

Executive Summary |

Perspective

Overseas migration for employment has become a cornerstone of the Bangladesh economy and society. Pioneered by individual initiatives to explore job opportunities in different parts of the world, and encouraged by supportive government policies and programs, more than 11.66 million Bangladesh nationals have so far migrated overseas for employment. Bangladeshis are now dispersed across 160 countries, covering all major continents and regions. The experience of more than half a century signifies a significant positive trend in the outflow of nationals for overseas migration, which suggests that there are ample opportunities for further labor migration in older destinations and it can be extended by exploring new destinations.

Alongside, female migration has been playing a progressive role in the overall flow of migrants from Bangladesh. With less than 1.49% of total migrants in as late as 1992, females now comprise more than 12% of total migration in 2017. The annual trend rose consistently from 2000 to 2012. However, in 2014, the number of female migrant workers more than doubled to 76,000 from only around 37,000 in 2012. The number of female overseas employment was over 121,000 in 2017, which is the highest since 1991. Importantly, female migrants comprise mostly less skilled domestic and service related occupations. Most of the recent female migrants work as domestic help, factory worker, care giver, sales person, health-worker, doctor, engineer, technician etc.

Overseas employment represents over one-fifth of the annual addition to the country's total labor force and over half of additional manufacturing jobs created in recent years. Migration plays a pivotal role in the economy of Bangladesh mainly in two major ways: firstly, it reduces unemployment; and secondly, migration positively affects the remittance flow. The inflow of remittance has increased every year with some periodic downswings, and it is substantially contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The remittance has redeemed country's dependence on external resources and helped improve leverage over pressures from international donor agencies. Despite recent down trends in the flow of remittances, it's the second most important source of foreign exchange for the country – second only to RMG, and comprises around 12% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). There is an emerging consensus that the remittance from nationals working abroad has potential for country's long-term development.

There are periods of significant upswings in the level of migration, reaching new peaks as experienced during 2007, 2008, and once again in 2017. Such periodical swing is associated with sudden increase in the flow of migration to some specific destinations. For instance, a significant increase in the flow of migration between 2006 and 2007 was associated with policy shifts in two major destinations - UAE in the Middle East, and Malaysia in the South east. The recent upturn in migration, beginning from 2014, is related to increased migration to different countries. What it underlines is the fact that the observed trend in migration from Bangladesh is not a case of smooth and predictable sail, rather a significantly bumpy course.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the current study is to carry out international market mapping for overseas employment through analyzing country-wise job demand, supply strength, and training needs as well as legal issues related to migration of professional and skilled workers with different skill level. Additionally, the study aims at branding specific trades of Bangladesh and strengthening the capacity of BMET in terms of overseas employment worldwide.

The specific objectives of the research work are as follows:

1. To explore specific demanding job sectors in the international market in terms of professional and skilled trades;
2. To forecast demanding trades of professional and of different skills level in international job market;
3. To identify specific countries where professional and skilled manpower of Bangladesh could be employed;

4. To identify the demand of female workers in particular trades.
5. To find out standard qualifications, which the workers should possess to fit in the internationally demanding job sectors;
6. To suggest specific professional and skill trade attributes for designing or strengthening training programs;
7. To suggest changes in government policies as well as legal framework in formulating or strengthening the government's policy framework for operating overseas labor markets more effectively;
8. To identify some specific professionals (e.g. Engineer, Doctor, Graduate Nurse etc.) and skill trades (e.g. welding, plumbing etc.) to be "the brand skilled Trades" of Bangladeshi Overseas workers;
9. To suggest ways to branding specific trades.

The current study specifically focuses on answering the following questions:

A: Which countries may have the prospects of absorbing more Bangladeshi workers both in the short-run and/or long-term?

B: What particular sectors of the respective economies have the prospects of absorbing Bangladeshi workers?

C: Which particular occupation and skill categories have future demand prospects across countries and respective economic sectors?

D: What comparative advantages Bangladesh may have vis-à-vis its' international competitors in having a greater access to overseas labor markets?

E: What different skill-gaps there may arise for the kinds of occupation and skills with future prospect overseas having implications for education and training of such skills in Bangladesh?

F: What planning and policy options Bangladesh should have in harnessing various labor market opportunities?

Existing Research Gap

Despite Bangladesh's long experience with international migration, academic interests in the prospects of labor migration from Bangladesh has been quite limited, particularly when it comes to focusing specifically on the future prospects of labor migration, identifying and highlighting major underlying factors, and projecting the future level and trend of migration.

Rigorous and systematic analysis of international migration prospects involves a clear underlying of both theoretical as well as practical aspects of international job markets dispersed across countries, regions, and continents. It further involves identification and utilization of appropriate research tools and techniques toward generating relevant information answering pertinent questions.

A well-defined analytical framework, appropriate and reliable data sources, and objectivity in data analysis are some of the key elements. Most important, such studies should be clearly focused, and executed by qualified and experienced professionals, and guided and monitored by a team of experts. Successfully completed, such research findings would have significant positive impact on future policy planning.

There exists, however, a significant gap between the previous studies and the current one.

Firstly, the previous studies were not focused specifically on the prospects of migration from Bangladesh as its prime objective; touched upon the issue rather on a sideline basis.

Secondly, no previous studies provided a comprehensive approach to the issue in the truest sense of the term. The current study focuses on the prospects of labor migration in terms of level, skill and occupation, sector orientation, and geographical distribution, to list a few.

Thirdly, the current study identifies and utilizes the most relevant and appropriate research methods and instruments. Reliance of primary data is the unique feature of the current study based on such sources as survey, key informant interviews, interview of overseas employers, focus group discussions, and in-depth field observations.

Fourthly, the current study has the broadest possible horizon to look into in terms of prospects of labor migration from Bangladesh. It makes a detail profile of 53 different countries from across the globe – which has been done never before, and conducts in-depth field study in 12 different countries.

Methodology

Deployment of primary data is central to the present study generated through development and utilization diverse research instruments such as literature review, sample survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth field studies, and consultation with different stakeholders at different stages of the study. Consultation involved, among others, as among the core research team, BMET, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and Office of the Access to Information (a2i).

Sample survey on different stakeholders followed systematic random sampling techniques and covered a total of around 1,557 samples. These included, among others, 308 foreign employers, 1,011 current migrants, 226 Key Informant covering different segments of the population. To this was a comprehensive review of 53 countries experiences relating to presence and/or import of foreign workers.

Uniquely, detailed field-visits were made in 12 countries with prospects of migration from Bangladesh, which were selected based on systematic random sampling from among the list of 53 countries which are at the core of the study. These include Algeria, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Egypt, Palau, Sudan, Poland, Russia, Spain, Seychelles and Slovenia. Given Bangladesh's existing MOU with particular countries, these were excluded from the sampling process to begin with – KSA, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Whilst primary data was the main stream of data sources, it was complemented, where necessary, by secondary data collected from all available sources. It included data from BMET, UN, World Bank, IOM, ILO, etc.

Towards data analysis, the study utilized tools such as charts and diagram, simple tables, cross-tabulation, trend analysis, and regressions. Qualitative information relied on reviews and summaries.

Major Findings

Prospect and Projection of Future Overseas Employment:

Future job prospect for Bangladeshi migrant workers has been perceived to be quite promising. This is based on opinions expressed by the key informants, such as: recruiting agents, returned migrants, academicians, and labor attaches were interviewed for the purpose of the current study. In their opinion, future job prospects from Bangladesh are either 'very good' or 'good'. Only a small proportion of the KIIs expressed pessimism on the issue – calling the prospect either 'depressing' or 'very depressing'.

The recent positive trend in the level of migration would seem to validate the revealed positive perception about the future of migration. The overall trend of migration lately has been in the positive direction. Since 2014 overall level of migration has been increasing consistently, in 2013 it was 409,253, in 2016 it ascended to 757,731, and finally reached to 1,008,525 in 2017 – the highest annual outflow of migrants reached ever. Notably, during the last couple of years the upward trend in migration has been most uninterrupted – increased continuously.

Different reasons underlying the perception about future prospects of migration, positive or otherwise, can be grouped under two broad dimensions: (a) demand side factors, (b) supply side factors. The demand side factors include: economic growth of the country (Average GDP growth rate, Expansionary fiscal policy), demographic transition (population growth rate, percentage of total population aged 65 and above), growth rate of labour force, attitude towards migrant (average growth rate of international migrant, percentage of international migrant stock, percentage of Bangladeshi migrants in terms of total stock), unfavorable attitude towards certain jobs of local citizen, labour importing policy of destination country. The supply side factors include availability of need based

training, government sponsored recruitment system, easy/systematic migration process, building image of Bangladeshi expatriate through branding, strengthening bilateral relationship, presence of embassy in both the countries, strong trade/investment relationship. Inhibition of local people towards certain jobs and cost effectiveness of Bangladeshi workers have been identified as important factors underlying perceived positive future prospects.

A total of 41 countries have been identified as having prospects for employment of Bangladeshi nationals looking forward. This includes, among others, existing countries, such as: KSA, UAE, Oman, Malaysia, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritius, Qatar, Singapore, South Korea, and newly emerging and potential countries like North Sudan, South Africa, Algeria, Australia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Netherland, New Zealand, Poland, Seychelles, Sweden, USA, Uzbekistan, Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Macau, Norway, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey and Ukraine.

Eight major economic sectors underline future job prospects for Bangladeshi workers, which in order of importance are construction, services, industry, agriculture, health, ICT, tourism, and power and energy. Across individual countries – particularly based on country visits, service sector is most important in Spain and least important in North Sudan. In Egypt industrial sector is most prospective, as is construction in Algeria. What it would suggest is that stage of economic development in a particular country is an important indicator of future job prospects for Bangladeshi workers.

Different occupations and skill categories have been found with future prospects as based on past trends, survey findings, and job portals on individual countries. Based on survey results, a total 171 different occupations have been identified with future prospects. Top on the list in professional categories are Engineer (civil), Manager, Engineer (computer), Engineer (mechanical), Merchandiser, doctor, and in skill categories are construction workers, mason, restaurant staff, industrial workers, cleaners, drivers, cook, farm labor, electricians, plumbers, domestic help, garment workers.

The level of migration looking into the future – despite difficulties in the choice of an appropriate methodology for this purpose, is expected to be increased by 1.5 times within the next decade. Compared to the current level of around 1 million – as of 2017, it is expected to rise to around 1.5 million in 2027.

Competitors and Challenges

While there are prospects for continuation of the current level of migration – as well as its diversification in terms of both skill composition and geographical destinations, realization of the potential is fraught with immense challenges. There are numerous competitors to be faced and challenges to be met. These all, however, vary across male and female migration, skill categories of interest, and destination of migrants.

The study has revealed that the major competitors of Bangladesh in the overseas market include India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Phillipine, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand and China. The relative strengths and weaknesses of the workers from these competitive countries vary in terms of occupations and skill categories. Philippines is widely recognized for its well-developed training programs. The workers of Philippines are also perceived having good technical and administrative skills. India is a reliable source of skilled migrants particularly for the IT sector. They are also perceived as knowledgeable and hardworking workers in Europe. Besides, India is also a good source of medium and low skilled workforce including tailors, dress makers, sewers, health visitors, nursing, sanitary, hotel and restaurant keepers, etc.

Sri Lanka has been a greater source of less skilled workers to Gulf countries accounting almost 80 percent and they have good adaptation capabilities in different environment. The workers of Pakistan have expertise in agricultural sector and they are recognized as inexpensive labor. Pakistan is a large supplier of low or semi-skilled workers in the construction sector and their drivers have a good reputation in the overseas market.

Similarly, the primary strengths of Bangladeshi migrant workers have been found to be as cost-effective, hardworking, law-abiding, quick learners and capable of adopting to new cultures and languages. However, low skill

level, lack of relevant job experience, poor skill in the English language, etc. are some of the limitations of Bangladeshi migrant workers.

Irrespective of various limitations, Bangladesh can be an excellent source of skilled and semi-skilled workforce for economies experiencing industrialization, socio-economic developments, and demographic transformations. But to capitalize the momentum Bangladesh needs to solicit some challenges such as low level of wages, lack of knowledge and information regarding migration opportunities and risks, and linguistic barriers. Moreover, it is also needed to promote the skills and capabilities of Bangladeshi workers by developing and executing appropriate marketing and branding strategies.

Female Migration

The future prospect of female migration from Bangladesh is quite positive. Top five destinations of female migration include, in order of importance, the UAE, KSA, Jordan, Lebanon and Oman. Despite a long list of occupation and skill categories in which female migrants from Bangladesh are involved, less than 15 of occupations accounted almost 96% of female migrants. More important, only five skill categories account for more than 84% of females. These include domestic help (servant), female labor, house worker and cleaner.

Different sectors employ female migrant workers. Notable among these are – in order of relative importance, services, industry and health. The single most important sector employing female migrant workers is service. The demand for female migrants are increasingly coming from various service activities in shops, department stores, clerical jobs – the ones so far dominated by female migrants from Philippines. The next important sector is industry, particularly readymade garments, already increasing number of female migrants are going to Mauritius, Middle East, and South-East to work in such activities. All such developments will positively affect the demand for female workers overseas.

Some distinct occupations seem to emerge as being prominent with implications for future opportunities for female migration. At the bottom of the occupation ladder are domestic workers. This includes domestic aid, housekeeper and babysitters etc. Then comes works outside the house and of menial type – cleaners, labor and porter. Both these type of activities are menial in nature, involve very little education and training, and payments are minimal too. However, for working outside the domestic limits – in shops, hospitals, shopping malls etc. - the terms of employment could be better even though these type works need only elementary education and training. Involvement in skilled or semi-skilled jobs such as factory works, waitress, machine operators, beauticians, food server, secretary, etc. offer better benefits and safety and security unlike domestic works. Finally professional and semi-professional jobs such as doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers are all on the top of the job ladder. These involve years of education and training.

Large stock of Bangladeshi female migrants is in the Middle Eastern countries, and most of them are engaged in lowly paid lower-level jobs in service sectors. Also a handful of female migrants are involved in mid-level jobs like industry worker, nurse, shops and restaurant workers, carpenters etc. Also an insignificant portion of the Bangladeshi female migrants are engaged in higher-level professional jobs like doctor, engineer, IT professional, accountant etc. Despite the present concentration of female migration in low-level jobs there are enough scope to create employment opportunity in mid and higher level segments of international job markets. For example, European countries, which are having large number of aging population, have demand for mid-level jobs for foreign migrants like nurse, care-giver etc. The study, from both primary responses and available information, reveals that there is scope for diversifying the portfolio of female migrants both geography and occupation wise. Rationally, therefore, government should take appropriate policy and administrative measures to give impetus to supply female workers in the mid and upper segments of the international job markets, which are much more rewarding and prestigious. As the government generate enough thrusts to capture market shares in these two segments the remittance from female migrants is expected to significantly increase in near future. The government measures are to be undertaken in the following areas:

1. Strengthening internal capacity

- a. Introducing and/or strengthening skill based trainings with required language proficiency for the prospective female migrants.
- b. Providing orientation to the cultural affairs of the prospective countries to ensure easy adaptability with the unfamiliar socio-cultural environment.

2. Introducing supportive migration process

- a. Introducing One-Stop Service Center to provide necessary information about employment conditions with the aim of protecting them from potential abuses.
- b. Implementing a well-structured recruiting system to smoothen the process of obtaining visa, work permit or other relevant documents.

3. Ensuring social security and rights

- a. Arranging government to government dialogue and negotiation to ensure the welfare of female migrants.
- b. Strengthening contractual agreements and encourage Member States to implement relevant UN legislations.
- c. Ensuring strict monitoring system to have proper control over recruitment agencies to stop female trafficking.
- d. Enabling foreign missions to provide quick health/financial/legal support, if any case of violation of rights reported.

Standard Qualifications and Minimizing Skill-Gap

One major challenge faced by Bangladeshi workers overseas is what is commonly known as skill gap – the divergence between the required education and experience from the employers’ point of view and that endowed by the migrants themselves. For this purpose skill-category wise information were collected from different stakeholders, such as: foreign employers, expatriates, migrant workers, returned migrants, recruiting agencies, labor attaches, embassy officials, public policy planners, academicians and industry experts to assess the required standard qualifications. Information regarding the required standard qualifications were also collected from some of the job portals of different destination countries, so that the cross check and verification between collected primary data and available secondary data can be done; and after that the ‘Standard Qualifications’ are finalized for each of the occupations of all professional and skill categories.

Requirement of New Training Programs:

In Bangladesh there are 40 public Universities, 92 Private Universities, 350 Polytechnic Institutes, 70 Technical Training Centers, 6 Institutes of Marine Technology (IMT), 127 Technical Schools and Colleges, 4 agricultural colleges and 121 agricultural training institutes, which are offering professional degrees, diploma and certificate courses; and, under BTEB there are 7773 public and private institutes (up to December 2015), which are offering academic programs on different technologies.

But, after scrutinizing existing training/education programs, a major gap is identified –“Lack of Relevant Work Experience”, necessary steps should be taken to minimize this gap. The government should give special focus on developing ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) based industries, so that Bangladeshi workers can possess the required skills to meet the growing demands of this emerging sector in the international market. It is observed that, new programs should be introduced for the occupations named: **Butcher, Chicken Feeder, Harvester, Seaman, Black Smith, Barber, Care Giver (Diploma), Semi-Skilled Cleaner, Fork Lift Driver, Heavy Vehicle Driver, Jewelry Maker, Packaging Staff, Gas fitters, Security Guard, Crane Operator, Heavy Vehicle Driver, Graphics and Animation Designer.** Along with these, Diploma in Fashion Designing, Portuguese language for Agricultural Engineer, Spanish Language for Supply Chain Manager, French language for Nursing, Trade Course Certificate for Painting Supervisor and Painter can be offered under BMET.

Suggestions for Strengthening Training Programs

It is observed that, some modifications are needed to strengthen existing training programs to develop necessary skills to meet the requirements of international job market:

1. Redesigning the NTVQF:

The 08-Level NTQF of Bangladesh should be limited within 4 levels before Diploma. Based on several countries' experience, the following NTVQF model is proposed:

Schooling Year	Levels	Qualifications	Job Classifications	Name of Certificate
	L8	Doctoral and Post-Doctoral		
	L7	Masters		
	L6	Bachelor		
	L5	Diploma		
11, 12	L4	NSC-3/HSC (VOC-11,12)	<i>Highly Skilled Worker</i>	Senior Skill Certificate
9, 10	L3	NSC-2/SSC (VOC-10)	<i>Skilled Worker</i>	Junior Skill Certificate
8	L2	NSC-1/SSC (VOC-9)/RPL	<i>Semi-Skilled Worker</i>	R.P.L-2
5	L1	NSC-Basic/RPL	<i>Less Skilled or Basic Worker</i>	R.P.L-1

2. Certification of Skills:

There are specific names of Skill Development Certificates in China, which are: a) Junior Skill Certificate, and b) Senior Skill Certificate, based on these certificates, candidates are employed as junior or senior mechanic/technician. Bangladesh government may introduce these types of skill development courses in higher secondary level.

3. Recognition of skill certificates:

Skill certificates of different levels can be recognized and compared with different degrees of general education certificates, so that the skill certificate holders can get social recognition and the skill development activities become heightened.

4. Institutional framework for skill development activities:

- Government can establish a '**Skill Development Board/HRD Service Center**' for training quality improvement and certification, which is available in many countries of the world.
- A '**Teachers Training Technical University (TTU)**' can be established to increase the efficiency level of the teachers/instructors.
- Government can establish '**Directorate of Skill Development**' (DSD) to institutionalize the skill development activities.

5. Separate wings for 'Technical Education' and 'Technical Training' under BTEB:

BTEB should have separate wings for 'Technical Education' and 'Technical Training' to develop skilled human resource. Because, there are some fundamental differences between 'Technical Education' and 'Technical Training', which are summarized below:

Technical Education	Technical Training
It is for the regular students.	It is for the school leavers.
25% general subjects and 75% technical subjects are offered.	20% theoretical subjects and 80% job practice practical sessions are offered.
Practical experiments are conducted to make the theories understandable.	Job practice practical sessions are conducted to build-up the students' capacity to perform occupational duties.
After finishing technical education, students can become sub-Assistant Engineer or mid-level manager.	After completing technical training, students can become skilled/efficient worker of different levels.
Students get Degree Certificate.	Students get Skill/occupational Certificate.

6. Relaxing admission criteria, upgrading syllabus and introducing HSC (Tech) courses:

- The students who have passed SSC/equivalent exams of all groups should have the opportunity to enroll in the HSC level Technical or Vocational courses. In this moment only SSC (VOC) students can enroll in HSC level vocational courses.
- BTEB should introduce at least 4 technical subjects in HSC level courses, so that the students can avail necessary skills. In this moment only 1 technical subject is compulsory for the students. Proposed structure of HSC (Tech) courses:

11 th Class		12 th Class	
Course No.	Course Title	Course No.	Course Title
1	Bangla-1 st Paper	1	Bangla-2 nd Paper
2	English-1 st Paper	2	English-2 nd Paper
3	ICT-1 st Paper	3	ICT-2 nd Paper
4	Physics-1 st Paper	4	Physics-2 nd Paper
5	Trade-1 (Technical)	5	Trade-1 (Technical)
6	Trade-2 (Technical)	6	Trade-2 (Technical)
7	Trade-3 (Technical)	7	Trade-3 (Technical)
8 (Any One)	Mathematics-1	8 (Any One)	Mathematics-2
	Accounting-1		Accounting-2
	Social Science-1		Social Science-2
	Agriculture-1		Agriculture-2

- BTEB should introduce HSC (Tech) courses, because existing HSC (VOC) courses are not skill-development oriented. The following six HSC (Tech) trades can be introduced:
 - Automobile Trade
 - Electrical Trade
 - Electronics Trade
 - Mechanical Trade
 - Refrigeration and Welding Trade
 - Civil Construction Trade

7. Recruiting/Motivating eligible instructors/teachers in the Technical Training Centers:

It is imperative to recruit eligible and motivated instructors/teachers to ensure quality training or education, but the issue of same salary scale for different positions and different salary scales for same position is hindering the recruitment and promotion process. It can be resolved by implementing the following salary scale:

- Chief Instructor-9th grade
- Senior Instructor-10th grade
- Instructor-12th grade

8. Apprenticeship Program (Earning and Learning):

The best way to minimize the skill-gap of `Relevant Work Experience` is creating enough employment opportunities for the fresh graduates/trainees. As our economy is unable to produce required employment opportunities, our workers can be equipped with relevant work experience through the implementation of "Apprenticeship Program". The apprenticeship or dual training systems found in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland and they are classic examples of successful public-private partnerships in vocational education and training.

9. Quality Improvement:

- The government should monitor and improve the Institutional Quality Improvement (IQI), Teaching Quality Improvement (TQI) and Student Quality Improvement (SQI) check-list properly to ensure quality training/education.
- BMET may organize overseas/foreign study tour for the trainers, so that they can have practical experience regarding standard training programs of successful countries.

10. Recognition of prior learning (RPL):

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and Certification of skills should be accommodated in the NTVQF and considered to undertake aiming to open formal economy jobs to those who have not had the advantage of formal vocational training, because millions of workers in our country do not have the scope to engage themselves in formal training. Though they have necessary skills-set and they are successfully meet the current demands. Recognition means certification of skills on the basis of standard qualification criteria. Certification is intended to help foreign employers more easily recognize the skills and competencies of job applicants and thus make it easier for workers to compete for jobs in the international job market. RPL has been particularly prominent in skills development in South Africa.

11. Advanced and Dynamic Training Module for Quality Assurance:

Continuous development of training modules is necessary to cop up with the advanced technologies and to maintain the international standard. Some countries are pursuing accountability to standards through national qualification frameworks.

12. Over/Under qualifications of the workers:

It is necessary to address to issue of over/under qualifications of the workers. The weight of the training programs should be measured and different levels of training should be incorporated. Because over qualified workers do not want to engage in searching low profile jobs and many workers are interested to enter in short-term training course to avail a low profile job, like Assistant Plumber, Assistant Physiotherapist etc.

13. Smooth flow of information:

Labor market information systems should generate, update and disseminate information on current and future skill needs. This supply of critical information on an ongoing and timely basis is half the story. The other half is the transmission mechanisms that make this continuous flow of timely information available to education and training institutions, private market trainers, employers, trade unions, young people and their families, and displaced workers.

14. Minimizing gap with a holistic approach:

Skills development policies are not pursued in isolation; along with technology, foreign labor market, macroeconomic, destination countries' trade and investment policies, they are an integral part of national skill development strategies. These strategies reflect the aspirations of societies and, on the basis of labor standards and institutions, make up the countries' preparation for and response to global opportunities and threats.

Select Policy Options

Some broad areas of policy options towards realizing various latent opportunities in different emerging and potential markets, the following policy suggestions have been put forward:

1. Comprehensive and coordinated plan of action:

International migration involves a host of issues, sectors, and stakeholders, therefore foreign employment should not be the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment or the Ministry of Labor and Employment. Strong inter-sectorial coordination at national level is must to maintain and further improve the process of migration from Bangladesh. Different Ministries, such as Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Finance should play pivotal role in this process to operate effectively in the international job market. Such coordination can be driven by the Prime Minister by placing the national observatory for employment under the management of the Prime Minister's Office. An inter-sectorial directorate should be created to manage all Labor market issues.

2. Market monitoring, assessment and evaluation:

Realizing various international labor market opportunities requires a constant monitoring of the various market dynamics, first, in major destination countries, and, secondly, in the regional and global level. Equipped with adequate knowledge and experience in market research, and aware of various international migration dynamics, a specialized body should be constituted for the task.

A national observatory for employment and training can be formed that will produce reliable data and develop policy options based on their analysis. It should decide on its information gathering tools, conduct its own desk research, consult with relevant bodies and expert groups, and make its own observations about the markets. The observatory can perform the following functions:

- Collect and disseminate information on continuous basis regarding the changes in demands of international job market.
- Carry out in-depth studies at regular intervals on specific topics such as skill gaps, working environment, effectiveness of training programs, supportive policies for female, youth employment opportunities.
- Conduct regular salary surveys covering all forms of waged work (including very small enterprises also) in the destination countries to measure the suitability of sending Bangladeshi workers;
- Set up a team of experts who regularly analyze the data and develop sound policy options based on the results of analyses for the government.

3. Adaptation to policies of destination countries:

After reviewing the employment policies of different destination countries and international conventions on migration and migrant workers thoroughly, some important policy issues have been identified. Based on the findings from the review, major policy recommendations are as follows:

- a. As the scope and opportunities of foreign employment are facilitated mostly by the bilateral agreements between the destination countries and sending countries, Bangladesh government should take proper initiatives to sign bi-lateral agreements with all the prospective destination countries.
- b. According to the destination countries' policy framework, employment agencies have significant role in recruiting foreign workers, so Bangladesh government should focus on building good relationship with these employment agencies through appropriate channel.

- c. As the Visa and work permit are the most significant component of foreign employment process, Bangladesh government should invite all the destination countries to open their embassies (which do not have) in Bangladesh, so that the foreign employment process becomes smoother.
- d. There are countries which follow open-door policies (e.g. Argentina) and don't provide work permit in advance. Sending workers is possible only by granting tourist/visiting visa. But Bangladesh government does not allow the workers to leave the country without the work permit documents (Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013, Chapter 2, No. 4. Migration). So, this law should be amended to make the process easier and supportive.
- e. Some destination countries (e.g. Algeria) follow the principle of importing foreign Labor only for multinational companies/foreign operators, so the government can meet with the authorities of the multi-national companies which are operating in our country, with specific objective to convince them to recruit Bangladeshi nationals in their branches/factories in other countries. Additionally, Bangladesh government can facilitate local large companies to operate in this type of countries by relaxing capital transfer regulations and offering suitable fiscal incentives.
- f. Bangladesh government should focus on sending experienced professional and skilled workers as many destination countries provide long-term resident and work permits for the professionals like doctors, nurses, engineers of construction and industry sectors, IT professionals, and assembler of industrial plants, senior managers, etc. Some major labor importing countries (e.g. KSA) have brought strategic changes in policies to develop their own labor force and encourage recruiting only those foreign workers who possess specific skill-sets.
- g. Government should focus on those skill categories which are covered by the quota system of destination countries (e.g. Albania) as they apply quota system on certain occupations to import labor from other countries.
- h. Bangladesh government can take necessary steps to sign trade agreements with the destination countries, which will increase cooperation and broaden the scope of employment.
- i. It is evident that many migrant workers in different countries (mostly in the countries of Middle -East) are subjected to violations of their rights by their employers and recruiters through withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, non-payment of wages, long working hours, unpaid overtime, contract substitution, no days off, threats of imprisonment, and verbal, physical or sexual abuse. So, government should play active role to sort out these issues immediately before sending our workers in those countries. From the above analysis of different international conventions/policies, it can be said that the rights of migrant workers can be ensured by ratification of these conventions on migration and Labor (UN, IOM, ILO and EU standards on Labor and migration). So, the countries which ratify these conventions should give more priority to send our workers and the government should provide legal support to the Bangladesh workers to ensure their rights in abroad through proper channel.

4. Convergence across policies:

Skills and employment policies should be viewed together. The full value of one policy set is realized when it supports the objectives of the other. One of the main challenges of public policy is to foster institutional arrangements through which government departments, employers, workers and training institutions can respond effectively to changing skill and training needs, and indeed play a strategic and forward-looking role in anticipating future needs. Some policy orientations arising out of the study are mentioned below:

- Expand the availability of good quality basic education as an essential right and as a foundation for vocational training, lifelong learning and employability.
- Improve the capacity of Labor market information systems to create, update and disseminate information on future skills needs to inform forward-looking skills development policies.
- Extend the availability of affordable training for new/future skills and occupations as part of opportunities for lifelong learning, by preparing them for new technologies and emerging opportunities in domestic and global markets.
- Enhance the capacity of governments and employers to effectively manage the shift from declining sectors into more competitive activities and sectors.
- Foster the coordination and alignment of basic education, vocational training and employment services with R&D, industrial, trade, technology and macroeconomic policies.
- Encourage investment in skills training for new occupations and jobs.

5. Developing relationship with prospective employers:

Being at the center of overseas job opportunities, government in collaboration of the expatriate nationals or recruiting agents working in a particular destination should develop relationship with the foreign employers. Such contacts can be established and maintained through correspondence, visits, and invitation to visit Bangladesh. Creation of a pool of prospective foreign employers could prove effective in placing workers in their companies. These foreign employers could also include those who have business relations – projects – construction or otherwise, in a third country. For instance, Chinese construction firm working in Algeria could prove useful in recruiting nationals for such projects.

6. Closer links between the Government and the recruiting agents:

Recruiting agencies historically have demonstrated their relative efficiency in discovering and exploiting various job market opportunities across the globe which should be fully harnessed in the interest of the country. A close cooperation between the private recruiting agents and the GoB could be a win-win proposition.

The whole process of migration could be divided into different segments, and distributed between the two based on respective comparative advantages. For instance, once a market has been identified and a MoU signed between respective governments, recruiting agents could be assigned the role of processing respective jobs in collaboration with employers abroad. A closer link between the GOB and the private recruiting agents could prove most effective in realizing existing market opportunities.

Branding Specific Trades

In the modern era of complexity, the business managers and individuals encounter more choices with less time to take decision. Therefore, a strong brand's capacity to simplify decision making, lessen risk, and set expectations is invaluable. Building strong brands that carry on that promise, and maintaining and improving the strength of those brands continuously, is a management imperative. The respondents of the study also expressed the significance of branding and promotion of different professions and trades considering the intense global competition. Based on our country capacity and competencies of the labor force, the most suitable professions and skill trades to be branded in the international market are as follows:

1. Engineer
2. Medical Graduate
3. ICT Professionals
4. Nurse and Care Giver

5. Garments Worker
6. Construction Worker

The purpose of branding is to create brand awareness so that consumers can think of the brand quickly and easily particularly at the right time and right place. Branding helps to communicate the meaning of a product and service regarding its quality and superiority. It also helps to build positive attitude and perception that is critical for a sustainable relationship. Therefore, branding has now become a managerial imperative regardless of the type or nature of the business.

The construction worker of Bangladesh has experience of working on diverse projects around the world including in Middle Eastern and North African countries. Besides, they also have appropriate training and certificate to meet the requirements of the overseas employer. Therefore to brand the construction workers of Bangladesh it is needed to develop a fundamental positioning idea based on our strength and market needs. Some possible positioning ideas are proposed including “Construction skill for tomorrow,” “We don’t build beams; we build dreams” and so on. To establish the idea or key positioning message it is needed to commence brand awareness campaign. We recommend undertaking a big event “Construction skill for Tomorrow-week’ to uncover the present status and position of construction workers of Bangladesh. Besides, some other branding strategies like sector-specific conferences, global roadshows, info-campaign, a trade magazine, etc. are recommended. The expected outcome of these strategies has also been outlined.

The standard of Bangladeshi engineers and science graduates is on the same level with most developing nations. They also possess project experience ranging from power plants, high-rise buildings industrial plants, roads & bridges, dams & irrigation projects, river-training works, housing & real-estate projects and railway projects located mostly in the countries of Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Thus, to differentiate our engineer we need to focus not only on the creativity and technology but also how these innovations create values conforming to the need of the potential markets. The positioning idea or slogan to stand out our engineers can be ‘Engineering for an inspiring world.’ To uncover the idea we propose a week-long breakthrough event ‘Inspiring engineering for tomorrow’ is proposed. Moreover, strategies including global conference/exhibition of engineering accomplishments/global face of engineering, web portal and digital communication, Quarterly magazine/ field visit/career fare have been suggested along with expected outcome.

The healthcare sector around the world has been experiencing a shortage of human resource creating opportunities for trades in this sector. Currently, there are 348 nursing colleges/institutions both private and government possessing a remarkable capacity of 16235. Besides, almost 50% of the nurses and caregivers have working experience in government educational institutions, and the rest are involved in private organizations as well as NGOs. In overseas market, Bangladeshi nurses are perceived as shy or culturally insensitive but considered as ‘sincere’ and ‘hard working. Hence, we believe the positioning idea ‘Care is our only language’ would reflect the devotions and compassion of our nurses and caregivers. We propose a landmark event ‘Nursing that heals’ to be arranged to publicize the idea. Besides, few other branding tactics like Recruitment resources, area-specific conferences, ‘promising nurse’ awards, comprehensive website, and social media campaign have been recommended.

IT and software industry has been considered as one of the thrust sectors of Bangladesh. The IT professionals of Bangladesh are widely renowned for their quick learning abilities as well as have higher competencies in English proficiency compared to professionals of countries like Vietnam and China. And the IT professionals of Bangladesh have experience in working on different projects with USA, UK, Canada, and Denmark. Considering the strength of our IT professional and the diverse needs of the employer we recommend ‘Your IT solutions for tomorrow’ would be a relevant platform to differentiate. A live event should be planned and organized to uncover the idea with the active participation of some of the significant bodies in ICT sector of Bangladesh. To establish brand image some other tactics such as International conference and workshops, exhibitions, award ceremony, development of recruitment materials, and comprehensive website, collaboration, and cooperation to nurture bilateral relationship have been proposed. The anticipated outcomes of these strategies have been portrayed as well.