

International Migrants Day celebrated: Overseas jobs shrink for Bangladeshis

The 18th of December is the International Migrants Day. This day has been an official international observance since 2000, and it is intended to focus on the plight, rights, and contributions of the millions of migrants across the globe.

The 2019 International Migrants Day was celebrated throughout the world including in the backdrop of drastic fall in overseas job opportunities for Bangladeshi workers and the cost of migration soaring for them. The Bangladesh government took no reintegration program for the female workers who continue to return home from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries every day as victims of abuse.



This year, the International Migrants Day was celebrated on the theme ‘Dignity and Justice are Migrants’ Rights.’ But the country’s migrants face harassment, cheating and abuse before and after leaving the country. Bangladesh government officials and Bangladesh civil society organizations said that the Global Compact for Migration adopted in Marrakesh was expected to be adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 19 without any changes. They said that proper implementation of the GCM would reduce problems faced by migrant of Bangladesh abroad, particularly the female workers.

This year, 712,000 workers migrated from Bangladesh, compared to over 1000,000 lakh in 2017, according to Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment ministry of Bangladesh.

On the eve of the celebration of the International Migrants Day, Overseas Employment ministry secretary in charge Rownaq Jahan explained the causes for drastic fall in overseas job opportunities for Bangladeshis saying, the changes in global leadership, rescission, destination countries adopting policies reserving jobs for their citizens had reduced overseas job opportunities for Bangladeshis in the outgoing year. She said that steps would be taken to boost overseas job opportunities in the coming year. The ministry has no plans for the immediate reintegration of the returnee migrants, especially the female domestic workers who continue to return home from Saudi Arab as victims of sexual abuse, torture and without getting arrear wages.

Around 2,000 Bangladeshi workers were deported by Saudi Arab every month since January, said officials. Bangladeshi workers had to pay the highest migration cost to middlemen. Over 10 million Bangladeshi workers have gone to work in 168 countries since 1976 and 80 per cent of them to the Middle East, according to a source.

12th GFMD summit in Quito on 20-24 Jan 2020

The 12th summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) which was scheduled in November 2019 will now be held on 20-24 January 2020. The venue, Quito, the capital city of the Republic Ecuador, would remain unchanged, said 2019 GFMD chair Ambassador Santiago Chavez. Ecuador has become the first South American country to host the 12th GFMD in its capital, Quito.

Created in 2007 in Belgium, GFMD is a state-led, informal and non-binding process. The process (GFMD)



helps shape the global debate on migration and development and provides a flexible, multi-stakeholder space where governments can discuss the multi-dimensional aspects, opportunities and challenges related to migration, development, and the link between these two areas. The GFMD process also allows the governments - in partnership with civil society, the private sector, the UN system, and other relevant stakeholders – to analyze and discuss sensitive issues, create consensus, pose innovative solutions, and share policy and practices.

The GFMD 10-Year Review Report recommended a number of improvements to the GFMD Summit format in order to deepen the policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and networking, as well as to facilitate the formation of partnerships. For the first time in the history of the GFMD, all GFMD stakeholders, governments, international organizations, the civil society, business and local authorities would meet during the summit at the same venue.

Civil Society Day

This year's GFMD Civil Society Day (CSD) theme of "Civil society transforming global migration governance: Strengthening means of implementation and enriching partnerships for migrants and communities". The CSD will take place on the 2nd day of the GFMD Summit this year, in parallel to the three other official GFMD stakeholder mechanisms (governments, business and mayors). The rest of the GFMD Summit (opening and closing plenaries, "common space", and GCM-related dialogue) is open to all participants, making this year's GFMD Summit a truly multi-stakeholder process, and providing many opportunities for strategizing, networking, advocacy and partnership-building. Around 200 civil society delegates are expected to participate in the Civil Society Day program. An additional 20 seats will be reserved for delegates of local civil society organizations from Ecuador.

Belgium hosted the first GFMD summit in 2007. The rest GFMD summits took place in the Philippines (2008), Greece (2009), Mexico (2010), Switzerland (2011), Mauritius (2012), Sweden (2013), Turkey (2014-15), Bangladesh (2016), Germany (2017) and Morocco (2018).

GFMD Programs at a Glance

The Quito GFMD Summit's official inaugural ceremony will take place on Tuesday, 21 January. It will be followed by parallel, separate but interrelated meetings of governments, civil society, the private sector and local authorities on Wednesday, 22 January. A larger 'Common Space' will provide all stakeholders the opportunity to mingle, share ideas and create partnerships in an open setting on Thursday, 23 January. There will be a voluntary dialogue on the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) on 24 January.

Global Academy on Migration & Development (GAMD) formed: BASUG is Board member

A new global platform, Global Academy on Migration and Development (GAMD) was launched at the Peer 2 Peer Learning program in Indonesia in...2019 with an objective to discover new perspectives, ideas and innovation that can help improve the lives of the migrants across the globe. The GAMD is an idea brought to existence by the Migration Laboratory which was set up with 33 migration experts from 18 countries. The Migration Laboratory took place with the framework of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and on behalf of the Federal Government of Germany.



GAMD is a strategic partnership created to fill the gap in migration and development policy implementation. And to turn policy into concrete action, GAMD will be working with the governments, businesses, international development agencies, NGOs, academic and Diaspora organisations. The focus of the GAMD



will be Diaspora engagement, development-oriented/gender-responsive reintegration and mainstream migration in governance. *(Photo, Indonesia: Board of Directors of GAMD. From left: Efrain, Freesca, Bikash, Mai, Jose and Ndi)*

The Executive Board of GAMD comprises with Ms. Mai Dizon-Anonuevo of Atikha, Philippines, (Executive Director), Ms. Freesca Syafitri, Parliament, Indonesia, (Deputy Executive Director), Ms. Ndi Njoku, African Foundation for Development, UK, (Treasurer), Mr. Jose Galvez, Impresa Etnica, Italy, (PR & Communication Officer), Mr Bikash Chowdhury Barua, BASUG Netherlands (Europe Coordinator) and Mr. Efrain Jimenez, Federacion Zacatecana, Mexico



(Latin American Coordinator). GAMD Board of Directors will meet in Quito, Ecuador during the next GFMD which will be held on 20-24 December 2019.

CIM Forum on Digitalization and Diaspora in Germany: BASUG joins

Essen, November 10: Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), the joint venture of German International Cooperation GIZ and German Employment Agency, organized a two-day forum on Digitalization and Diaspora on November 8 and 9 in Essen, Germany.

Delegates from different development and diaspora organizations, civil society organizations, development ministry, migration experts and academics took part in the CIM Forum this year held in Philharmonie Essen Conference Centre.

The Head of Diaspora Cooperation Program of GIZ Lena Ayse Ollenschläger gave the welcome address, while head of the department on Fundamental Issues of Refuge and Migration from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development BMZ Gundula Weitz opened the forum as chief guest. Julia Miosga and Christine Schmitt moderated the sessions. Diaspora expert in the Serbian Health Sector Dr. Stefan Stefanovic presented the key-note speech on E-Health and representative from Cameroonian Engineers and Informatics Association VKII Dr Valery Tchanque Kemtchou presented paper on E-Learning. Moderated by the Scientific Officer in University of Bremen Dr Jane Ayeko-Kümmerth the discussion was addressed among others by BMZ Consultant for Refuge and Migration Dennis Röntgen, GIZ Official Anne Doose, Dr Valery Tchanque Kemtchou and Dr Stefan Stefanovic.



Program Managers of Migration and Diaspora Program of GIZ Marius Jedlitschka and Julian Tangermann presented the Program Migration and Diaspora and the Funding outlines. President of Latinka Association Rafael Sanchez-Moreno presented paper on Digital Tools and Innovation in the Voluntary Engagement.

In the technical sessions BASUG Germany Project Coordinator AHM Abdul Hai and Project Consultant Riazul Islam facilitated the workshop on Websites for Associations: Preconditions and Instances, Christian Fotso from Brücke Association facilitated workshop on Digitalisation in the Development Cooperation: Time of a New Paradigm, Dr Karim Chabrak from Coinsence Association facilitated the session on Blockchain: New De-central Tools for Global Cooperation, Prof Dr Stanley Mungwe from the German Association for Practical Computer Training and Business Association conducted the session on the Use of Website and Social Media to Improve Brand and for Fundraising Channels, Prof Dr Sama Mbang from

Digital Transformation Alliance and Olivia Davis-Mbou and Maximilienne Babang from Mapubi facilitated sessions respectively on Design Thinking as Method of User-Friendly Solution and Knowledge Transfer with Local Partner Organization and Participants through Digitalized Ways.

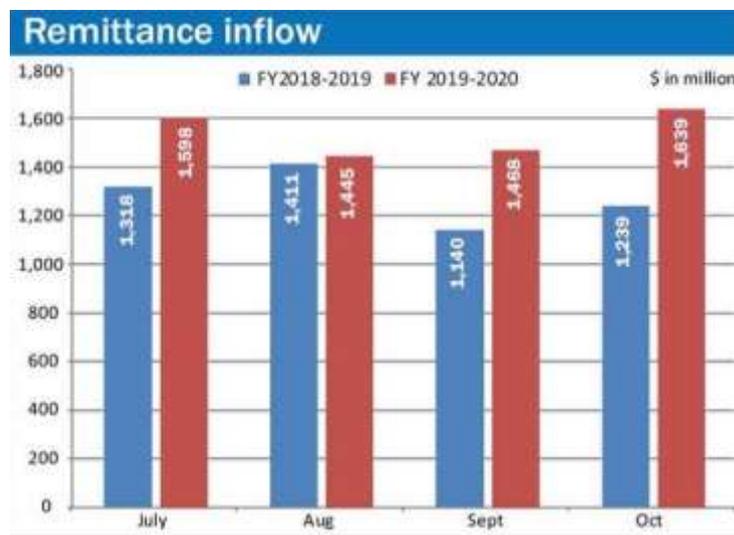
In the market of inspiration about fifty organizations and associations including CIM, Engagement Global, BASUG Diaspora and Development, Seraji Foundation, ASG Germany, Mapubi, Brücke, Coinsence, VKII, Aghanic, Network of Afghan Associations in Germany NAVID, Vietnamese-German Bridge Association and Xochicuicatl Association took part with their own flyer, brochures, posters, information materials and traditional products from their home countries.

Introduction of cash incentive of 2% pushes remittance 20.5pc up in July-Oct in Bangladesh

Remittance inflow rose by 20.41 per cent year-on-year in July-October of the fiscal year 2019-2020 amid a sharp growth in remittance receipts in last couple of months as the Bangladesh government started giving incentive to the beneficiaries against remittance, according to a report published in New Age, Dhaka. In the 4 months of the current fiscal year, the country received \$6.15 billion, up \$1.04 billion on \$5.11 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

The central bank of Bangladesh executive director and spokesperson Md Serajul Islam told New Age that the inflow of remittance had witnessed significant growth recently amid the government's move to issue 2 per cent cash incentive against the inward remittances. The government's move has prompted many of the expatriates to send money through the banking channel instead of sending through the illegal channel known as 'hundi', increasing the volume significantly in last couple of months, Serajul said.

Besides the incentive factor, the transaction through the banking channel would also benefit the remittance beneficiaries to avail different other banking services, he said. In last two months of FY20, the country's remittance inflow grew by 28.85 per cent and 32.32 per cent respectively. Remittance flow rose by \$328 million to \$1.47 billion in September this year from \$1.14 billion in the same month last year.



In October, the inflow of remittance increased to \$1.64 billion, up \$400 million on \$1.24 billion in the same month of FY19.

To encourage the expatriates for sending money through legal channel, the finance minister in the national budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020 announced the incentive. In line with the government's budgetary

announcement, the central bank on August 6 this year issued guidelines on issuing incentive against inward remittance to encourage repatriation of earnings of the expatriates through legal channel, setting July 1, 2019 as the effective date. Following requests from the BB, the finance ministry in October 2, three-months after the budgetary announcement, released Tk 1,530 crore for six months. Another Tk 1,530 crore out of the government's Tk 3,060 crore in budgetary allocation for FY20 to give incentive to the beneficiaries of remittances would be released later.

Although the central bank released the money in favour of the respective banks, many of the beneficiaries of inward remittances are yet to get the incentive for various reasons. For instance, an official of Sonali Bank head office told New Age last week that the bank was yet to start giving incentive against remittance through

bank accounts. The official, however, said that the bank would introduce the facility soon and the beneficiaries would get the incentive in arrear from July 1, 2019.

Meanwhile, the central bank has issued instruction to the banks for wider circulation of the information among the remittance beneficiaries especially in the remote areas and abroad through the country's embassies abroad. Apart from the incentive factor, depreciation of local currency taka has become another incentive for the expatriates. The interbank exchange rate of a US dollar increased to Tk 84.75 on Sunday from Tk 83.9 at the beginning of January this year. In FY19, remittance inflow hit record \$16.4 billion, breaking the previous highest of \$15.32 billion in FY15. The inflow of remittance in FY19 was 9.48 per cent or \$1.42 billion higher than the amount received in FY18, \$14.98 billion.

BCSM-Parliamentarians Joint Meeting Held in Dhaka

Bangladesh Civil Society for Migration (BCSM) core members had a maiden meeting with Bangladesh Parliamentarians' Caucus on Migration and Development in Dhaka on November 26, 2019.

During the meeting, they have expressed grave concerns over rights violation of Bangladeshi female migrants in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. They also expressed their concerns over emerging syndication centering Malaysian labour market and increasing the migration cost for the Bangladeshi workers.

They discussed the scope of BCSM's collaboration with the caucus and set out a road map to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Global Compact for Migration (GCM) with upholding migrants' rights. *(Photo: BASUG representative Md. Owasim Uddin Bhuyan is seen in the left with other participants)*



BCSM core members include Ain O Salish Kendra, BASUG Diaspora and Development, BCWWF, Bangladesh Ovibashi Mohila Sramik Association, BRAC, IMA Research Foundation, INAFI Bangladesh, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, WARBE Development Foundation. Senior Journalist Md Owasim Uddin Bhuyan represented BASUG Diaspora and Development in the meeting.

Speaking as chief guest Parliamentarian Caucus on Migration and Development chairman Israfil Alam MP said that Bangladeshi female workers were facing problems in Saudi Arabia and the government should immediately ensure their protections.

Caucus member Rezaul Karim Bablu MP, and member and former MPs Adv Sohrab Uddin, Selina Jahan Lita, Rowshanara Yeasmin Suty and Jebunnesa Afroze were present at the meeting. Dhaka University professor and founding chair of RMMRU presented keynote paper at the meeting, moderated by BCSM chair and migration expert Professor Abrar Chowdhury. BCSM co-chair Syed Saiful Haque and British Council's PROKAS head Jerry Fox among other head of the organizations took part in the discussion.

European Development Days (EDD) 2019 in Brussels

With the title “Addressing inequalities: building a world which leaves no one behind” the European Development Days (EDD) 2019 was held in Brussels on 18-19 June 2019.

Organized by the European Commission, the EDD brought the development community together from across the world each year to share ideas and experiences in the ways that inspire new partnerships and innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges.



It may be mentioned that EDD is Europe’s leading forum on development since 2006. Head of States, Commissioners, Members of European Parliament (MEPs), high-level experts, grassroots activists and other stakeholders will take part in this annual event.

The German development organization, GIZ-CIM also take part actively with its own stand in the EDD 2019. Members of the Migration Laboratory set by CIM-GIZ in 2017 joined the program and shared their experiences working within the Laboratory in order to find out ways on how migration can benefit all. The members of the Laboratory who took part in the EDD 2019 in Brussels were: Celeste Ugochukwu, African

Foundation for Migration and Development, Bikash Chowdhury Barua, Chairman of BASUG and Mohammad from Sweden. *(Photo above left former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and*



Nobel Peace laureate Mr Kailash Satyarthi of India speaking at the EDD in Brussels while below are the members of the Migration Laboratory with Anne-Christine Keienburg of GIZ (left) of GIZ, Germany)

Nobel Peace laureate Mr Kailash Satyarthi of India (won Nobel prize in 2014) and former Prime Minister of England Tony Blair were among others who addressed the EDD 2019 in Brussels.

Remittance: Where does lifblood of Nepal's economy go? Why Bonds fail to attract Nepalese migrants?

Remittance has been the lifblood of Nepal's economy, with the money sent back by nearly 500,000 migrant workers equivalent to 28 percent of last year's Gross Domestic Product, according to an April report from the World Bank. In 2018 alone, Nepali migrants sent home \$8.1 billion, making it the 19th largest receiver of remittance in the world. The amount of remittance had gone up by 16.39 percent year-on-year, despite a drop in the number of departures, according to a report of Kathmandu Post.



Where does the money go? Experience show, this money is neither saved nor invested; a vast majority goes into consumption, meeting expenses and purchasing goods for a higher standard of living, say labour migration analysts and economists. “If we look at various studies, a general conclusion shows that most of the money is spent on daily consumption like food, clothes, medicines and other day-to-day expenses,” said Swarna Kumar Jha, coordinator of the National Network for Safe Migration.

“For example, the nearly decade-old Nepal Living Standards Survey 2011 reported that among migrant families, 79 percent of remittance was spent on daily consumption and seven percent on repaying loans,” said Jha. “That trend more or less continues.” Findings from a more recent nationwide survey, conducted by Sharecast Initiative Nepal, a not-for-profit new media organisation, support Jha's conclusion. While the survey is yet to be released, raw data showed that migrant households are still using remittance primarily to meet daily expenses while also paying back loans and purchasing immovable assets like land. The survey, which is part of the Nepal Media Survey 2019, was conducted with 4,129 individuals in 42 sample districts across all seven provinces.

“Everyone talks about GDP, but no one knows where the remittance is going,” said Madhu Acharya, co-founder and CEO of Sharecast Initiative Nepal. “So, while conducting our national media survey, we tried to discover where migrant families invest their money. We wanted to understand the financial behaviour of migrant households.” According to the survey results, 60.2 percent of respondent families said that their income is spent on food, followed by clothes (42.1 percent), health and treatment (36.4 percent), education (35.6 percent), repairing or buying home (15.4 percent) and buying new land to build homes or for agriculture (9.5 percent). “Remittance has undoubtedly improved the quality of lives for migrant families by providing better food, access to health facilities, and education to their children. But we need another study if we really want to learn about its contribution to the national economy,” said Acharya. Spending patterns and remittance benefits also differ across regions, castes, and social strata. A separate study—Labour Migration and the Remittance Economy: The Socio-Political Impact—by the Centre for the Study of Labour and

Mobility (CESLAM) at Social Science Baha says that the costs and benefits of migration vary by caste/ethnicity, class, and region. The report concluded that Hill Dalit and Tarai Dalit migrants, and those from the lowest wealth quartile, earn relatively less than other groups. According to the study, 36 percent of migrant households surveyed had invested in the land after migration. “The spending pattern is also different in rural and urban areas,” said Baniya. “Families that can afford to buy land have moved to nearby cities whereas land plots left behind during the insurgency or by families that moved to urban areas are being bought by other migrant families.”



Are purchases helping in the long term? Migrant families also tend to buy luxury goods like mobile phones and vehicles, which, like land, are non-productive sectors, which don't guarantee a return and do little to stimulate the economy, say analysts. “Gadgets, land and buildings are stagnant investment. Buying land can only be a fruitful investment if it generates jobs,” said Jha. But analysts warn against labelling investments in health, nutrition, education and communication as unproductive, as the outcomes aren't seen immediately.

Channeling investment into productive sectors is the responsibility of the government, which has so far not done enough towards this end, they say. Utilising the incomes of migrant workers by investing in productive sectors, like hydropower, development projects and encouraging them to hold savings in banks, has long dominated the country's political economy discourse. But little of substance has been done to help channel investments towards these sectors. The Foreign Employment Policy 2012 and other relevant statutes talk of the productive usage of remittance in the national economy, but solutions are limited to increasing formal remittance flow through banking channels. A recent Labour and Employment Ministry task force recommended a number of measures to formalise remittance and utilise migrant incomes in productive sectors, including lowering remittance fees in banks. The task force had also recommended setting up a 'remittance fund' with workers' income, reserving 5% primary share for migrant workers and their families in various companies, and encouraging them to buy foreign employment bonds. In 2010, Nepal Rastra Bank, the country's central bank, had also decided to float foreign employment saving bonds, specifically targeting Nepali migrant workers. These bonds were exclusively sold to Nepalis working abroad, Non-Resident Nepalis or those who had returned from foreign employment destinations less than four months ago. The government had hoped to use the money collected to finance its deficit and to fund various development projects. However, these bonds failed to attract migrant workers, many of whom are not even aware that such bonds exist. When the bonds were first introduced, only 0.40 percent of the securities up for grabs were sold. The government thus needs to overhaul its pre-departure orientation training, which is mandatory for those going abroad for foreign employment, and embed financial literacy, say analysts. The current model of training, where a few hours that only touch lightly finance, is not enough, they say. Orientation training should provide detailed information on how to save money and where to invest, with the training extended up to a few days. “Similar awareness programs can be started by local units at the school levels itself.” (Courtesy: Kathmandu Post/ANN)

BCSM held its AGM in Dhaka

Bangladesh Civil Society for Migration (BCSM), a national civil society forum in Bangladesh observed its Annual General Meeting (AGM) through holding a day long Strategic Planning Workshop in Dhaka on 7 December 2019. Held at the Six Seasons hotel in Dhaka, capity city of Bangladesh the AGM was attended among others by the Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Md Salim Reza as chief guest.

Participants from all member organisations of BCSM, heads of the organisations and a senior functionary



were present at the meeting set out a collective road map for the platform for the next three years including those to help achieve Sustainable Development Goals and Global Compact for Migration.

BCSM chair Prof CR Abrar presided over the meeting, where Journalist Md Owasim Uddin Bhuyan represented BASUG: Diaspora and Development, a core member of the forum. Among other founding members, BCSM co-chair and also WARBE Development Foundation chairman Syed Saiful Haque took part in the strategic discussion of the forum. The national civil society forum was established to facilitate the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) hosted by Bangladesh in December 2016.

It may be mentioned that to facilitate the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in 2016 in Dhaka, Bangladesh Civil Society Coordination Committee (BCSCC) was formed. Later on 23 January 2017, BCSCC was transformed into BCSM. Along with pursuing its work on GFMD and PGA, the BCSM expanded its scope to address the emerging challenges of migration.



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(Photo above: First meeting of the Board of Directors of GAMD at Pullman Hotel in Indonesia in September 2019); Below: BASUG Chair Bikash Chowdhury speaking at the Peer to Peer meeting in Java, Indonesia)

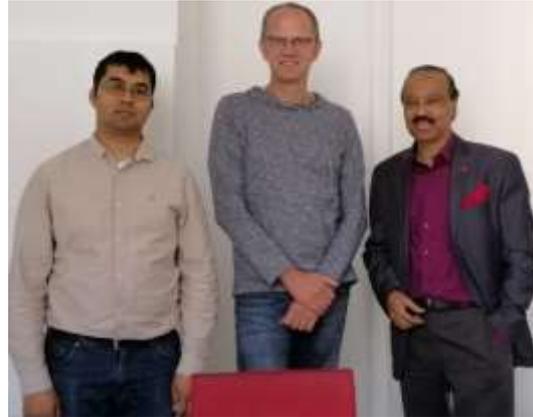


(Photo below: Children left behind by their parents are being looked after by a local NGO in Java, Indonesia. Their parents went abroad as migrant workers. Staging drama while Migrants leaders visited them)





(Photo left: Ms. Pasma Dahal, Country Coordinator GIZ Nepal at Peer to Peer Learning in Indonesia in Sept 2019; R: P2P meeting. Below: A H M Abdul Hai, Riazul Islam & Bikash Chowdhury with Mr. Gerald Knauf, Projektreferent, SUE NRW at SUE office in Bonn on 22 Oct 2019; Below last: Consultation of Trade Union & CSOs on migration in Dhaka)



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