

Towards IMRF 2026

National Consultation with the Migrant Communities 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: 7th December 2025 (Sunday) || Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Venue: Krishibid Institute Bangladesh (KIB), Khamarbari, Dhaka



Background:

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is a non-binding global agreement adopted by the United Nations in 2018 to make migration safer, more organized, and rights-based. Guided by 10 principles and 23 objectives, the GCM supports countries in preventing unsafe migration, ensuring fair recruitment, improving access to information, strengthening protection systems, and delivering better services to migrants throughout the migration cycle.



To review progress, countries report through the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), held every four years. The first IMRF took place in 2022, and the next will be held in 2026. As part of this process, countries submit a Voluntary National Review (VNR). Bangladesh holds a unique position, as it initiated the GCM proposal in 2016 and is recognized as a GCM Champion Country, expected to lead inclusive and evidence-based implementation.

In preparation for IMRF 2026, Bangladesh will submit its VNR. To complement this, WARBE Development Foundation, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with support from the European Union (EU), organized consultation series to develop a multi-stakeholder Shadow VNR Report, following the same reporting framework as the government's review.

This consultation brought together migrant workers, returnees, trafficking survivors, climate-displaced persons, family members, and migrant network representatives. The objective was to capture grassroots realities, identify key challenges and emerging issues, and develop practical recommendations to promote inclusive, transparent, and people-centred migration governance in line with GCM commitments. The findings from this consultation will directly inform the Shadow Report, ensuring migrant voices are reflected in GCM monitoring and reporting.

Objectives:

- Facilitate meaningful dialogue with migrant communities and migrant networks to support GCM monitoring and accountability.
- Capture firsthand experiences of migrant workers—particularly women, returnees, and other vulnerable groups, regarding recruitment, migration processes, access to services, protection, and reintegration.
- Assess progress and identify gaps in the implementation of the GCM, national pledges, and migration-related services at the local level, including issues of safety, transparency, and access to information.
- Gather stakeholder feedback linked to selected GCM objectives based on lived experiences.
- Promote inclusive, rights-based migration governance through informed discussion and policy-oriented dialogue.

Welcome Remarks:

The consultation began with opening remarks by **Ms. Jasiya Khatoon**, Director of WARBE Development Foundation. In her address, she emphasized the importance of



bringing forward the real-life experiences of migrant workers, stating, ***“We want to highlight the reality of marginalized migrant lives and bring out the harsh truths that often remain unseen.”*** She acknowledged that both the government and development organizations have taken various initiatives to reduce migration-related challenges and improve migrant

welfare through policies, laws, and programs. However, she noted that these policies differ from country to country, making international frameworks such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) crucial in ensuring common standards and protections. At the end of her remarks, she introduced the session chair, speakers, and invited guests, and formally opened the floor for inclusive discussion and participation. She encouraged returnee migrants to openly share their experiences across the entire migration cycle, from recruitment to return, along with their recommendations for meaningful change and long-term sustainability.

Following the migrant participants’ introduction, **Ms. Mahjabeen Khaled**, Member of Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), emphasized the importance of listening to migrants’ voices, emotions, and lived experiences. Encouraging participants to speak freely, she stated, ***“If you speak openly, we can carry your words to the higher authorities, your concerns and complaints are the basis on which we will advocate for your rights.”***

Through his presentation, **Mr. Asif Munier**, Independent Consultant, provided an



overview of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), adopted in 2018, with progress reviewed in 2022 and the next review scheduled for 2026. He explained that, as a GCM Champion Country, Bangladesh is making deliberate efforts to include migrant voices in its reporting, an approach that remains limited in many countries. Highlighting the purpose of the consultation, he stated, ***“The***

stories and struggles of migrants often remain unheard at the global level, and this platform is meant to bring those voices forward.” He outlined the objectives of the consultation and discussed the key challenges migrants face throughout the migration cycle, both during migration and in destination countries. He also referred to findings from an ILO survey on Bangladeshi migrant workers, which reflect the realities faced by people before departure, while working abroad, and after returning home.

Among the four outgoing migrant participants, migration costs were reported to be very high. For Saudi Arabia, expenses reached up to BDT 3,80,000, including payments to sub-agents, even for low-skilled “loading” jobs. In contrast, one participant spent only BDT 20,000–30,000 to migrate to Jordan through BOESL. Several participants mentioned receiving garment-related training for destinations such as Mauritius and Jordan. However, some were forced to migrate again due to the lack of decent employment opportunities after returning to Bangladesh. Among the 33 returnee migrants present, 12 received BDT 13,500 each from the RAISE fund as reintegration support. Most returnees are now engaged in small-scale income-generating activities, 15 are running small businesses such as medicine shops, food delivery services, or

clothing sales. Six participants have found wage employment, while one is currently undergoing driving training to secure future work. Participants who returned from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE, Libya, and Mauritius shared severe migration-related hardships. Many reported extremely high migration costs, in some cases reaching up to BDT 7,00,000, along with false job promises, wage theft, poor living conditions, physical abuse, and even imprisonment. Overall, the findings revealed widespread deception by intermediaries, frequent job mismatches, and significant challenges in reintegration upon return to Bangladesh.

Roundtable Session:

Participants were divided into five groups for roundtable discussions. During these sessions, migrants shared their experiences of accessing, or failing to access, basic services, benefits, rights, and grievance mechanisms, guided by the framework of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). The discussions focused on identifying what progress has been made by the government so far, as well as highlighting the remaining gaps and priority actions needed to ensure migrants’ rights, protection, and access to services. Key discussion points were:

- Migrants have very limited awareness of government initiatives such as Technical Training Centers (TTCs) and opportunities for 1,000 young migrants per Upazila due to poor information dissemination at field and institutional levels.

- Existing training programs are often low in quality, especially language training, resulting in communication barriers, skill mismatches abroad, and increased risk of exploitation.
- Migration costs have risen sharply in recent years, with brokers and intermediaries charging bribes far beyond government-fixed fees, including unfair medical and testing costs.



- Heavy reliance on brokers continues, as they are perceived to offer quicker and easier solutions despite higher risks.
- Bangladeshi embassies abroad were widely reported as inaccessible, unresponsive, and affected by bribery, failing to provide effective support to migrant workers.
- Migrants face unequal treatment in legal processes, where brokers and perpetrators often escape accountability through payments and influence.
- Government response for

missing, detained, or imprisoned migrant workers remains minimal and ineffective.

- Health protection and insurance benefits were largely absent during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing many migrants to return prematurely.
- Female migrant workers experience declining social status, stigma, and lack of gender-sensitive support mechanisms.
- Access to welfare assistance is restricted by complex and stringent conditions, limiting its reach among vulnerable migrants.
- Gender- and child-sensitive services are largely absent, particularly at the union and local government levels.



- Despite incentives, formal remittance systems remain underused due to high costs and procedural barriers, encouraging continued reliance on hundi.

- Airport services and migration-related facilities were described as inadequate and disrespectful, particularly toward returning migrants.

- BMET awareness activities have limited impact in remote and rural areas.

- Repatriation of deceased migrants is frequently delayed unless bribes are paid, and in

many cases, communities are forced to raise funds to bring bodies home.

- Migrants stranded at borders receive little to no government assistance, pushing them back into dependence on brokers.

A few recommendations also came from the discussions of the migrant participants, which were:

- **Awareness & Information:**

- Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns at grassroots levels, including Union Parishads.
- Inform migrants about TTC, training opportunities, and support programs.
- Ensure accessibility in remote areas via digital platforms and community outreach.

- **Training & Skills Development:**

- Standardize curricula, focusing on language and technical skills.
- Align training with international standards to reduce exploitation risks.
- Regularly monitor and accredit training courses.

- **Migration Costs & Regulation:**

- Crack down on brokers, bribes, and opaque practices.
- Ensure transparent processes and independent audits of medical/tests.

- Provide subsidized pathways to make formal migration affordable and broker-free.
- **Embassy Oversight & Justice:**
 - Strengthen embassy oversight with anti-corruption measures and mandatory worker check-ins.
 - Provide accessible helplines for migrant support.
 - Reform courts for fair, bribe-free justice.
 - Establish dedicated units for missing/detained migrants with international coordination.
- **Health, Welfare & Reintegration:**
 - Provide targeted health benefits and reintegration support post-crises (e.g., COVID).
 - Promote positive narratives for female migrants to improve their social status.
 - Simplify welfare bank/ministry conditions for easier access.
 - Integrate gender and child-sensitivity training at local levels.
- **Remittances & Services:**
 - Reform remittance systems to lower formal costs and reduce restrictive conditions.
 - Upgrade airport and migration services with dignity-focused protocols.
 - Expand BMET awareness initiatives nationwide.



- **Crisis & Border Support:**

- Prioritize swift, cost-free body repatriation with family support funds.
- Develop border assistance programs to aid stranded migrants legally and humanely.

Speech from Core Working Group Representatives:

Mr. Nazmul Ahsan, Bangladesh Ovivashi Adhikar Forum (BOAF), expressed his commitment to taking action based on the information shared during the discussion. He emphasized that the goal is to ensure the government receives this information and acts on it. He said, ***“We hope to present the information you shared with us to the government so that proper actions can be taken.”***

Mr. Pervez Siddiqui, Film4peace Foundation, highlighted the crucial role of BMET officials, noting that much of their funding comes from migrant remittances. He reminded the audience that migrants played a key role in supporting Bangladesh’s economy, especially in the years after the liberation war. He described migrants as ***“remittance fighters”*** who continue to work tirelessly for the country’s socio-economic development. He encouraged migrants, saying, ***“Never feel alone or helpless. Live with your head held high—this country is proud of all of you.”***

Mr. Hassan Imam Shaon, of Devcom Ltd., emphasized that civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in ensuring that migrants’ voices are not only heard but also actively considered in policymaking. He highlighted that CSOs act as a bridge between migrants and decision-makers, both in the government and at the global level. He encouraged all stakeholders to create more inclusive platforms where migrants can share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions, so that policies and programs truly reflect their needs.



Mr. Syed Saiful Haque, Chairman, WARBE, highlighted the need for more attention and effective action in the migration sector. He referred to the 23 objectives of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and stressed the importance of reviewing its implementation with input from migrants. He also encouraged wider promotion of the ***3R campaign*** (Resist, Reclaim, Realise). He said, ***“We will review the implementation with migrants’ voices and draft the report.”***

The session concluded with gratitude remarks by **Mr. Suhrawardy Hussain**, Deputy Director, WARBE DF who expressed sincere thanks to all participants for their active engagement and valuable contributions. He encouraged continued collaboration among all parties to create sustainable, fair, and safe migration pathways, and wished everyone success in their ongoing efforts.

This consultation highlighted the efforts for promoting inclusive and people-centered migration governance, by ensuring that migrant voices are heard, the process becomes more transparent, accountable, and responsive to real needs. The event also emphasized that continued collaboration among the government, civil society organizations (CSOs), IOM, and migrants themselves is crucial to identify gaps, address challenges, and advance the Global Compact for Migration's vision of safe, orderly, and regular migration for all.

