

Chapter-18

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment was established to enhance overseas employment opportunities through immigration management by providing appropriate technical training based on demand of global labour markets and ensure enhanced welfare and rights of expatriates. To that end, the Ministry has been formulating and implementing policies, plans, enacting laws, rules and regulations, developing projects, programmes and monitor the management of overseas employment as well as overall welfare of expatriate workers. Ministry also looks after the rights and interests of migrant workers, preventing harassment, providing appropriate training for the active workforce, exploring new labor market, development of existing overseas employment management system and creation of public awareness about safe migration process in order to ensure the overall welfare of expatriates. This Ministry has recently enacted the "Policy on Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment 2016" which aimed at to provide a comprehensive labour migration framework with a particular focus on the protection of migrant workers.

1.2 Since its inception, ministry is taking various steps and continuously monitoring overseas employment scenario to create more decent jobs in this sector and improve the welfare situation. Due to these initiatives of the ministry, nearly 91 million Bangladeshi workers are currently employed in 160 countries of the world. The creation of overseas employment for a large proportion of active community of the country significantly reduces unemployment rate of the country on one hand and on the other hand remittance from expatriates is being used to meet the country's import bills and to increase the foreign currency reserves which plays an important role to enhance the economic growth of the country. In 2015-16 fiscal year 14.93 billion US dollars has been sent by migrant workers. Data also show that as a result of the expansion of labor market on an average about 5 lakh workers are going abroad in every year for employment of which women workers are a significant part. Due to different measures taken by the ministry to ensure safe passage of female workers, women overseas employment gradually increased from 17.8% in FY 2013-14 to 18.29% in FY 2015-16.

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. Women are taking this opportunity to improve their socio-economic condition through employment in the formal sector in lieu of unpaid family work or informal sector work. To support this, training on house-keeping, language and various trades is being provided to the women workers who are willing to go abroad. Selected with the help of district administration, female worker training is being provided in Technical Training Centers (TTCs). It is useful to highlight that compulsory training for 21 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 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 workers:** The expatriates would be able to concentrate more on their jobs if their welfare is ensured. This increases their productivity which leads to a higher income. Due to various steps taken by the government for the welfare of the women expatriates and their families, more female labour is being attracted to overseas employment. This plays a positive role for women's advancement.
- 3.4 **Increase in remittance flow:** As remittances sent by the expatriates through legal channels are included in the main sectors of economy, it helps to improve the Balance of Payment (BOP) and reduces dependency on foreign aid. During the last three years 2,97,813 women were employed in foreign countries. They have sent large amounts of remittances back to the country. Technical and vocational training can transform the poor women workforce into important wage earners. To ensure the higher income and profitable investment of remittances, the Expatriate Welfare Bank has been established. Women expatriates have ample opportunities to develop their fortune by getting benefits from the facilities offered by this bank as well.
- 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 for women, the "Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment" has taken a wide range of pragmatic steps. Those are as follows:
- ❖ To train the labour force in accordance with the demand of the relevant foreign country with a view to creating a new labour market and retaining the existing market;
 - ❖ To ensure regular short and long term migration opportunities with minimum cost for any person, both male and female, 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 as well as increase opportunities for migration of other professionals such as house keepers, gardeners and nurses, and undertake various activities and implement projects through Wage Earners' Welfare Fund;

- ❖ 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 newly established 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 of the ministry related to women's advancement are mentioned below:

- ❖ The opportunities for women to work in different countries including Middle East have been opened up. Women workers are required to take a 21 day orientation course before going abroad as housemaids. Along with training on house-keeping, they are taught about the 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 the work abroad with confidence;
- ❖ There is a plan to send 50 thousands women workers to Hong Kong within next year 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 export women workers;
- ❖ In the quest for job creation, both at home and abroad, skill development is progressing through the training to women workers. 64 TTCs and 6 Institute of Marine Technology have been established under the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. Besides, a project of establishing 40 TTC's are going on in 40 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 House-keeping 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;

- ❖ The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) arranges pre-departure awareness briefing for women workers.

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 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. ❖ Part of the increase in overseas employment is from women's employment in various countries including Hong Kong and the Middle East. This is enabling women to become economically solvent and will eventually raise their position in their family and in the society as well.
2.	Human resource development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are 64 TTC and 6 Institute of Marine Technology under the revenue budget under 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 women's advancement.
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 the ministry. ❖ Such welfare activities undertaken by the ministry also assist women workers. These welfare activities benefit the families of

Serial No.	Priority spending sector/programmes	Impact on women's development (Direct and Indirect)
1	2	3
		the migrants directly, and in addition, migrant women workers can work abroad with greater confidence and less strain. This encourages more women workers to seek overseas employment through this demonstration effect. 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 2017-18			Revised 2016-17			Budget 2016-17		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	400266	112019	27.99	317174	86586	27.3	340605	92781	27.24
Ministry Budget	688	282	41.05	481	161	33.42	560	181	32.37
Development	412	253	61.35	237	135	56.84	287	154	53.63
Non-Development	275	29	10.61	245	26	10.74	273	28	10.08

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	2014-15	2013-14
Women's participation in overseas employment	percent	18.29%	21%	7%

8.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

- ❖ Since the inception of the Expatriate Welfare Bank, 1118 women workers have been given an amount of 9 crore 79 lakh Taka as collateral free loans. Loans are provided to the applicants within three days of submitting application. 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' has been enacted. The objective of the new policy is 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;
- ❖ In 28 labour wings 07 women officers have been posted which constitute 25 percent of the posted officials;

- ❖ Initiatives have recently been taken to send female works to Saudi Arab and UAE;
- ❖ From 2014 to 2016 there were 2.97 lakh 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 gradually increased from 17.8% in FY 2013-14, 21% in FY 2014-15 and it reached to 18.29% in FY 2015-16 and remittance 14.94 billion USD in 2014, 15.32 billion USD in 2015 and 13.61 billion USD has been eared.
- ❖ In FY 2016-17, till March, 2017, 79,001 women workers have gone abroad. The government BOESL has facilitated the migration of 24,913 women workers to Jordan, Bahrain, Oman and other countries through March, 2016. They are mainly operators, supervisors, quality checkers and personnel officers, industrial nurses of garments industry, housekeepers, and housemaids.
- ❖ The arrangement enables the travel of women workers to Jordan at a cost of only Taka 10,000.

9.0 Some success story of Women Migrants:

Sahara Begum, who holds passport number BE 0071731, got the exit certificate for the housemaid profession through using the Online Based Emigration Clearance System on 26/12/2015, and went to Saudi Arabia. So far, She has sent 3,20,000/- (three lakh twenty thousand taka) to Bangladesh as remittance and now she and her family is in good financial condition.

Parvin Begum, who holds passport number BL 0422746, got the exit certificate for the housemaid profession through using the Online Based Emigration Clearance System on 01/09/2016, went to Saudi Arabia. So far, She has sent 1,60,000/- (one lac sixty thousand taka) to Bangladesh as remittance and now she and her family is in good financial condition.

Champa Begum, who holds passport number BM 0550254, got the exit certificate for the housemaid profession through using the Online Based Emigration Clearance System on 10/02/2017, went to Saudi Arabia. She used to get around one thousand Saudi Riyal as a monthly salary. So far, She has sent 60,000/- (sixty thousand taka) to Bangladesh as remittance and now she and her family is in good financial condition.

These are not mere three isolated incident. So far 1,09,423(one lac nine thousand four hundred and twenty three) women migrants went abroad since june, 2015 and get back their financial solvency.

10.0 Progress on Recommended Activities in the Previous Year

Serial No.	Recommendations	Progress
1.	All out initiatives for employment generation for both literate and illiterate segments of the female work force	BMET are providing job oriented training for both male and female youths and eventually they are getting job at home and abroad.
2.	With a view to overseas employment, make arrangements for technical and market oriented training at Upazila level	From FY 2013-14 to 2015-16, 6.25 lakhs prospective workers have been trained through 64 Technical Training centres(TTCs) and 6 Institute of Marine Technology(IMTs) among which 2.01 lacs are women.
3.	Make the system for overseas employment easier for women and make arrangements for sending women workers abroad with a minimum cost	From FY 2013-14 to 2015-16, a total number of 15.59 lakh workers were sent abroad for employment among which number of women was 2.78 lakh.
4.	Create data base for migrant women workers and monitor their condition regularly	Substantive progress has made so far and activities are going on.
5.	Ensure proper wages, allowances and other benefits according to the laws of concerned countries	Government are ensuring all these things through Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Labour wing situated in each Embassies.
6.	Increase social awareness by building up activities regarding women's migration	Regular activities are taking place to build social awareness.
7.	Ensure exporting of women workers from data bank in order to prevent exploitation by middle men	Various types of measures are taking place to prevent exploitation by middle men.

11.0 Recommendations for Future Activities

- ❖ Establish support centre in the destination Countries to help the women migrants in any crisis period;
- ❖ Formulate an action plan to reduce the migration cost gradually as a percentage of yearly income migrants as per target 10.7 of SDG's, which is 120% of yearly income within 2020, 100% of yearly income within 2025 and 80% of yearly income within 2030.