

# Project Steering Committee Meeting of the “Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh Project

Venue: Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), Dhaka

Date: Thursday the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2012



The 1<sup>st</sup> Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting of the project titled “Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh” was held under the chairpersonship of Dr. Zafar Ahmed Khan, Secretary, MEWOE on Thursday the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2012 at the Conference Room of the MEWOE. The PSC comprises of 18 representatives from the tripartite constituents – Government, Trade Unions, Employers Associations – and other important actors in the area of labour migration, including, the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), who is a donor to this project, migrant workers associations, migration research institutions and other civil society actors.

Welcoming all the members of the PSC, the Chairperson highlighted the role of the MEWOE, pointing out that it has been created with the goal of facilitating labour migration, exploring new labour market and ensuring the welfare of Bangladeshi migrant workers and their families. The Chairperson pointed out that this project has been designed and developed based on the requirements identified by the MEWOE to address the challenges in the field of migration of the Bangladeshi labour.



The Country Director of ILO, Bangladesh, André Bogui, thanked the Minister, Mr. Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, and the Secretary, Dr. Zafar Ahmed Khan, the IOM and the UN Women, who are ILO's project partners, the donor, SDC, and all the stakeholders who helped develop the project. The Country Director mentioned that migration is a feature of globalization and Bangladesh will benefit if it, with the other labour sending countries of the South Asia, pursues collective and regional bargaining with the labour recipient countries. The Country Director also emphasized the need of good social services and women workers' empowerment in Bangladesh and cross border collaborations for their protection overseas.

The Head of Cooperation in SDC, Mr. Derek Mueller, stated that it is a great moment for the Swiss Government to come to the 1<sup>st</sup> PSC meeting of the project. He noted the challenges in the process of finalization of the project and the keen interest with which the Minister of MEWOE has been following up the project preparation. He noted that now it is the duty of all the stakeholders to cooperate and implement the project successfully.



The Head of Mission of the IOM, Sarat Dash, reiterated his confidence in the leadership of the MEWOE and the joint nature of the project. He emphasized that with the cooperation and determination of all actors involved, the project would reach its goal.

The highlight of the meeting was a joint presentation of the planned activities, budget and the changes foreseen by five presenters, one each from the MEWOE, BMET, ILO, IOM and UN Women. The presenters included Mr. Hazarat Ali, Additional Secretary and the National Project coordinator, MEWOE; Dr Nurul Islam, Director and Project Focal Person, BMET; Gregoiré Crettaz, Migration Specialist, ILO; Disha Sonata Faruque, Programme Officer, IOM; and Sabina

Saeed, Programme Officer, UN Women.

The PSC members reviewed the proposed work-plan and the budget, the terms of reference of the PSC and the Project Coordination Committee and all other documents in the course of the meeting.

During the discussions, the President of the BAIRA, an association of the recruiters, emphasized the need for attention to the women migrants and the welfare of the returning migrants. He raised the issue of violation of the contracts by overseas employers and that the governments of the destination countries do not provide social security to the migrant workers.



The Labour Advisor of the BEF, a federation of the employers, expressed BEF's interest in working with the project to address the employment needs of those returning migrant workers who have to come back under difficult circumstances, especially women migrant workers.

The Representative of the WARBE, a migrant workers association, expressed that the project has ambitious goal but less time to achieve it and it may require re-consideration by ILO. Notwithstanding this issue, the WARBE felt that the intervention through project is timely and critical.

The Representative of the RMRRU, a migration research institution, appreciated the comprehensiveness of the project and that it covers the entire migration cycle. RMRRU pointed out that in view of the comprehensiveness, the project implementation will be complex requiring tremendous cooperation and coordination, and that the realization of the objectives will take much longer time. RMRRU mentioned that it is the first time in their experience that a PSC is being conducted so transparently and where all project documents with all details and propositions are made available to the PSC members.



The Project Management Team of ILO, led by the Chief Technical Advisor, Ms Nisha, further added that the adaptation of actions in the work-plan and of budget were necessitated by the long gap between the time project was planned and the time when it finally was approved. She pointed out that the adaptation are focused on the present day situation and needs and that the project will need, at least, full three year timeframe for implementation.

The PSC members univocally endorsed the project plans and were thanked by the Chairperson, who also assured all stakeholders of the MEWOE's commitment to the project.

The meeting was closed with remarks from Begum Shamsun Nahar, Director General, BMET. The Director General expressed her satisfaction with the time available to the PSC member to review documents and discuss the issues. She emphasized that this project prioritizes the rights of the migrant women workers, which is a priority for the Minister MEWOE and all others in the MEWOE and BMET, and called upon all present to extend their cooperation and collaboration for making migration safe for the Bangladeshi labour.

