

## **Towards IMRF 2026**

### **Divisional Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Shadow Report On GCM Implementation in Bangladesh**

**Organized by:** WARBE Development Foundation  
**In Partnership with:** International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
**Supported by:** European Union (EU)

Date: 1st December 2025 (Monday) || Time: 10.00 am – 2.30 pm  
Venue: Halda Hall, Hotel Saikat, Chattogram

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is a UN agreement adopted in 2018 to make migration safer, better organized and more rights-based. It includes 10 guiding principles and 23 objectives that help countries improve information, recruitment, protection, and services for migrants. Every four years, countries review their progress at the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) by submitting a Voluntary National Review (VNR). Bangladesh, as one of the GCM Champion Countries and an early initiator of the Compact, will report back at the IMRF in 2026.

To support this process, WARBE Development Foundation in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with support from the European Union (EU) is organizing a divisional consultation to prepare a Shadow VNR Report. This report will follow the same structure as the Government's report, but will reflect community voices and field realities.

This consultation brought together migrants, returnees, local government representatives, sub-agents, media, trade unions, NGOs, CSOs, and City Corporation officials. Participants discussed the current situation, challenges faced at the grassroots level, and practical recommendations based on GCM goals and previous IMRF commitments.

The findings from this session will be used in the Shadow Report to ensure that grassroots perspectives contribute to a more inclusive, transparent and accountable migration governance system in Bangladesh.

#### **Objectives:**

- Facilitate meaningful, inclusive dialogue among migrant workers, returnees, local government representatives, and city corporation officials.
- Engage sub-agents, local media, trade unions, NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs for community-level insights.
- Identify progress and gaps in GCM implementation, access to services, safety, transparency, and accountability.
- Collect structured feedback across the cluster of 23 GCM objectives.



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- Ensure active participation of women migrants, left-behind families, and vulnerable communities.

## Welcome Remarks:

The consultation began with an introductory speech by **Ms. Jasiya Khatoun**, Director of WARBE Development



Foundation. She outlined the objectives of the session and emphasized why learning directly from grassroots experiences is essential for preparing an accurate and credible Shadow Report. Highlighting the value of lived realities, she noted, ***“Real stories from the ground are what help us understand the true picture of migration.”*** She

also stressed the importance of reviewing the requirements for GCM implementation, aligning them with national priorities, and encouraging participants to share practical insights that can strengthen evidence-based advocacy. Through this, she invited all attendees to contribute openly so that the collective input can help shape more inclusive and effective migration governance.

**Mr. Utpal Barua**, Chief Executive, Bright Bangladesh Forum and Executive Member, Bangladesh Ovibashi Adhikar Forum (BOAF) introduced participants and guests. As a local organizer, he called on all development organizations and representatives to be aware of and actively engage in opportunities for immigrants and socio-economic development from their respective positions.

## Objectives and Expected Outcomes:

**Syed Saiful Haque**, Chairman, WARBE Development Foundation, highlighted the need for greater attention and meaningful implementation in the migration sector, reminding participants of the importance of effectively addressing all 23 GCM objectives. He underscored Bangladesh’s pioneering role as a GCM Champion Country and noted that although Bangladesh has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, this does not limit



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the country's ability—or commitment—to implement the GCM. He introduced the concept of "Migration 360," explaining that safe migration is a shared responsibility between both



sending and destination countries. Emphasizing the urgency of creating safer pathways, he remarked, ***"When safe options are limited, people are often forced to take unsafe routes simply to build a better life."*** He further explained that the Government will submit its official Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the IMRF. At the same time, civil society organizations will prepare a Shadow Report to reflect the realities and challenges experienced by migrants on the ground.

**Ms. Mahjabeen Khaled**, Member, Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), explained that the SAG serves as an advisory body for the Asia–Pacific region, providing guidance on regional migration priorities and coordination. She highlighted Bangladesh's leadership as a GCM Champion Country and noted that its progress continues to set an example for others in the region. She emphasized that the national consultation process plays a crucial role in shaping the Shadow Report, ensuring that voices from all levels are included. Finally, she remarked, ***"A meaningful report is only possible when every voice, especially from the grassroots, is heard."***

**Mr. Mahendra Chakma**, Assistant Director, DEMO Chattogram, praised the initiative and



expressed hope that the VNR report would present the reality and that everyone would work together toward this.



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## Presentation:

**Mr. Asif Munier**, Individual Consultant, provided context for the discussion by sharing two introductory videos on the IMRF, the VNR process, and the purpose of the Multi-stakeholder Shadow Report. He explained how ongoing international conflicts and



disruptions to daily life have contributed to increased migration flows toward Europe, creating additional pressure on destination countries. He also highlighted the key outcomes of the 2022 IMRF, which ended with several promises and renewed commitments from Member States. Then he connected migration to the broader SDG agenda, underscoring that inclusion must extend to everyone, especially those often left out of policy conversations.

In addition to his presentation, he facilitated the group work sessions and guided participants through their group presentations.

## Open Floor Discussion:

During the open-floor discussion, participants raised several critical challenges that migrant workers continue to face. Many pointed out the limited availability of migration-related service offices at the grassroots level, especially in rural and upazila areas where most migrants come from. Due to this gap, villagers often travel long distances, spending time and money to access basic information and services from centralized institutions such as BMET and DEMO. Participants also expressed concern about the quality and relevance of existing skill-based training programs. They noted that many trainings do not match international job requirements, leaving workers stuck in low-skilled, low-paid jobs and more exposed to exploitation.

A major barrier highlighted was the lack of accommodation for month-long residential trainings; without support for lodging and meals, many trainees from remote districts are forced to drop out. Another issue was the absence of active returnee migrant forums. Participants stressed that such spaces are essential for sharing lived experiences, providing peer support, and strengthening reintegration efforts at the community level. Finally, while more remittances are now flowing through banks, participants shared that awareness among rural families remains low. This lack of information makes many continue relying on informal channels like hundi, which increases risks and limits financial security for migrant households.



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## Roundtable Workshop Session:

Following the plenary, participants were divided into five groups for a structured roundtable workshop. Each group had a facilitator and a note-taker. Discussions were guided by a questionnaire organized around key GCM themes. The five groups discussed their assigned cluster of themes.

**Key Findings:** The group discussions brought forward several critical insights, along with practical and experience-based solutions shared by participants:

- Information gaps remain widespread, as migration-related updates rarely reach grassroots communities. Existing databases are outdated, fragmented, and not interconnected across agencies.
- Policies often exist on paper but lack proper implementation and monitoring, leading to slow or incomplete progress at the field level.
- Migration costs remain high, pushing people toward brokers. Many local institutions are weakening due to limited funding and operational challenges.
- Pre-departure training is inadequate, particularly in technical and language skills, leaving migrants unprepared for destination country requirements.
- G2G recruitment processes are more transparent, but diplomatic negotiations on migration pathways and worker protections are slow.
- Legal aid, health insurance, and birth registration services remain weak, especially in Chittagong, where the Rohingya crisis adds further administrative pressure.
- Embassy support abroad is often insufficient or unresponsive, especially in cases involving wage theft, missing migrants, or death.
- Use of informal channels like hundi persists, as many rural families still face barriers accessing formal remittance systems despite government incentives.
- Low awareness and ineffective training at the community level leave migrants dependent on brokers and vulnerable to fraud.
- Discrimination against migrants is rising, but targeted, evidence-based interventions are still limited.
- Migrant workers are rarely involved in policy discussions, resulting in gaps between real needs and official decisions.





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- Sub-agents remain unregistered, despite provisions in the OEMA 2013 amendment, continuing unregulated recruitment practices.
- Limited progress is seen in social security measures, prevention of disappearances, dignified repatriation, and reducing stigma around women's migration.

### **Positive Developments:**

- Approval of the Reintegration Policy 2024 and the Expatriate Policy
- Continued provision of death compensation
- Improved service delivery during the COVID-19 period
- Bangladesh's leadership role in initiating and championing the GCM process

### **Recommendations:**

- Improve information access at the grassroots, ensuring timely updates through local offices, community outreach, and integrated digital platforms. Migration-related databases should be updated regularly and connected across relevant agencies.
- Ensure quality pre-departure training, with mandatory language and technical modules aligned with destination-country job requirements.
- Reduce migration costs, including low-interest loan options and expanding skill development institutes to district and upazila levels.
- Strengthen policy monitoring and follow-up, so that good initiatives translate into effective action on the ground.
- Register all sub-agents without delay under the amended OEMA provisions to reduce unregulated recruitment.
- Increase awareness activities, using community workshops, local youth groups, and community radio to counter misinformation and reduce broker dependency.
- Promote formal remittance channels, offering user-friendly banking services and stronger incentives to discourage hundi.
- Enhance embassy services abroad, ensuring responsive, humane assistance and expediting the establishment of new missions where migrant numbers are high.
- Simplify birth registration processes, especially in areas affected by administrative backlogs such as Chittagong.
- Introduce transparent health insurance schemes and expand access to legal aid for all migrants, including low-income and undocumented workers.



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- Engage migrants, returnees, and civil society directly in policy discussions to ensure grounded and inclusive decision-making.
- Establish one-stop support clinics, provide training stipends, and ensure quicker consular assistance for emergency cases.
- Guarantee humane treatment and reintegration support for undocumented and distressed migrants returning from abroad.
- Strengthen cooperation with destination countries on anti-trafficking measures and safeguarding migrant rights.
- Finalize and operationalize the National GCM Action Plan, ensuring alignment with field realities and measurable progress indicators.

### Closing Remarks:

**Syed Saiful Haque**, Chairman of WARBE Development Foundation, summarized the key reflections from the consultation. He noted that the Wage Earners Welfare Board (WEWB) continues to operate primarily through the insurance contributions of migrant workers, underscoring the need for more efficient and transparent use of these funds. He also pointed out that DEMO officials often receive no specialized training after being posted, which limits the quality of services delivered at the field level.

In his concluding speech, he acknowledged several positive developments in the migration sector, including a decline in visa trading, a reduction in the use of the hundi system for remittances, and the formation of a Task Force/Reform Team to push for systemic improvements. He concluded with a hopeful message, expressing that accurate, accessible information must reach migrants at every stage, from urban centers to the most marginalized communities—so that migration becomes safer, more transparent, and more empowering for all.

