

Chapter-18

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment was established to improve the country's socio-economic condition by ensuring the overall welfare and equal opportunities for the expatriate Bangladeshi citizens, exploring new labor market, creating skilled labour force through training according to the demand of the market, reducing unemployment through foreign employment and increasing remittance inflow. After the establishment, the ministry is regularly monitoring the issue of foreign employment and is making efforts to create more decent jobs and increase overall welfare. Due to the various activities of the ministry, there are currently 12.3 million Bangladeshi workers in 165 countries around the world. Creating overseas employment of a large portion of working people of the country is playing an important role in keeping the country's economy running, contributing to remittance growth, hence macroeconomic stability and national income growth.
- 1.2 The ministry's activities are framed by different policies, laws and regulations for the smooth running of the activities. This Ministry has recently enacted 'Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy, 2016' and Overseas Employment and Migrant Rules, 2017.

2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry

- ❖ To ensure the overall welfare of the expatriates and to protect their rights and to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country through overseas employment;
- ❖ To consolidate the existing labour market, explore and expand new labour markets, and manage overseas employment;
- ❖ To provide comprehensive training and modernize the overall training system in order to create a skilled labour force as per the needs of the foreign labour markets;
- ❖ To take measures to bring back the dead bodies of the migrant workers and extend financial aid to the families of the deceased workers, take care of afflicted migrant workers, provide scholarships to the children of migrant workers through Wage Earners' Welfare Fund and to undertake other welfare activities for the migrant workers;

- ❖ To negotiate and sign agreements and MOUs with migration related International Organizations, foreign governments and various other international organizations regarding manpower export and training;
- ❖ To provide special privileges to the expatriates and to select Commercially Important Persons (CIPs) among the non-resident Bangladeshis.

3.0 Strategic objectives of the Ministry and their Relevance with Women's Advancement and Rights

- 3.1 Creation of a skilled labour force with technical knowledge as per demand of foreign labour markets:** More overseas employment opportunities for women have emerged due to increasing demand for domestic housemaids in the Middle East and Hong Kong. With advent of these opportunities Women's unpaid /non-monetized informal works are now being translated into monetized form and included as measurable direct contribution to GDP. Females' contributions are now measurable and visible. For the socioeconomic development of the country, aspirant female migrant workers are being given training as per the demand of the new market under various trades like house-keeping, language and various trades. Selected with the help of district Technical Training Centre (TTC) and District Employment and Manpower Office (DEMO), female worker training is being provided in Technical Training Centers (TTCs). It is useful to highlight that compulsory training for 30 (thirty) days has been introduced for foreign bound female workers.
- 3.2 Increase of overseas employment:** Overseas employment has direct impact on poverty alleviation. Family of a young man or woman becomes financially solvent through overseas employment which eventually reduces poverty. With the increase of overseas employment, the rate of women's employment abroad has also increased. As a result, they are being able to take part in the decision making process in their family as well as improve their social status
- 3.3 Ensuring welfare of the expatriates and potential workers:** In order to protect the safety and rights of the female workers, various measures have been taken by the ministry. As a result, huge numbers of interested female workers are now taking opportunities of safe migration. For this, they are now able to earn more by using their improved productivity and completing full tenure of their terms of contract. Due to various steps taken by the government for the welfare of the women expatriates and their families, overseas employment for women are getting popular. This plays a positive role for women's empowerment.
- 3.4 Increase in remittance flow:** Remittances sent by expatriates in legitimate ways are involved in the mainstream of the country's economy, as the country's foreign exchange reserves are increasing; on the other hand dependence on foreign aid is

decreasing. In the last 3 (three) years 3,41,708 (Three lac forty one thousand seven hundred eight) women workers have been employed abroad. The technical, vocational and income generating training of the poor women makes them more productive and more earning. Expatriates' welfare bank has been set up to ensure remittance and income generating and profitable investment by expatriates. Through this, expatriate women workers are being able to take advantage of their financial condition.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities of the Ministry for Women's Advancement and Rights

4.1 To establish women's rights and to create opportunities for more overseas employment of women, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has taken a wide range of pragmatic steps. Those are as follows:

- ❖ Facilitating training program according to the market demand in order to containing and expanding the international labor market.
- ❖ To ensure regular short and long term migration opportunities with minimum cost for any person irrespective of gender from any region of Bangladesh, who is willing to go abroad;
- ❖ To safeguard the rights and dignity of expatriates both at home and abroad and give proper attention on security issues of women workers during bilateral discussions regarding new and the existing labour markets;
- ❖ To generate employment for skilled and semi-skilled expatriate workers (such as house maid, gardener, nurse) as well. Different activities and projects are taken for the welfare of expatriates with the financing from wage earners welfare board.
- ❖ Arranging regular joint meeting and meeting with high level officials for regular and necessary adjustments required for the necessary reduction and amendment of existing work agreements;
- ❖ To award recruiting agencies, who succeed in exploring new labour markets, hire more skilled workers, and are successful in exporting skilled female workers with a minimum cost and who arrange high income jobs;
- ❖ To provide soft loan facilities from the Expatriate Welfare Bank to the workers including women willing to go abroad;
- ❖ To encourage remitting through legal channels, assist expatriates and their families in investing remittance in viable projects or activities, and also assist expatriates return from abroad for social and financial re-integration. This will result in women's employment, income generation and empowerment, strong presence in the family and the society and eventually, improvement in living standards.

4.2 Different activities related to women's advancement:

- ❖ The opportunities for women to work in different countries including Middle East have been opened up. Women workers are required to take a 30 (thirty) days orientation course before going abroad as housemaids. Along with training on house-keeping, they are taught the languages, customs, rituals, social norms and culture of concerned country. Therefore, they become accustomed to and learn about the issue of managing their own security. By this, they can concentrate on work abroad with confidence;
- ❖ There is a plan to send 50 (fifty) thousand women workers to Hong Kong within next 05 (five) years as part of the international labour market expansion. With a view to this, a contract has been signed with the government of Hong Kong. A similar contract has also been signed with the government of Jordan in order to create opportunity for women workers;
- ❖ In the quest for job creation, both at home and abroad, skill development is progressing through the training to women workers. 64 (Sixty Four) TTCs and 6 (six) Institute of Marine Technology have been established under the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. Besides, a project of establishing 40 (forty) TTC's are going on in 40 (forty) upazilas. These institutes provide training to women workers besides male workers on various trades;
- ❖ In accordance with the huge demand for skilled women workers in housekeeping in the Middle East and other countries, the International Migration Organization is assisting in the design of a course curriculum for women workers. With this, opportunity has been created in exporting women workers in the Middle East and other countries. In addition to this foreign recruiting agencies are being given dedicated space in the TTC to provide training and invest.
- ❖ The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) arranges pre-departure awareness briefing for women workers.
- ❖ To ensure shelter, necessary welfare assistance from the Embassy, female safe homes have been established in Saudi Arabia and other countries. To provide food, shelter and medical treatment, legal assistance and air ticket for their repatriation necessary budget has been allocated.

5.0 Priority Spending Areas and Benefits for Women's Advancement

| Serial No. | Priority spending sector/programmes | Impact on women's development (Direct and Indirect) |
|------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1. | Overseas employment generation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ With a view to promoting overseas employment, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment issues licenses and regulates the recruiting agencies. Moreover, the ministry is also taking the necessary steps for the expansion of new labour markets and consolidation of the existing ones. ❖ With the Increased overseas employment, employment opportunities for women in different countries including Hong Kong and the Middle East have also been increased significantly. Women are becoming self-sufficient economically due to the increased employment of women workers in foreign countries. |
| 2. | Human resource development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are 64 TTC and 6 Institutes of Marine Technology under the operating budget of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. Training on different trades such as T.V. repair, automotive, electronics and information technology, welding, fridge repair, computer training, plumbing, pipe fitting, and garments are being conducted in these training centers. With such training, workers can build up their skills. ❖ Because of the increasing demand for house maids in the Middle East and Hong Kong, women workers, selected with the help of District Administration, are being trained on house-keeping, language learning and different trades in Technical Training Centers for women employment in abroad. By this training, they have the opportunity to become efficient and skilled, and acquire the capacity to look after themselves in the workplace. It also enhances their opportunities for overseas employment and plays a supporting role for the overall advancement of women. |
| 3. | Welfare of Bangladeshi migrants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The provision of legal assistance, pursuit of compensation from foreign employers for deceased migrants, scholarships for children of migrants, assistance to afflicted migrant workers, health services, inspection of workplaces, return of dead bodies of the migrant workers, and financial assistance to the family of the deceased migrant workers are some of the important welfare activities performed by |

| Serial No. | Priority spending sector/programmes | Impact on women's development (Direct and Indirect) |
|------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | <p>the ministry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Such welfare activities undertaken by the ministry also assist women workers. These welfare activities benefit the families of the migrants directly, and in addition, migrant women workers can work abroad with greater comfort and no stress. This encourages more women workers to seek overseas employment. As a result, there is a positive impact on women's advancement and the socio-economic development of the country. |

6.0 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

| Description | Budget 2019-20 | | | Revised 2018-19 | | | Budget 2018-19 | | | Actual 2017-18 | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-------------|---------|----------------|-------------|---------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| | Budget | Women Share | | Revised | Women Share | | Budget | Women Share | | Actual | Women Share | |
| | | Women | percent | | Women | percent | | Women | percent | | Women | percent |
| Total Budget | 523190 | 161247 | 30.82 | 442541 | 136036 | 30.74 | 464573 | 136938 | 29.48 | 321861 | 88441 | 27.48 |
| Ministry Budget | 591 | 273 | 46.27 | 596 | 262 | 43.99 | 595 | 270 | 45.38 | 398 | 136 | 34.11 |
| Development | 295 | 227 | 76.93 | 301 | 217 | 71.99 | 307 | 243 | 79.07 | 167 | 111 | 66.52 |
| Operating | 296 | 47 | 15.71 | 295 | 46 | 15.46 | 288 | 27 | 9.38 | 231 | 24 | 10.62 |

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of the Ministry in relation to Women's Advancement and Rights in the last three years

| Performance Indicators | Unit of Measurement | Achievement | | |
|--|---------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Women's participation in overseas employment | percent | 18.29% | 12.43% | 13.85% |

8.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

- ❖ Since the inception of the Expatriate Welfare Bank, 1201 (one thousand two hundred one) women workers have been given an amount of 10.41 crore Taka as collateral loans without deposit. With the help of these loans, women workers are going to Jordan, Hong Kong, Dubai, Oman, Bahrain, and Lebanon;
- ❖ A new policy titled the Policy on Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment 2016 and Rules on Overseas Employment and Expatriates' Management 2017 have been enacted. The objectives of the new policy and rules are to elaborate the policy context and directives taking into account of current challenges and opportunities for Bangladesh and its workers in the international labour market;

- ❖ From 2016 to 2018 there were 3,41,708 (three lakh forty one thousand seven hundred eight) women workers sent abroad for employment. Due to safe migration measures and initiatives taken by Govt. and compulsory training for women, number of women among migrants is gradually increasing.
- ❖ Safe homes have been set up in Saudi Arabia in various places in Saudi Arabia to ensure the protection of women workers and to help embassy, and monitoring sells have been opened to provide them food, food, medical care and legal assistance, and necessary manpower and budget allocations are allocated.
- ❖ Work Contracts have been signed to ensure the rights and protection of women workers and they are regularly reviewed at the meeting of the Joint Technical Committee for necessary amendments.
- ❖ In FY 2018-19, till February 2019, 66,382 (Sixty six thousand three hundred Eighty two) women workers have gone abroad. From FY 2010-11 to January 2019, the government BOESL has facilitated the migration of 54,728 (Fifty four thousand Seven hundred twenty eight) women workers to Jordan, Bahrain, Oman and other countries. They are mainly operators, supervisors, quality checkers and personnel officers, industrial nurses of garments industry, housekeepers, and housemaids.
- ❖ Women workers are being sent, free of migration costs to Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

8.1 A Success story of Expatriates' woman worker is given below:

Expatriates' Worker

Lamia Akter, daughter of a farmer of Enayetnagar village of Munshiganj district. She has 3 siblings and parents in her family who were extremely poor. As her days were full of hardles, she could not finish her study. Her father got her married. After the birth of a son, her husband married once again. In distress, she came back her father's house with her son. Afterwards, she was trying to earn her livelihood with the thought of the future of his son and she moved to Jordan as a domestic worker through BMET in 2013. After working there for a year and a half, she took a job as office assistant in UAE and worked for nearly two years. Then she went to Saudi Arabia in 2016. She worked with respect in the three countries of the Middle East and got salary, allowances and other facilities. Due to work in the Middle East, she was well-versed in Arabic language and computer operating. After returning back to home country in 2018, she is now working as a translator and computer operator in a private firm. When she was abroad, she purchased some land properties at home with the savings she made. She has sent her younger brother abroad and her son is studying, all these are possible as she is earning a handsome amount. As a beneficiary of the BMET program, she is now living a comfortable life

9.0 Recommendations for Future Activities

- ❖ To take an all-inclusive initiative for the employment of both educated and illiterate women labor force
- ❖ To provide technical training at upazila level for women's foreign employment
- ❖ To make matters easier for women and to go abroad for women at low cost
- ❖ To create data base for expatriate women and regular monitoring of the situation of expatriate women
- ❖ According to the law of the employer, other facilities, including salary allowance of women workers working abroad are to be ensured
- ❖ To take social awareness on sending women workers abroad
- ❖ Ensuring the sending of women workers through data band support in order to reduce the exploitations by the middlemen