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Event Report

Towards IMRF 2026
2nd National Consultation for Shadow Report on GCM Implementation

Date: 29th December 2025 (Monday) || **Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Venue: Ascott the Residence, Baridhara Diplomatic Area, Dhaka

Background

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is a non-binding international framework adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, guided by ten principles and twenty-three objectives aimed at making migration safer, more organized, and rights-based. Bangladesh holds a unique global position as the initiator of the GCM proposal at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Migration in 2016 and remains one of the Champion Countries for GCM implementation.

In line with the GCM review mechanism, Member States participate in the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) every four years. The first IMRF was held in 2022, and the second IMRF is scheduled for 2026. As part of this process, countries submit a Voluntary National Review (VNR) to assess progress, challenges, and commitments, including the implementation of pledges under the Pledges Initiative.

To complement the official VNR, WARBE Development Foundation, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with support from the European Union (EU) has undertaken a series of consultations to prepare a multi stakeholder Shadow Report on GCM implementation in Bangladesh. This national consultation specifically focused on engaging trade unions, recruiting agencies, employers, private sector and business community representatives to capture sector specific realities, identify implementation gaps, and formulate practical recommendations in line with GCM objectives and guiding principles.

Objectives

- Facilitate inclusive dialogue among trade unions, private sector actors, recruiting agencies, and business communities in the context of GCM monitoring and accountability.
- Gather institutional perspectives on labour migration governance, fair recruitment, skills development, reintegration, employer responsibilities, and migrant protection.
- Identify progress, gaps, and systemic challenges in GCM implementation, national pledges, and migration related services at the ground and institutional levels.
- Collect stakeholder inputs aligned with the cluster of twenty-three GCM objectives and guiding principles.
- Contribute evidence based and people centred recommendations for the Shadow Report to inform Bangladesh's engagement at IMRF 2026.

Welcome Remarks and Opening Session

The consultation began with welcome remarks by **Ms. Jasiya Khatoon**, Director of WARBE Development Foundation, who highlighted Bangladesh's leadership as a GCM Champion Country and its commitment to inclusive migration governance. She reflected on previous national and divisional consultations conducted for the Shadow Report and stressed the importance of engaging ***"trade union, private sector stakeholders, recruiting agencies, and business communities in assessing GCM implementation."*** She also noted that the upcoming Voluntary National Review for IMRF 2026 presents ***"a critical opportunity to incorporate diverse sectoral perspectives and real-time experiences into national reporting."***

A short video documentary on the Global Compact for Migration was then screened, tracing its evolution from the New York Declaration to the adoption of the GCM. The documentary highlighted the multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-religious dimensions of migration, the relevance of the 23 GCM objectives, and the growing importance of addressing climate-induced migration. It reinforced that migration should be a choice rather than a necessity and emphasized the need to change the narrative around migration rather than migration itself.

Mr. Syed Saiful Haque, Chairman of WARBE Development Foundation, delivered the opening remarks, expressing gratitude to all participants for their engagement. He stressed that ***"the voices of trade unions, private sector actors, and business communities are essential for developing a credible and inclusive Shadow Report."*** Recalling Bangladesh's leadership in raising migration and mixed migration concerns globally, he noted that while the GCM is non-binding, its implementation requires ***"a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach."*** He also underlined that the four-year IMRF review cycle, including the VNR and Shadow Report preparation, must be ***"grounded in grassroots engagement to reflect real impacts, implementation gaps, and accountability challenges."***

Key Interventions and Inputs

Dr. Rubina Hossain, Chairman, Seed Foundation, emphasized that ***"fair recruitment must remain at the heart of the GCM framework."*** She highlighted the need to reduce gaps in training quality, skills development, and labour market alignment, noting that small and medium enterprises and private sector actors need ***"greater exposure and meaningful engagement in migration governance discussions."*** She also stressed the importance of upskilling women migrants, raising awareness of their rights, promoting credible recruitment pathways, and expanding entrepreneurship- and expertise-based opportunities. Dr. Hossain added that ***"trade unions and civil society***

***organizations share a responsibility to push for the implementation of agreed recommendations through sustained advocacy.*"**

Ms. Rehana Parween, Former Cultural Secretary, BAIRA, underscored the importance of comprehensive cultural orientation for migrant workers, including language, workplace culture, social norms, food habits, climate, and basic rights in destination countries. She observed that "***without proper preparation, migrant workers remain highly vulnerable to exploitation and rights violations.*"** She called for compulsory reporting mechanisms, reassessment of migration costs charged by agencies, mandatory technical training, and stronger actions against irregular migration syndicates, including systematic verification of work permits.

Mr. Shakil Akter Chowdhury, General Secretary, Bangladesh Labour Federation (BLF) and Convener, Trade Union-CSO Action Alliance (TUCSAA) highlighted structural gaps in migration governance, stressing that "***responsible authorities must show stronger awareness and accountability.*"** He called for regular regional data reviews, engagement through platforms such as the Colombo Process, and collective planning involving government, academia, trade unions, and worker representatives. He noted that "***despite having one of the highest migration costs globally, Bangladeshi migrant workers remain among the lowest paid,*"** underscoring the need for improved technical skills and stronger diplomatic engagement to uphold Bangladesh's role as a GCM Champion Country.

Mr. Asif Munier, Migration Expert and National Consultant, provided an overview of global and Asia-Pacific labour migration trends, emphasizing that "***trade union and migrant voices must be reflected in both national and shadow reporting processes.*"** He reiterated that since the GCM

and the VNR are non-binding, ***"neutrality, evidence-based analysis, and non-politicized reporting are essential."*** He highlighted ongoing consultations with migrant workers to capture real-time challenges, including limited awareness of rights, weak access to embassies and grievance mechanisms, trafficking, climate-induced migration, border governance issues, and reintegration gaps.

Group Work and Workshop Sessions

Conducted by **Mr. Asif Munier**, the participants were divided into thematic groups to identify key challenges, gaps, and recommendations.

Group One highlighted persistent challenges across the migration cycle, including rising unemployment, weak diplomatic engagement with destination countries, and the continued neglect of climate-induced migrants. The group also pointed to inconsistent quality of training and certification systems, legal and procedural barriers, the limited presence and outreach of BMET institutions at the district level, and a growing disconnect between academic education and market-oriented technical skills.

Group Two emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive, rights-based migration governance framework that clearly defines institutional roles and responsibilities. Participants stressed the importance of accountability mechanisms, transparency in decision-making, and coordinated oversight to ensure protection of migrant rights at every stage of the migration process—from recruitment to return and reintegration.

Group Three focused on reintegration and the broader contribution of migrants to national development. Participants highlighted inadequate access to healthcare and education for returnee migrants and their families, limited support from government institutions and recruitment agencies, and the absence of internationally recognized certification for skills acquired abroad. They also emphasized the need for long-term social protection, dedicated reintegration funds, a centralized national database of returnee migrants, effective

grievance management systems, overseas support hotlines, and labour-friendly help desks at airports.

Group Four stressed the importance of adhering to GCM guiding principles and Bangladesh's national commitments. The group recommended exploring new labour markets, strengthening digital governance tools such as the Probashi application, simplifying police clearance procedures, and ensuring health and life insurance coverage for migrant workers. They also called for establishing TTCs in all districts and high-migration zones, as well as providing financial, legal, and technical support to families of deceased migrant workers abroad.

Panel Discussion

Mr. Naimul Ahsan Jewel, Member Secretary, National Coordination Council for Workers Education (NCCWE) and Convening Committee Member, TUCSAA emphasized that ***"reintegration must be government-led,"*** supported by coordinated use of resources, accessible loan facilities, and mental health services. He recommended developing digital documentation for undocumented migrants, mapping Recognition of Prior Learning processes, establishing returnee migrant databases, issuing digital migrant cards, creating dedicated service queues at airports, setting up residential and women-focused training centres with internationally recognized certification, and operationalizing reintegration funds.

Mr. Ikram Farazy, Chairman of NEC Money Transfer Ltd. stressed that ***"transparency in remittance channels is essential,"*** calling for a revision of migration costs and a review of comparative wage standards across destination countries.

Mr. Saiful Islam, Executive Director, Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI), noted that Recognition of Prior

Learning should be applied more systematically, adding that ***"negative stereotypes about migrant workers must be challenged by recognizing their skills and contributions."***

Mr. Mizanur Rahaman, BAIRA, highlighted gaps in pre-departure and post-arrival support systems and emphasized that ***"meaningful progress requires collective action from all stakeholders."***

Mr. Mohammad Ashraful Islam, IOM, underscored the need for ***"accountable institutions, stronger coordination, adequate manpower, modern tools, and upgraded training facilities."*** He also stressed the importance of grassroots engagement to promote legal migration pathways and the development of comprehensive reintegration plans.

Governance, Policy, and Coordination

- Strengthen a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to GCM implementation through structured coordination among government, trade unions, private sector actors, recruiting agencies, civil society, and academia.
- Institutionalize regular national and regional reviews of labour migration data and policy implementation, aligned with IMRF reporting cycles.
- Ensure full adherence to GCM guiding principles and national commitments, including transparency, accountability, human rights, gender responsiveness, and evidence-based policymaking.
- Establish or strengthen parliamentary and inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms to improve oversight, policy coherence, and accountability.

Fair and Ethical Recruitment

- Prioritize fair and ethical recruitment by reducing excessive migration costs and eliminating informal brokers and syndicate-based systems.
- Review and rationalize recruitment-related fees to ensure compliance with national regulations and international standards.
- Strengthen oversight of recruiting agencies through mandatory reporting, audits, and enforcement.

- Improve verification of overseas job offers and work permits to prevent fraud and job mismatches.

Skills Development and Training

- Improve the quality and standardization of pre-departure training, including language, technical, cultural, and rights-based components.
- Align technical and vocational training with destination-country labour market needs and international standards.
- Expand and strengthen Technical Training Centres in districts and high-migration areas with adequate staff, modern equipment, and quality assurance.
- Strengthen Recognition of Prior Learning to formally certify migrants' skills and work experience.
- Establish specialized, gender-responsive training programs for women migrant workers, including residential facilities and internationally recognized certification.

Rights-Based Migration Governance and Protection

- Strengthen rights-based frameworks to ensure access to information, grievance mechanisms, and justice throughout the migration cycle.
- Improve embassy and overseas support services through helplines, complaint systems, and regular worker outreach.
- Strengthen prevention and response to trafficking, forced labour, and exploitation through cross-border coordination and victim protection.
- Simplify administrative procedures, including police clearance and documentation, to facilitate regular migration.
- Ensure health and life insurance coverage for migrant workers, including during crises and emergencies.

Reintegration and Return

- Develop a comprehensive, government-led national reintegration framework integrating employment, entrepreneurship, skills use, and psychosocial support.
- Establish a centralized national database of returnee migrants to support planning and service delivery.

- Expand long-term social protection for returnees, including healthcare, education, financial inclusion, and concessional credit.
- Support returnees' contribution to national development through skills matching, enterprise development, and local employment initiatives.

Remittances and Financial Inclusion

- Improve transparency, accessibility, and affordability of formal remittance channels to reduce reliance on informal systems.
- Review wage structures and employment conditions of Bangladeshi migrants to promote fair compensation.

Services, Crisis Response, and Welfare

- Improve airport and migration-related services through labour-friendly help desks, dedicated service queues, and dignity-based protocols.
- Ensure timely, coordinated, and cost-free support for deceased migrants abroad, including repatriation and family assistance.
- Strengthen crisis preparedness and response for migrants affected by conflict, detention, pandemics, or border vulnerabilities.

Data, Technology, and Innovation

- Strengthen digital platforms, including the Probashi system, to improve access to information, documentation, grievance reporting, and services.
- Explore digital migrant identification systems to support service access, benefit portability, and reintegration tracking, while ensuring data protection.

Concluding Remarks

The consultation concluded with remarks by Syed Saiful Haque, who stressed the need for "***collective responsibility and sustained collaboration***" to advance fair, safe, and rights-based labour migration in Bangladesh. He noted that "***migrant workers are among the highest contributors to our national income, yet investment and policy attention to their welfare remain far too limited.***"

He emphasized that effective implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration requires ***"meaningful engagement of trade unions, private sector actors, civil society organizations, migrant communities, and government institutions."*** Referring to the formation of the Trade Union and Civil Society Action Alliance (TUCSAA), he said the platform would ***"strengthen accountability, support evidence-based advocacy, and follow up on the recommendations emerging from this consultation."***

Concluding, he reaffirmed WARBE Development Foundation's commitment, stating, ***"The outcomes of this national consultation will be systematically reflected in the Shadow Report for IMRF 2026,"*** to ensure that Bangladesh's reporting process remains ***"inclusive, transparent, and grounded in the lived realities of migrant workers and key stakeholders across the migration cycle."***

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AGENDA

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TIME	AGENDA ITEM	LEAD/PRESENTER
10.00am - 10.30am	Registration and Refreshment	**Ms. Tasmia Sarwar,** Project Manager, WARBE DF
10.30am - 10.45am	Welcome Remarks and Introduction of the Participants	**Ms. Jasiya Khatoon**, Director, WARBE DF
10.45am - 10.55am	Objectives and Expected Outcomes	**Mr. Syed Saiful Haque**, Chairman, WARBE DF
10.55am - 11.10am	Opening Remarks	**Mr. Mohammad Ashraful Islam, IOM**
11.10am - 11.30am	Presentation on IMRF, VNR and Shadow Report	**Mr. Asif Munier**, Migration Expert and National Consultant
11.30am - 11.50am	Key Interventions and Inputs	▪ **Dr. Rubina Hossain**, Chairman, Seed Foundation ▪ **Ms. Rehana Parween,** Former Cultural Secretary, BAIRA ▪ **Mr. Shakil Akter Chowdhury,** General Secretary, Bangladesh Labour Federation (BLF) and Convener, Trade Union-CSO Action Alliance (TUCSAA)
11.50am - 12.40pm	Group Formation and Group Consultation	Group Moderator
12.40pm - 1.20pm	Group Work presentation	Group Presenter
1.20pm - 1.40pm	Panel Discussion and Open Discussion for Participants	**Mr. Asif Munier**
1.40pm - 1.50pm	Summary of Recommendations	**Mr. Asif Munier and WARBE**
1.50pm - 2.00pm	Closing Remarks and Group photo	**Syed Saiful Haque**, Chairman, WARBE
2.00pm	Lunch	

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