognition, both at home and abroad,"* she stated.

## **Remarks from Convening Committee Members and Advisors**

**Badal Khan**, Convening Committee Member, highlighted, *"nearly 47% of Bangladesh's total population belongs to the working class. However, due to limited employment opportunities in Bangladesh, a significant portion of this workforce is compelled to seek jobs abroad."* He emphasized that remittance, similar to the ready-made garments sector, is equally vital for Bangladesh's economy and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Mr. Syed Saiful Haque**, Advisor, TUCSAA, a returnee migrant himself, observed the laws related to the migration sector. He noted that despite having migration-related laws, their enforcement remains weak. He also said that while remittances account for about one-fourth of Bangladesh's national budget, the allocation for the MoEWOE is among the lowest. He also pointed out the internal displacement issues caused by climate change, natural disasters, and development-induced displacements. He also pointed out that compared to other Southeast Asian countries, Bangladeshi migrant workers incur higher costs to go abroad, and called on the concerned ministry to ensure greater accountability.

Therefore, TUCSAA will work to combat corruption, irregularities, and syndicates within the migration sector and call upon the government. It will call for the collaboration, stated as, ***“relevant ministries (MoWCA, MoFA, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Co-operatives) to join hands in ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability.”***

**Razequzzaman Ratan**, Convening Committee Member, emphasised the need for government-level dialogue and media engagement to implement TUCSAA's action plan effectively. He extensively pointed out the contract issues like contract forgery, illegal and unregulated contracts, and fake contracts. He also highlighted the cultural, social, and economic challenges faced by returnee migrants, noting that around one million women have returned to Bangladesh, and 38% of women migrant workers have experienced family breakdowns.

He regretted that the government ignores responsibility for the welfare of migrant workers, despite their significant contribution to the national economy. He emphasised the importance of collaboration between civil society organisations, which will facilitate policy discussions, and trade unions, which drive movements at the grassroots level. He suggested that returnee migrants should be included within the trade union to ensure their representation and support. He further marked the need for global recognition of Bangladeshi migrant workers in terms of their education, skills, and safety, emphasising that these aspects are essential for ensuring their dignity and long-term empowerment. Additionally, he noted, ***“the cultural, economic and social stigma for the women workers is nothing but a demotivating aspect. TUCSAA therefore aims to provide structural support in defying these barriers and motivate the workers in a learned experience in this process.”***

**Mr. Md. Nazmul Ahsan**, Co-Convener, TUCSAA, stated, ***“The need for financial access for migrant workers is now a necessity, particularly through the Probashi Kallyan Bank.”*** He said, ***“easily accessible and low-interest loans can help migrant workers avoid fraud, excessive recruitment costs, or the need to sell family assets before migrating for working purposes.”*** He also urged an immediate step to counter the trafficking syndicate because the trafficked workers can not get any support from the government and there's the safety issue as well. He boldly committed that TUCSAA would engage with the policy makers and pressurize through the

migrants to ensure the migrated labor rights and it would sustain till every migrants rights are ensured.

### **Open Floor Discussion:**

An engaging question-and-answer session followed the speeches. Participants raised key issues including:

- The inclusion of technical and vocational education and skill oriented courses within the national curriculum.
- Establishment of skills development training and provide skills certification that will be recognised internationally (Ex: TTC, NSDA)
- Budget allocation and financial planning for MoEWOE and WEWB.
- Persistent passport and visa complications, visa bans and their probable solutions, including strong diplomatic measures.
- Addressing syndicate, human trafficking and illegal/fraudulent recruitment practices, visa selling frauds.
- Rise of internal migration and support system for them.

### **Closing Remarks:**

**Shakil Akhter Chowdhury**, Convener, TUCSAA, shared that nearly 10 million Bangladeshis are working abroad, contributing about 30 billion dollars in remittances each year. He highlighted the struggles faced by women migrant workers, such as difficulties in renewing passports and the social challenges they encounter after returning home. He emphasized the importance of protecting migrants' rights through policies that reach from the national to the grassroots level. He also pointed out the need for closer collaboration between trade unions and civil society organizations to close existing gaps and build a stronger support system for migrants. He expressed his commitment to continue working for the rights and well- being of migrant workers.

### **Vote of Thanks:**

In her gratitude remarks, **Nasrin Akhter Dina**, Convening Committee Member, thanked all participants, partners, and guests for their active engagement. She re-addressed TUCSAA's commitment in building an inclusive and rights-based migration governance framework that upholds the dignity of every worker.

The launching of the Trade Union–Civil Society Action Alliance (TUCSAA) marks a significant milestone in Bangladesh’s ongoing efforts to promote fair migration and protect the rights of migrant workers. By bringing together trade unions and CSOs under a unified platform, TUCSAA aims to strengthen advocacy, enhance coordination, and build accountability mechanisms across all levels, from policy formulation to grassroots implementation.

Grounded in the vision of ***“Migration for Prosperity: Ensuring Dignity, Safety, and Reintegration of Migrant Workers,”*** TUCSAA aspires to become a long-term collaborative initiative contributing to a just, equitable, and inclusive migration governance system in Bangladesh.