

NATIONAL REINTEGRATION POLICY FOR MIGRANTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 PREAMBLE.....	3
1.2 CONTEXT OF THE POLICY	4
2. NATIONAL REINTEGRATION POLICY FRAMEWORK	7
2.1 SCOPE.....	7
2.2 VISION, MISSION & OBJECTIVES.....	7
2.2.1 Vision.....	7
2.2.2 Mission	7
2.2.3 Objectives	7
2.3 PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES	8
2.4 POLICY DIRECTIVES.....	9
2.4.1 Overarching Directives	9
2.4.2 Social Reintegration of Returnee Migrants.....	10
2.4.3 Economic Reintegration of Returnee migrants.....	11
2.4.4: Physical and psychosocial well-being of returnees and their family members.....	13
3. EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS	14
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY DIRECTIVES.....	15

1. INTRODUCTION

International migration is a major contributor to the growth of Bangladesh's economy. Recognizing the immense contribution of expatriate Bangladeshis, and to ensure their welfare, rights and protection, it is necessary to provide strategic directions for an inclusive, accountable and gender responsive policy for sustainable reintegration of migrants. The government is hereby formulating a '**National Reintegration Policy for Migrants**' policy as follows:

1.1 PREAMBLE

Migration is a dynamic phenomenon across the globe, with migration flows impacted, and impacting global, regional and national events. The impact of migration and return on national development narratives in countries of origin and destination is potentially immense.

International labour migration has been an important and strategic area of focus for Bangladesh since independence in 1971. Migrants contribute to the country's economic development, ensuring the welfare of millions depending on them, while developing skills in the process. This transfer of income in the form of remittance has been key in the country's development narrative and has brought significant improvements to the well-being of its people.

Every phase of the migration cycle should be geared toward protecting the rights and dignity of migrants and promoting development; this includes at the reintegration stage. Effective reintegration of all returnee migrants is a vital component of overall migration. For migration to have a positive impact on migrants and their families and communities, and on countries of destination and origin, it is important that their journey is well planned from the pre-decision phase. This includes given consideration to return and reintegration from the outset.

As a 'champion country'¹ of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), Bangladesh is a strong advocate for the promotion of safe, orderly, regular and dignified migration. Bangladesh's national development plan and different policy frameworks reflect the importance of migration in the context of Bangladesh as the country transitions into middle-income status.

Migrants usually return to Bangladesh with newly acquired skills, networks and capacities. Through targeted policy interventions, it is essential to create an enabling environment to welcome returnees back and ensure they are able to make best use of economic and social opportunities available to them in Bangladesh. For vulnerable women and men returnees – including victims of trafficking - it is equally important that the Government of Bangladesh has the infrastructure and mechanisms in place to offer holistic support upon return. Through this national Reintegration Policy, the Government of Bangladesh establishes a framework for the provision of well-planned and integrated interventions to support the sustainable reintegration of all Bangladeshi returnee migrants.

¹ The UN Network on Migration invited a group of Member States, including Bangladesh, to serve as "Champion countries" for the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, targeting them with explicit support from the Network, while also generating key insights, lessons learned, and positive practices that can be shared in dedicated spaces and with other Member States.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE POLICY

Bangladesh has been experiencing a systematic routine growth in the overseas employment and migration sector. There is adequate evidence that overseas employment and migration can be one of the major instruments of macroeconomic stability, beyond just counting remittance. The Government explicitly recognizes the vital importance of migration in the development of Bangladesh and aims to facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The Government envisioned to sustain an environment of having decent employment opportunities with dignity and protection of rights for every citizen, where overseas employment and migration contributes to national economic and social development. Over the years, Bangladesh continued its efforts to be a preferred source of human resources in addressing critical developmental needs of countries around the globe, especially for the skilled workforce. Bangladesh continues to play a pioneering role in governing migration for the benefit of all. This includes ensuring maximum benefits for migrants at every stage of the migration cycle.

The return and reintegration of migrants is an integral part in the migration cycle, and disruptions in the process and timing of return can interrupt the entire cycle. After return, the sustainable reintegration of migrants is also fundamental. This process is multi-faceted and multi-layered, including economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions. The huge benefits that come from well reintegrated returnees are immense. They bring knowledge, resources, finance and their global networks into Bangladesh, and they must be recognised as a net good for the country. While well planned and managed return can net-positive developmental outcome, return can determent sustainable development when it is not accompanied by effective reintegration.

The Government of Bangladesh is always committed to improve migration governance and it is also an opportunity to maximise the benefits and to address the challenges associated with migration today. A systematic journey towards building a robust system to take care of overseas employment and well-being of migrant workers started with enactment of 'Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013' and obtained complete shape with adoption of a number of important legal instruments e.g. Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016, Labour Migration Management Rules 2017, Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act 2018 and Action Plan for Implementation of the Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016.

The government is committed to strengthen and improve policies and practices to ensure that returns are safe and dignified and reintegration is sustainable in alignment with national laws and international legal frameworks and standards. In Bangladesh, reintegration of migrants need to be well reflected throughout national and local legislation, policies and integrated into relevant sectoral frameworks and development plans. While there have been several attempts develop relevant policies, these remain limited and often sector-specific. The Action Plan for Implementation of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 directs development of an action plan for the rehabilitation and integration of poor and destitute returning migrants (Policy Directives 2.3.9). The Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act, 2018 mandated the broad for adoption of projects for the social and economic rehabilitation and reintegration of returning migrants (Section 9). Reintegration of the returning migrants is also included in the 10-point agenda on overseas employment of the National 8th Five Year Plan.

Considering the above context, the vision, objectives and policy directives of the national reintegration policy are drawn from the National Constitution, Vision 2041, National 8th Five

Year Plan, National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), International Labour Standard (ILS) and Conventions; Global Compact for Migration (GCM), and Other national and international commitments and the Action Plan of the Policy. The government will take action to facilitate access to services, legal assistance, health and psychosocial assistance, social protection, vocational training, employment opportunities and decent work in compliance with international human rights laws and standards, including being gender-responsive, upholding child rights, and considering the specific rights and needs of migrants in vulnerable situations to make reintegration sustainable.

National Reintegration Policy for Migrants is laid out in accordance with the norms and laws of existing legal and institutional regimes, both national and international. To ensure conformity to international labour standards as ratified by Bangladesh and its national, social, political, and economic policy regimes, the development of this policy is closely tied with:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- International Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990)
- Migration for Employment Convention No.97 of 1949
- ILO Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised), 1949 (No. 86)
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- ILO Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation (No. 205)
- ILO Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market
- ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2006)
- 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and Targets Relevant to Reintegration
- New York Declaration for Refugees & Migrants (2016)
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), 2018
- Regional Consultative Processes and other Processes

Among the national legislative and policy frameworks, the following have greater relevance to this policy:

- 8th Five Year Plan of the Government of Bangladesh, (FY 2021-2025)
- Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy, 2016
- Action Plan of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy, 2016
- Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (OEMA), 2013
- Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) Act, 2018
- The National Skills Development Bill, 2018
- National Skills Development Policy, 2021
- The Action Plan of National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) (2016-2021)
- The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012, and the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking, 2018–2022
- The National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM), 2016–2020
- Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMA)

There are many reintegration-related challenges that require direct policy interventions. Some of the key challenges and needs include:

- I. There are limited targeted, institutional and gender-responsive economic, social, and psychosocial support services available to aid reintegration of returnee migrants, and where services are available there is limited awareness and access of them.
- II. Social stigma associated with migration, especially for women migrants, limits their ability to be accepted back into their families, communities and society.
- III. There is a need for an inclusive financial system necessary for returnee migrants, especially for women, to access the benefits of savings, credit, insurance, and other services.
- IV. National Social Protection Programme lacks adequate provisions to cover returnee migrants and their families.
- V. Migrants often do not have a solid foundation in financial literacy and remittance management, this impacts their ability to accumulate capital formation and set-up businesses upon return.
- VI. There are inadequate active labour market measures² for returnee migrants and labour market reintegration.
- VII. Significant challenges exist in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) development for the returnee migrants, especially for the women.
- VIII. There is lack of data on returnee migrants and their diverse skills, needs, and aspirations.
- IX. Existing mechanisms do not properly identify the needs of vulnerable returnee migrants and victims of trafficking.
- X. There is lack of awareness among the returnee migrants on existing support services including Gender Based Violence (GBV) response mechanisms and referral systems.
- XI. There is lack of coordination to link returnees to government and non-government service providers for sustainable reintegration.

² Active labour market measures aimed to reduce unemployment by: (i) matching jobseekers with current vacancies through direct job-search assistance or information provision; (ii) upgrading and adapting the skills of current jobseekers in order to improve their employability; (iii) providing incentives to individuals or firms to take up certain jobs or hire certain categories of workers; and (iv) creating jobs either in the form of public sector employment or the provision of subsidies for private sector work.

2. NATIONAL REINTEGRATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 SCOPE

Reintegration requires comprehensive and need based approaches. The sustainable reintegration process enables individuals to secure and sustain the political, economic, social and psychosocial conditions needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity in the country and community they return or are returned to, in full respect of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. This should include targeted measures that enable returnee migrants to have access to justice, social protection, financial services, health-care, education, family life, an adequate standard of living, decent work, and protection against discrimination, stigma, arbitrary detention and all forms of violence, and that allows returnees to consider that they are in an environment of personal safety, economic empowerment, inclusion and social cohesion upon return.³

The policy is gender responsive and holistic across the individual, community, and structural levels to enable migrants return safely and reintegrate successfully.

2.2 VISION, MISSION & OBJECTIVES

2.2.1 Vision

Enabling Bangladeshi returnee migrants, whose rights and dignity are secured, contribute to the country's development as dignified and capacitated citizens.

2.2.2 Mission

Ensuring effective and accountable governance of a comprehensive and gender-responsive reintegration programme, in collaboration and cooperation with all key stakeholders to ensure the rights, protection and welfare of migrants and their families, while creating opportunity to engage them as equal partners in the development process of Bangladesh.

2.2.3 Objectives

- I. To enable the dignified and safe return of migrants and their effective reintegration into their communities and the society more generally.
- II. To create opportunities for returnee migrants to acquire employable skills, skills recognition, and engage in productive employment and sustainable entrepreneurship.

³ Ensuring Safe and Dignified Return and Sustainable Development, March 2021, Position paper: UN Network on Migration

- III. To ensure the physical and psycho-social wellbeing of all returnee migrants and their family members.
- IV. To facilitate the empowerment of returnee migrants to secure their rights and influence migration and development decisions.
- V. To strengthen multi-stakeholder participation for effective, innovative, and sustainable reintegration of returnee migrants.

2.3 PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

This policy adopts a needs-based, holistic and integrated approach toward reintegration of migrants, and is guided by the following principles and approaches:

- I. **Migrant-centred:** In all reintegration-related decisions the interests of migrants is paramount; reintegration assistance will be designed and delivered reflecting the needs for returnees.
- II. **Rights-based:** All the social, economic, and political rights of migrants will be upheld and secured through multi- sectoral interventions.
- III. **All Stages of Migration:** Effective reintegration requires planning and consideration throughout the migration cycle. This policy applies across the whole migration governance spectrum.
- IV. **Gender Responsiveness and Empowerment of Migrants:** This policy should mainstream gender equality elements into all reintegration assistance for migrants and empower women and vulnerable returnee through gender responsive interventions.
- V. **Mainstreaming of reintegration:** Reintegration should be mainstreamed across relevant policy areas and linkages made with relevant sectoral plans.
- VI. **Inclusiveness:** This policy is designed for all returnees, regardless of gender, age, education, or migration history. It equally applies to regular and irregular migrants, including victims of trafficking.
- VII. **Non-discrimination:** Preferential treatment should be avoided, but where appropriate, affirmative action to ensure protection to vulnerable and at-risk groups should be available.
- VIII. **Evidence-based:** All reintegration-related decisions made in the context of this policy should be based on evidence and the prevailing context.
- IX. **Living Policy Document:** This policy should be considered a 'living document' and requires regular review and amendment as the context changes in Bangladesh and around the world.

2.4 POLICY DIRECTIVES

After return, a wide spectrum of services is required to facilitate the economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration of returnee migrants. These include health services including mental health, financial services, skills recognition, re-skilling for employment in the domestic labour market, re-migration, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), access to social services including legal support, and counselling support for career development. Distressed migrants, especially women and children, who experienced exploitation, human trafficking, and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), require special protection services and psychosocial support.

The government will design, implement, and monitor comprehensive socio-economic, psychosocial, and legal services to facilitate the reintegration of returnee migrants.

2.4.1 Overarching Directives

- I. The Returning Migrants Management of Information System (ReMiMIS) will be enhanced to establish a comprehensive database with information on the educational attainment, skill levels, experience, and aspirations of all returning migrants, especially women migrants.
- II. The Government will adopt a case management approach to the provision of reintegration support. This will entail interventions tailored to individual returnees and their family members to ensure needs-based support from relevant government and non-government service providers through reintegration counselling.
- III. One-Stop Centres for Migration Services will be established for migrants, including returnee women and gender diverse groups, to access all information and obtain specific services needed by returnee migrants and their family members.
 - a. Relevant guidelines will be developed for the One-Stop Centres for Migration Services.
 - b. One-Stop Centres for Migration Services will operationalize a referral system linked to service points of the government, private, and non-government institutions where returnees can access their desired health, education, housing, documentation, legal, and social security services.
 - c. One-Stop Centres for Migration Services will be physically established at the local level within the framework of the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) and in coordination with District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMOs), Technical Training Centres (TTCs) and with active engagement and linkage to the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs) and trade unions.
 - d. Relevant ministries will be coordinated with and engaged to ensure the provision of necessary services to returnees and their family members.
- IV. Reintegration support programmes will be decentralized and linked with One-Stop Centres for Migration Services and other local level government structures to ensure that all returnees can avail support.

2.4.2 Social Reintegration of Returnee Migrants

2.4.2.1 Social Integration Measures:

I. The government will take measures to promote a positive image of migrants to ensure dignified reintegration, recognition, and wider acceptance of migrants as 'partners of development' while addressing the social stigma associated with migration, especially for women migrants.

II. Returnees and their family members will be assisted to access documentation and registration.

III. Measures will be taken to mitigate the social cost of migration; including through ensuring migrants at all stages of the migration cycle have access to the resources needed to develop care plans for their children, elderly, family members left behind, and dependant people with disabilities (PWDs).

IV. Institutional measures will be taken to ensure access to justice for returnee migrants, especially women and victims of exploitation, forced labour, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and human trafficking.

V. Access to alternative dispute resolution, and local mediation where applicable, will be facilitated, with the involvement of local government, CSOs and other community networks.

VI. Opportunities will be facilitated for the migrants to engage with CSOs, NGOs, CBOs, and trade unions that advocate for migrant-friendly policies and provide support networks to migrants and returnees.

2.4.2.2 Social Security Measures:

- I. A comprehensive needs assessment will be undertaken to identify the social security and protection needs of returnees.
- II. A contributory social security⁴ programme will be initiated for migrant workers which will cover unemployment, work-related injuries in countries of destination, old age, and health protection.
- III. Gender-responsive social protection services will be made more accessible for the most vulnerable returnee migrant women through capacity building, digital innovation, and tools to enhance sustainable reintegration.
- IV. Mandatory contributory life and disability insurance will cover all migrants.

⁴ ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (C 102) covers the nine contingencies of social security (maternity, children, unemployment, employment injuries, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, and health protection)

- V. Special provisions will be adopted in mutually-agreed standard employment contracts to ensure safe and dignified return of migrants, including domestic migrant workers.
- VI. New/existing Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMA) will be developed/revised to include special provisions related to social security and portability of social security benefits.

2.4.2.3 Social Assistance Measures:

- I. Social assistance measures for the welfare and protection of returnee migrants, including women and family members left behind, will be ensured. Assistance for education, health, and nutrition will be provided for the children of migrant workers.

2.4.3 Economic Reintegration of Returnee migrants

2.4.3.1 Wage employment in the local market:

- I. The government will ensure Active Labour Market Measures for reintegration of returnee migrants.
- II. Referral mechanisms will be established to facilitate returnees' entry into local labour markets through One-Stop Centres for Migration Services.
- III. Integration into labour markets will be prioritized through multi-dimensional skill development programmes.⁵
- IV. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems and career guidance cells will adopt migrant-friendly approaches and promote returnees' entry into local and international job markets.
- V. Public-private-partnerships (PPP) will be promoted, including local employment schemes, on-the-job training, apprenticeship programme, skill development, and technology transfer.
- VI. Digital technology will be introduced for job advertising, search & application processes; and recruitment for both local and international job markets.
- VII. Technical, vocational and soft skills training will be conducted in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, especially for returnee women migrants.⁶

⁵ Including competency assessment and certification including on-site assessment, electronic RPL (eRPL) system, National Skills Passport scheme, facilitation of Technical & Vocational Training through TTCs, access to apprenticeship programmes, skill accreditation and certification, career guidance, financial literacy and job placement.

⁶ This will include the adult education programmes of literacy, numeracy and digital skills as well as soft skills in areas such as teamwork, communication skills, life skills and language training.

2.4.3.2 Entrepreneurship promotion

- I. Entrepreneurship among returnee migrants will be enhanced and promoted through an all-inclusive package of services,⁷ and an entrepreneurship training programme developed for returnee migrants with a specific focus on women returnees.
- II. Community-level interventions will be taken to create livelihood opportunities for returnees and their family members, especially women returnee migrants.

2.4.3.3 Re-migration

- I. Capacity will be built in diplomatic missions to explore emerging labour markets for employment of skilled returnee migrants.
- II. Access to low-interest loans and other financial schemes for returnees will be facilitated through Probashi Kalyan Bank (PKB) and other scheduled banks.
- III. A comprehensive Government skills development plan for returnees will be formulated and implemented jointly with the skills sector.⁸

2.4.3.4 Effective management and use of Remittances

- I. A comprehensive financial literacy training, budgeting & financial counselling, and a mandatory saving scheme for migrants will be introduced.
- II. Mechanisms will be established to introduce returnee migrants to productive investment and business opportunities upon return, including business start-up support, access to banking and microcredit.
- III. Scheduled banks and other financial institutions will introduce special benefit packages for returnees and their family members based on remittances received.
- IV. Commercial Banks and financial institutions will promote the importance of transferring remittances through formal channels.⁹

⁷ Including seed funding schemes, business development services, entrepreneurial skill development, value chain development, support to formulate market promotion plans, and quality standardization. Special provisions will be made to support low-income and vulnerable returnee migrants, especially women and their family members, in accessing the package

⁸ The plan will include skills assessment upon return, skills development, improving skills, recognition, certification of skills through RPL, issuance of National Skills Passports, and skills accreditation.

⁹ Different types and flexibility of financial services including digital wallet transfer will be expanded for migrants especially for returnee women migrants.

- V. Strategic measures will be implemented to incentivize expatriates, especially the diaspora community, to invest in the economy of Bangladesh.

2.4.4: Physical and psychosocial well-being of returnees and their family members

- I. Awareness of available health services will be raised among migrants and their family members.
- II. Capacity will be built amongst healthcare providers to address the specific health needs of returnees, including the impacts of gender-based violence, and trafficking- and exploitation-related trauma.
- III. Measures will be taken to include returnee migrants in the national response plans related to Public Health Emergencies of International Concern.
- IV. Reintegration counselling will be facilitated, based on needs. Supportive approaches will be adopted accounting for the psychosocial needs of returnees and their family members.
- V. Well-planned psychosocial support will be delivered through engagement of relevant stakeholders. Community-based psychosocial support mechanisms will be created to support returnee migrants to reintegrate.
- VI. Relevant Government and non-governmental agencies will be engaged to provide counselling and psychosocial support to returnees.

3. EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS

- I. Under the leadership of the MoEWOE a ‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-society’ approach will be adopted in implementing this policy.
- II. A national multi-stakeholder coordination framework or committee with MoEWOE as chair will be established to provide policy guidance and monitor this policy’s implementation.
- III. All key government stakeholders will be members of this coordination framework and provide their respective support, coordination, and resources towards the mandate and vision of the reintegration policy.
- IV. National, regional, and local level programmes will be aligned with this policy and local level government staff will be educated on the policy’s implications.
- V. Partnerships will be established with the civil society, non-governmental organizations, development partners, trade unions, the private sector, and research institutions to implement this policy, with mutual respect and acknowledgement of each other’s roles and responsibilities.
- VI. An Information Management system will be established for multi-sectoral, inter-ministerial policy implementation progress reporting.
- VII. The coordination committee established above will conduct joint policy advocacy at national, regional and international levels to facilitate better-coordinated services for returnee migrants, including the returnee women migrants, families left behind, and survivors of GBV and victims of trafficking, ensuring their social, economic, and political rights.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY DIRECTIVES

The Government will develop an action plan based on the policy directives to implement this National Reintegration Policy for Migrants. A technical working committee will be established for this purpose under the leadership of MoEWOE. This committee will engage with representatives from relevant ministries and institutions, including UN agencies, representatives of CSOs, trade unions, and the private sector, to ensure the accountability of all stakeholders.

A specific monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed for periodic evaluation to measure the policy implementation's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coherence. Moreover, it will be a priority to take lessons about best practices from the implementation of the policy and its measures.