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SARTUC/ITUC-BC/ILO-GOAL

Narrative Report

ITUC-BC is an apex body of 6 major national trade union federations in the country affiliated with International Trade Union Confederation ITUC the Pioneer global confederation. ITUC-BC is working closely with SARTUC in workplace issues including Migrant Workers in the country.

Bangladesh is a major source country for migrant workers in the GCC and South East Asia, and its overseas migrant workers have begun to face multiple challenges since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual average of outbound migrant workers is usually 750,000, however, according to Bangladesh's recruitment agencies, over 150,000 aspirant migrant workers (with employment visas to the GCC region) will not be able to travel this year due to flight closures and job cuts/stoppages. In addition, there is growing pressure from the governments of Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE to immediately evacuate Bangladeshis, especially those with 'irregular' status and serving custodial sentences

In collaboration with SARTUC in recent years ITUC-BC organized series of activities to support fair and ethical migration in the country under ILO GOAL project:

Date	Program Title	Venue
14-15 May 2023	Training on Fair and Ethical Recruitment of Migrant Workers	Hotel 71, Bijoynagar, Dhaka

GOALS GOVERNANCE OF LABOUR MIGRATION IN SOUTH & SOUTH-EAST ASIA

ILO

Programmatic Report on

Training on Fair and Ethical Recruitment of Migrant Workers

14-15 May 2023, Hotel 71, Bijoynagar, Dhaka

Introduction

Bangladesh, a densely populated country in South Asia, has experienced a significant outflow of migrant workers in recent years. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Bangladesh ranks among the top countries of origin for international migrants. The reasons for migration vary, including seeking better employment opportunities, escaping poverty, and supporting families back home. However, despite the potential economic benefits of labour migration, Bangladeshi migrant workers often face numerous challenges and vulnerabilities throughout the migration process.

One of the primary concerns is the prevalence of unfair recruitment practices. Many migrants fall victim to unscrupulous recruitment agencies and intermediaries who exploit their vulnerabilities and charge exorbitant fees, leading to debt bondage and financial burdens. This exploitative system often traps migrant workers in precarious conditions, leaving them vulnerable to labour exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking.

In recent years, the international community has recognized the need for fair and ethical recruitment practices to address these issues. Organizations, both governmental and non-

governmental, have taken steps to improve the recruitment process, including the protection of workers' rights, pre-departure training, and monitoring of recruitment agencies.

Aligning with the different global initiatives the International Trade Union Confederation - Bangladesh Council (ITUC-BC) & SARTUC organized a 2-days long training on Fair and Ethical Recruitment of Migration Workers shed light on the pressing issues faced by Bangladeshi migrant workers and the urgent need for fair and ethical recruitment practices. The training highlighted several pertinent issues that require immediate attention. This report aims to summarize the key discussions and recommendations put forth during the training.

Participants Detail

Organization/ Category	Number of Participants		Remarks
	Male	Female	
BMSF	2	1	
BJSD	1	2	
BLF	1	2	
BFTUC	2	1	
JSL	2	1	
BSSF	1	2	
BNSK	1		
OKUP		1	
WARBE		1	
ITUC-BC Co-ordination team	3		
Researcher	1		
Total	**14**	**11**	**25**

Opening Session

This training provided a platform for stakeholders, including Trade Unions, government representatives, civil society organizations, and recruitment agencies, to exchange knowledge and experiences and propose solutions for fair and ethical recruitment. Through collaborative efforts, it aimed to contribute to the development of policies and practices that prioritize the protection and well-being of Bangladeshi migrant workers.

In the subsequent sections of this report, we will delve into the specific challenges faced by Bangladeshi migrant workers, discuss existing laws and policies, examine best practices, and provide recommendations for improving the recruitment process to ensure fair and ethical

treatment of migrant workers. By addressing these issues head-on, we can work towards creating a more just and sustainable future for the migrant workers of Bangladesh.

In the opening session, Moderation has done by Shahidullah Badal, General Secretary, BMSF. Apart from ITUC-BC Professor Tofazzal Hossain, Chairperson, came up with the welcome remarks for the participants. In his opening remarks, he mentioned the importance of the migrant workers in Bangladesh. He also shares the vulnerabilities of the migrant workers as well. In this present context, it is high time to rise concern and awareness about the Fair and Ethical recruitment of migrant workers. Finally, he welcomed all the participants and wished for a fruitful training ahead.

From SARTUC, Sweanta Lama, Programme Officer, shared the welcome remarks. She also shared the present situation of the migrant workers and the way this fair & ethical recruitment can help the migrant workers to reducing their vulnerabilities. She also had some words on the initiatives of SARTUC in recent times. She also shared some relevant experiences of the Nepal migrant workers as the lesson learned from there can also help ITUC-BC with any upcoming initiatives.

In the opening session Pulak Ranjan Dhar, CLP, ITUC-BC had his welcome remarks to the participants. Finally, Shakil Akter Chowdhury, General Secretary, BLF and Coordinator, ITUC-BC also had some words to the participants. He also welcomes participants for this training and explained the objectives of this training.

With the introduction of the participants and sharing their expectations from this 2-daylong training, the opening session ended. Each of the participants introduced themselves differently and then shared their expectations from this training. Summarizing those expectations by the moderator the training moved to a snacks break.

Session 01

The first session of this training started with displaying a video documentary on the ILO general principles for fair recruitment. In the video, the participants got a clear picture of the process of fair recruitment and the challenges they faced during the recruitment process. After that, the core topic of the first session started.

The first session of the training, titled "*Understanding Labour Migration*," set the foundation for comprehending the complex dynamics of labour migration. Dr. Riaz Khan, a renowned expert in migration studies, served as the resource person for this enlightening session. Dr. Khan's comprehensive presentation provided valuable insights into the concepts of labour migration, the prevailing scenario of labour migration in Bangladesh, and the roles played by various actors in the migration process.

During this session, participants gained a deeper understanding of the key concepts related to labour migration, including the reasons that drive individuals to seek employment opportunities abroad and the economic and social impacts of migration on both the migrants and their home country. Dr. Khan emphasized the importance of recognizing migration as a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by various factors such as economic disparities, demographic changes, and social networks.

In addition to exploring the broader concept of labour migration, the session focused specifically on the labour migration scenario in Bangladesh. Dr. Khan highlighted the magnitude and significance of migration as a livelihood strategy for Bangladeshis, the sectors in which migrants are employed, and the destinations they commonly choose. The session shed light on the challenges faced by Bangladeshi migrant workers, including the risks of exploitation, abuse, and inadequate access to healthcare and legal protection.

Furthermore, the session examined the roles played by different actors involved in the labour migration process. Dr. Khan discussed the responsibilities of recruitment agencies, employers, governments, civil society organizations, and trade unions in ensuring fair and ethical recruitment, protecting the rights of migrant workers, and addressing the vulnerabilities, they face. The participants gained insights into the complexities of these roles and the need for collaboration among stakeholders to address the challenges effectively.

Session 02

In the second session of the training, Dr. Riaz Khan continued to enlighten participants on the topic of fair recruitment, focusing on the basic concepts of fair recruitment in labour migration and the guidelines provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Dr. Khan's extensive knowledge and expertise in the field made this session particularly insightful and informative.

The session began by exploring *the fundamental concepts of fair recruitment in the context of labour migration*. Dr. Khan emphasized the importance of transparency, non-discrimination, and equal treatment in the recruitment process. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the significance of fair recruitment practices, which include ensuring the absence of exploitative practices, respecting workers' rights, and facilitating informed decision-making for both employers and migrant workers.

Dr. Khan then delved into the guiding principles and operational guidelines provided by the ILO for fair recruitment. Participants learned about the ILO's commitment to promoting fair recruitment and protecting the rights of migrant workers. The session highlighted the key principles, such as the prohibition of recruitment fees charged to workers, the protection of workers against deception and coercion, and the importance of effective regulation and enforcement of fair recruitment standards.

By the end of the session, participants had a comprehensive understanding of the basic concepts of fair recruitment in labour migration and the ILO's general principles and operational guidelines. The knowledge gained in this session provided a strong foundation for the subsequent discussions on best practices and recommendations for fair and ethical recruitment of Bangladeshi migrant workers.

Session 03

The third session of the training focused on *the risks and challenges involved in fair recruitment practices within the context of labour migration*. Led by the esteemed resource person, Shakil Akter Chowdhury, participants explored the various risk factors that contribute to exploitative recruitment practices, examined the challenges of achieving fair recruitment in labour migration in Bangladesh, and brainstormed strategies to

promote fair recruitment.

To encourage active participation and foster collaborative discussions, a group work activity was organized during this session. Participants were divided into three groups, each assigned to address a specific set of challenges and risks faced by migrant workers at different stages of the migration process.

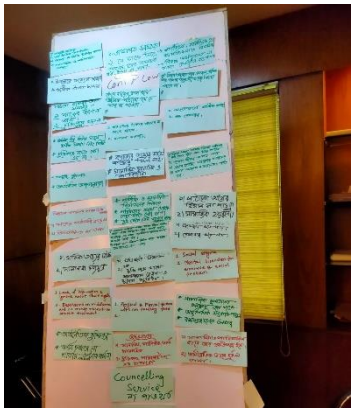
This session, session was conducted by Shakil Akter Chowdhury and the other hand, the group work was led by another esteemed resource person Shahidullah Badal, President, BMSF. Under the guidance of Shahidullah Badal, the participants engaged in insightful discussions.

The first group analysed *the challenges and risks faced by migrant workers before they migrate to the destination country*. They identified risk factors such as deceptive recruitment practices, exorbitant recruitment fees, lack of information and awareness, and limited access to legal support, all of which heighten the vulnerability of workers even before they embark on their journey.

The second group focused on *the challenges and risks that migrant workers encounter after migrating to the destination country*. They discussed issues such as exploitative working conditions, delayed or unpaid wages, restricted freedom of movement, substandard living conditions, and inadequate access to healthcare and social protection. These challenges often leave migrant workers trapped in precarious situations, making it difficult for them to seek redress or improve their circumstances.

The third group delved into *the challenges and risks faced by returning migrant workers*. They explored obstacles such as difficulties in reintegrating into society, stigmatization, limited job opportunities, and the absence of adequate support systems upon their return. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring the successful reintegration and well-being of returning migrant workers.

Shahidullah Badal facilitated the group work exercise, guiding participants in collecting and organizing the points from each group. The discussions generated valuable insights and perspectives that contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the risks and challenges associated with fair recruitment in labour migration.



The session concluded with a collective discussion on ways to promote fair recruitment in labour migration in Bangladesh. Participants reflected on the points raised during the group work activity and proposed strategies such as strengthening regulations, improving pre-departure training and information dissemination, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and advocating for the rights and protection of migrant workers.

At the end of the first day, Shakil Akter Chowdhury has done the day evaluation and shared the discussion regarding the second day. He also asked participants that, among them, anyone has to do a recap of the first-day sessions at the beginning of the second day.

Day 02

With a warm welcome to all the participants, the second day of the training started. One of the participants Tamanna Bita Alamgir has done the recap session. According to the last day's instruction, she had her note on this training and came up with details of the first day's discussion. With this recap session, all the participants were revived with the discussion points on the first day.

Session 04

The fourth session of the training cantered around *the regulatory framework governing migration in Bangladesh*. Led by the esteemed resource person, Shakil Akter Chowdhury, a renowned trade union leader, and expert trainer, the session delved into the key components of the regulatory framework of fair recruitment in Bangladesh's migration sector.

During this session, participants explored several important elements of the regulatory framework. The discussion began with an examination of the inclusion of fair recruitment in the 8th Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh. The 8th Five-Year Plan highlights the government's commitment to promoting fair recruitment practices as an integral part of the country's development agenda. Participants gained insights into the specific goals and strategies outlined in the plan to ensure fair

and ethical recruitment of migrant workers.

The session then shifted its focus to the Overseas Employment Policy of Bangladesh, which plays a crucial role in governing migration and recruitment practices. Participants explored the provisions and guidelines outlined in the policy to protect the rights and welfare of migrant workers. The discussion encompassed measures to regulate recruitment agencies, facilitate pre-departure training and orientation, and establish mechanisms for addressing grievances and disputes.

Another significant aspect of the regulatory framework discussed during the session was the Overseas Employment and Migration Act of 2013. This act serves as comprehensive legislation that governs various aspects of overseas employment, including recruitment, terms, and conditions of employment, and the protection of workers' rights. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the legal framework that guides fair recruitment practices and ensures the well-being of migrant workers.

Furthermore, the session moved to the License of Recruiting Agencies Rule of 2019, which provides specific guidelines and requirements for licensing and monitoring recruitment agencies in Bangladesh. Participants explored the role of licensing in regulating the operations of recruitment agencies and holding them accountable for fair and ethical recruitment practices.

Overall, the fourth session highlighted the significance of a robust regulatory framework in ensuring fair recruitment and protecting the rights of migrant workers. Shakil Akter Chowdhury's presence as the resource person enriched the session, fostering a deeper understanding of the regulatory mechanisms that shape the migration sector in Bangladesh.

Session 05

The fifth session of the training, titled "*Fair Recruitment in labour migration: Challenges and the way forward*," delved into various aspects of fair recruitment practices. Led by the knowledgeable resource person, Shakil Akter Chowdhury, participants explored the challenges faced in the recruitment process and discussed potential solutions to foster fair recruitment and protect the rights of workers.

The session began by examining the different actors involved in the recruitment process. Participants gained insights into the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, including recruitment agencies, employers, government bodies, civil society organizations, and trade

unions. Understanding the dynamics and interactions among these actors is essential for ensuring fair and ethical recruitment practices.

Furthermore, the session highlighted the crucial engagement of workers' organizations in fostering fair recruitment and protecting the rights of workers. Participants explored strategies to strengthen workers' organizations' involvement, such as capacity building, promoting collective bargaining, and advocating for the rights of migrant workers. The session emphasized the importance of empowering workers to participate actively in the recruitment process and assert their rights.

Additionally, the session showcased the ILO-Qatar pilot project on the employer pay model. Participants learned about the innovative approach of shifting the burden of recruitment costs from the workers to the employers. This model aims to eliminate worker-paid recruitment fees and prevent debt bondage, ultimately promoting fair recruitment practices.

The role of the private sector and trade unions in promoting fair recruitment was another key topic discussed in the session. Participants examined the responsibilities of the private sector in ensuring fair and ethical recruitment practices, as well as the potential benefits they can derive from such practices, such as improved worker productivity, reduced turnover, and enhanced reputation. The role of trade unions in advocating for fair recruitment standards, negotiating collective agreements, and providing support to workers was also emphasized.

During the session, participants engaged in a group work activity, organized into four groups. Two specific issues were addressed through the group work:

- identifying the actors and organizations involved in labour migration
- Exploring how trade unions can support the fair and ethical recruitment process.

The group work generated valuable recommendations and perspectives that contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of these topics.

Shakil Akter Chowdhury, as the resource person, provided expert guidance and facilitated discussions, enriching the session with his vast experience in the field. The fifth session served as a platform for participants to collectively explore the challenges of fair recruitment and brainstorm ways to overcome them, ultimately paving the way for a fairer and more ethical recruitment process in labour migration.

Session 06

This session of the training focused on *the global standards for fair recruitment*, exploring the intersection between migration and international frameworks. Under the guidance of resource person Shakil Akter Chowdhury, participants delved into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM), and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW).

The session commenced with an examination of the integration of migration into the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants explored how migration is interconnected with various dimensions of sustainable development, including poverty eradication, gender equality, decent work, and reduced inequalities. They discussed the role of fair recruitment practices in contributing to the achievement of these goals and fostering sustainable development.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration was another focal point of the session. Participants gained insights into the key principles and objectives of the compact, which provides a framework for international cooperation on migration. They discussed the importance of the compact in promoting fair and ethical recruitment practices, protecting the rights of migrant workers, and enhancing international collaboration to address the challenges associated with migration.

The session explored into the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Participants examined the rights enshrined in the convention and its significance in ensuring the protection and well-being of migrant workers. They explored the role of the convention in guiding fair recruitment practices and providing a comprehensive framework for the rights of migrants and their families.

Shakil Akter Chowdhury, as the resource person, provided expert insights and facilitated discussions on the global standards for fair recruitment. His discussions allowed participants to critically analyse the alignment between migration and international frameworks and their implications for promoting fair recruitment and protecting the rights of migrant workers.

The session concluded with a reflection on how these global standards can be effectively implemented and integrated into national policies and practices. Participants discussed the importance of adopting a rights-based approach, enhancing cooperation among stakeholders,

and leveraging these frameworks to advance fair recruitment and improve the overall well-being of migrant workers.

Overall, this session provides light on the global standards for fair recruitment, emphasizing the significance of the SDGs, the GCM, and the ICRMW. Shakil Akter Chowdhury's expertise and guidance enriched the session, enabling participants to explore the linkages between migration and international frameworks, and paving the way for a more comprehensive and rights-based approach to fair recruitment in the context of labour migration.

Preparing the Action Plan

At the end of the training, the participants formed a detailed action plan. The detailed action plan is described in the box below:

Organization	Activities	Timeframe	Resource Needed
BJSD	Consultation with the central committee	01 months	
	Formation of a Migration Team	2 months	
	Data collection of Migrant workers	4-5 Months	
	Training on Fair and Ethical Recruitment for the Migrant Workers	4 months	
BMSF	Multi-stockholder social dialogue		
	Awareness campaign		
	Developing and printing campaign materials		
	Awareness of labour law		
	Training sessions at the district level on online-based registration of the migrant workers		
	Preparing a 20-person team first will increase the number of team member		
BSSF	Sharing the experiences of working on migration issues with the central leadership and assigning a dedicated person for this sector from the federation		
	Sharing experiences with the National, Regional, and District level committee		
	Building working relationships with the actors involved in migration		
	Awareness campaigns across the country		
JSL	Organize migrant workers through the awareness campaign	3 Months	
	Training for the migrant workers on Fair and Ethical Recruitment	4 Months	
	Social dialogue and advocacy initiative from JSL	3 Months	
	Formation of a volunteer team in 64 districts with the Trade Union youth group	3 months	

BFTUC	Discussion session with the Executive Committee of the national federations		
	Formation of a working team		
	Networking among the Trade Union team from a different area		
	Courtyard sessions with the Migrant Workers		
BLF	Formation of area based volunteer team from BLF members		
	Finding the challenges faced by the family members of the migrant workers		
	Building working relationships with political leaders and public representatives		
	Regular training sessions on different migration issues		
	Organizing team meetings every 3 months		
	Follow-up activity with the migrant workers		

Closing Session

The two-day training on "Fair and Ethical Recruitment of Migrant Workers," organized by ITUC-BC, concluded with a closing session that encapsulated the key takeaways and emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts to address the challenges in labour migration, particularly focusing on Bangladesh. The training brought together a diverse group of participants, including experts, stakeholders, and representatives from various sectors, fostering meaningful discussions and exchanges of ideas.

The training concluded with a call to action, urging participants to take the knowledge and insights gained during the sessions and translate them into tangible initiatives and policy reforms. By working together, participants emphasized that it is possible to create a more equitable and ethical recruitment process that safeguards the rights and dignity of migrant workers, while also contributing to the sustainable development and prosperity of Bangladesh.

The ITUC-BC expressed gratitude to all the resource persons, participants, and organizers for their contributions and commitment to the training's objectives. They expressed their hope that the knowledge shared, discussions held, and recommendations generated during the training would serve as a catalyst for positive change in the recruitment and protection of migrant workers in Bangladesh and beyond.

As the training came to a close, the spirit of collaboration, empathy, and dedication continued to resonate. The two-day event marked a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to promote fair and ethical recruitment practices, laying the foundation for a more inclusive and just future for migrant workers in Bangladesh.

Annex-I

Schedule of the Training on Ethical and Fair Recruitment of Migrant Workers

Time and date	Content	Tools / Methods	Aids/Materials
	Day 1		
09:00-09:15	Registration Participants take seats		Registration Daily Attendance
09:15-09:30	Inauguration session Welcome address by the course coordinator, lead facilitator and special guest		
09:30-10:00	Introduction to each other	Ice breaking games	
10:00-10:30	▪ Collection of expectations from the participants ▪ Sharing of the objectives of the training	VIPP Card and Projection	PowerPoint
10:30-10:45	Video documentary on Fair Recruitment of Migrant Workers *(The ILO General Principles for Fair Recruitment - long version – 06:48 minutes video)*	Projection Discussion	Audio-visual material
10:45-11:15	**Tea Break**		
11:15-01:00	**Labor Migration: Bangladesh Scenario** ▪ Present Situation ▪ migration Outflow ▪ *Remittance inflow (last 20 yrs)* ▪ Main destination Countries ▪ Type of job ▪ Actors in migration process	Participatory Discussion PowerPoint Presentation	Handouts
01:00-02:00	**Lunch**		
02:00-03:30	**Fair Recruitment: Laws, national and international instruments** ▪ National law and policy ▪ ILO Convention ▪ ILO General Guiding Principles and operational Guidelines ▪ GCM, Abudhabi Dialogue, Colombo Process, SDG	Participatory Discussion PowerPoint Presentation	Handouts
03:30-03:45	**Tea break**		
03:45-04:45	**Risks and challenges in fair recruitment** ▪ Risk factors for exploitive recruitment practices ***(15 minutes)*** ▪ Challenges of fair recruitment in labor migration	Participatory Discussion PowerPoint	Handouts

Time and date	Content	Tools / Methods	Aids/Materials
	in Bangladesh ***(30 minutes)*** ▪ Ways to promote fair recruitment in labor migration in Bangladesh ***(15 minutes)***	Presentation	
04:45-05:00	Days evaluation and discussion on days reporting for recap in the next day	Evaluation	VIPP Card Poster Paper
Day 2			
09:00-09:30	Recap		
09:30-10:45	**Regulatory framework to govern migration in Bangladesh** ▪ Fair Recruitment in 8th Five-Year plan ***(15 minutes)*** ▪ Fair Recruitment in Overseas Employment Policy of Bangladesh ***(30 minutes)*** ▪ Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013 and the Rules of 2019 on License of Recruiting Agencies ***(30 minutes)***	Participatory Discussion PowerPoint Presentation	Handouts
10:45-11:15	**Tea Break**		
11:15- 1:00	**Case Study**	**Live**	
1:00-2:00	**Lunch Break**		
2:00-3:00	**Fair recruitment in labor migration: challenges and way forward** ▪ Role of Trade Union ▪ Role of CSOs ▪ Role of Government Agencies	Participatory Discussion PowerPoint Presentation	Handouts
3:00-3:30	▪ Group Work: Role of the private sector and Trade Union in promoting fair recruitment ***(30 minutes)***	Brain storming Small Group Work	Group Work Guidelines
03:30-04:00	**Tea break**		
04:00-04:30	▪ Planning and preparing advocacy action plan	Discussion and Planning	Template / format for planning
04:30-05:00	▪ Course Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation questions
05:00	**Closing**		