



# Towards an effective and integrated labour market information system for Bangladesh

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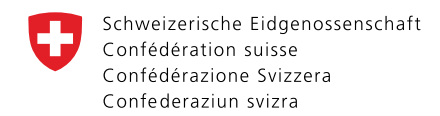
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# Towards an Effective and Integrated Labour Market Information System for Bangladesh



**Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC**



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Bangladesh Country Office

House 13/A, Road 136

Gulshan-1, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

Tel.: + 88 02 5504 4811 – 13

Fax: + 88 02 5504 4818 – 19

Email: IOMDhaka@iom.int

Website: <https://bangladesh.iom.int>

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**Towards an Effective and  
Integrated Labour Market  
Information System for  
Bangladesh**



# Authors

**Mohammad A. Razzaque, PhD** is a trained economist specializing in international trade, poverty and labour issues.

**Bazlul H. Khondker, PhD** is Professor of Economics at Dhaka University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. **Mahtab Uddin** is Lecturer in Economics at Dhaka University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

**Jillur Rahman** is Lecturer in Economics at Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

## Foreword from **BMET**

It is my immense pleasure to share the report on “Integrated Labour Market Information System” which was commenced by International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) under the guidance and leadership of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET). I am thankful to the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), Wage Earners’ Welfare Board (WEWB) for their continued support in this regard.

It is important to note that overseas employment market is a major source of employment for the Bangladeshi workers which constitutes around 13 percent of the total labour force. Lack of information and the absence of effective use of the existing information are amongst the major obstacles prompting fraudulent and exploitative practices by various intermediaries targeting migrant workers. Given situation, an effective integrated labour market information system (ILMIS) can be a tool for policymakers in implementing interventions that can support employment generation, skill development of workers, and analysis of employment efforts of different programmes and interventions.

The report presents an analysis of global migration trends with the prospects of Bangladeshi migrant workers in the evolving foreign labour markets while recognizing major challenges for their effective and beneficial participation in them. In addition to that, the publication proposes a comprehensive framework for an integrated and appropriate LMIS for Bangladesh outlining a possible implementation strategy.

I hope that this LMIS report will prove useful to policymakers, economists, financial and business professionals, development partners and other stakeholders. I would like to thank the research team for the contribution.



**Md. Salim Reza**

Additional Secretary

Director General

BMET

# Foreword

Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS) envisages to serve as a single window which can collect, evaluate and disseminate labour market information to all the stakeholders. The LMIS of a country helps to reduce the information deficit on the labour market which can help in better functioning of the labour market. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in partnership with International Labour Organization (ILO) with the support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) initiated a study to identify the prospects and challenges for migrant workers and the gaps in the current LMIS of Bangladesh.

The research is timely as Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) aims to further develop the LMIS web-portal as a platform to bring labour market information from diverse sources and the study will further strengthen the LMIS. The study proposes an operational modality and an implementation strategy for a possible Integrated Labour Market Information System (ILMIS) in Bangladesh. ILMIS will integrate the overseas labour market within the traditional LMIS capturing the emerging trends in the domestic labour market to illustrate the significance of overseas employment for Bangladesh.

ILO and IOM would like to express sincere gratitude to the research team comprised of Dr Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, Dr Bazlul H. Khondker, Mahtab Uddin, and Jillur Rahman for relentless effort in undertaking the research. The ILO and IOM are grateful to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for both technical and financial contribution. We are indebted to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWEB), the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) for their continuous guidance and support. We would also like to thank the team of the ILO and IOM in Dhaka offices and the regional offices for forging close collaboration and partnership in the project implementation and for their valuable inputs on the report.

The ILO and IOM believe that the findings and relevant recommendations from the research would contribute to the effective implementation of an Integrated Labour Market Information System (ILMIS) in Bangladesh.



**Giorgi Gigauri**

Chief of Mission  
IOM, Bangladesh



**Tuomo Poutiainen**

Country Director  
ILO, Bangladesh



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## Abbreviations

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ABI	Annual Business Inquiry
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APS	Annual Population Survey
ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
ASK	Ain o Salish Kendra
ASPBI	Annual Survey of Philippine Business and Industry
BAIRA	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDHS	Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BIDA	Bangladesh Investment Development Authority
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BILS	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
BLE	Bureau of Local Employment
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited
BOI	Board of Investment
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
COD	Country of Destination
DEMO	District Employment and Manpower Office
DES	Disability Employment Service
DOLE	Department of Labour and Employment
DYD	Department of Youth Development

ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ESA	Employment Service Area
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FY	Fiscal Year
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Surveys
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILMIA	Institute of Labour Market Information Analysis
ILMIS	Integrated Labour Market Information System
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILOSTAT	International Labour Organization Statistics
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	In-Principal Approval
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
ISIC	United Nation's International Standard Industrial Classification
ITC	Industrial Training Council
ITES	Information Technology Enabled Services
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KNOMAD	The Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMI	Labour Market Information
LMID	Labour Market Information Division
LMIDW	Labour Market Information Data Warehouse



LMIS	Labour Market Information System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCMC	Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission
MCS	Ministry of Civil Services
MDEC	Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation
MDPS	Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MEPSC	Management of Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council
MFI	Micro-Finance Institution
MHR	Ministry of Human Resources
MIDA	Malaysian Investment Development Authority
MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
MRSD	Manpower Research and Statistics Department
NCSI	National Center for Statistics and Information
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIC	National Information Center
NIPORT	National Institute of Population Research and Training
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NOC	National Occupational Classification
NOMIS	National Online Manpower Information System
NSC	National Skills Development

NSDA	National Skill Development Agency
NSDC	National Skills Development Corporation
NYCLMIS	New York City Labor Market Information Service
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFWs	Overseas Filipino Workers
OKUP	Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OWWA	Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration
PESO	Public Employment Service Offices
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
POEA	Philippines Overseas Employment Administration
PWT	Penn World Table
QCEW	Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
RBM	Results-Based Management
RMG	Ready Made Garments
SALM	Small Area Labour Market
SCAD	Statistics Centre - Abu Dhabi
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SID	Statistics and Informatics Division
SIR	Survey on Investment from Remittance
SLBFE	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
SMA	Survey on Manufacturing Industries
SMB	Steering and Monitoring Body
SSA	Statistics South Africa
SSC	Sector Skills Council





SUR	Survey on the Use of Remittance
TESDA	Technical Education and Skill Development Authority
TTC	Technical Training Centre
TVC	Television Commercials
TVEC	Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWC	TESDA Women's Centre
UDC	Union Digital Centre
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
USAID	United States Agency of International Development
VAT	Value Added Tax
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WDI	World Development Indicators
WEF	World Economic Forum
WEO	World Economic Outlook
WEWB	Wage Earners' Welfare Board
YEP	Youth Employment Programme



# Executive Summary

## Background

Inclusive growth and development are dependent on, among others, employment generation and a well-functioning labour market that can ensure participation of all – including women and other vulnerable groups – in economic activities. Generating adequate and productive employment opportunities is a challenge for Bangladesh, as it requires an additional 2 million jobs every year to accommodate new entrants into its large and growing labour force. Widespread underemployment and low participation in the labour force, particularly of women, mean many more jobs than the sheer number of people joining the labour force will have to be created.

International migration provides an important avenue to deal with the challenge of job creation. Over the past four decades, almost 12 million Bangladeshis have gone abroad as migrant workers. Yet, Bangladesh has failed to take full advantage of overseas market opportunities as there are major obstacles in reaping the benefits of labour migration, including workers' ending up with generally low-skilled, low paid jobs, being victims of human and labour rights violation, facing excessive costs of migration and other exploitative practices. Lack of information and absence of effective use of the existing information on overseas employment opportunities and the processes involved in securing them induce fraudulent and exploitative practices by various intermediaries targeting migrant workers. Information deficit and lack of awareness is not only a problem for aspirant migrant workers but also for jobseekers in the domestic economy. Among others, the information on the demand for different types of skilled labourers, existing market wages, workers' rights and obligations, training opportunities for skill development, and support for workers in adverse circumstances are often not available to enable the labour market efficiency. Against this backdrop, an effective labour market information system (LMIS), ensuring a better flow of information articulated in a way accessible to and disseminated widely, can effectively tackle many of the current obstacles. Such a system can also be used as a planning tool in considering interventions that can help generate employment, promote skill development, support certain groups of workers (including women and others with special needs), and promote safe and beneficial labour migration.

The objectives of this study are to identify the current gaps and assess the need for an effective LMIS for Bangladesh. Since the existing LMIS focuses on the domestic market only, this study provides an assessment of making the LMIS effective especially by incorporating the relevant information on labour migration including trends and prospects of employment in overseas markets, recruitment practices and welfare issues of migrant workers. It develops broad operational guidelines and implementation strategies for an integrated LMIS (by combining domestic and international markets) and presents a set of policy recommendations for the way forward in this respect.

## Emerging trends in the domestic labour market and implications for international labour migration

Despite going through a demographic transition in which the share of working-age population (15–64 years) has been larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older), Bangladesh has been unable to exploit the demographic dividend for not being able to create adequate number of productive jobs for the working-age population. While the overall expansion of the gross domestic product (GDP) has been quite impressive at more than 6 per cent per annum, the employment elasticity of growth has fallen from close to 1 per cent in early 2000s to just 0.12 per cent during 2013–16. Hence, high economic growth was not enough for fostering employment generation in the domestic economy. This along with lower level of labour force participation, particularly of women (as currently only about 36% of women work), and massive underemployment (for example, more than 40% of the workforce is in agriculture, the share of which in GDP is less than 15%) indicate that the demographic dividend remains elusive.

Jobless growth in the manufacturing sector is another major concern. The level of employment in the manufacturing sector fell from 9.5 million in 2013 to 8.6 million in 2016 despite a robust growth of manufacturing value added at an impressive average annual rate of 10.4 per cent. The use of more capital-intensive technologies and automation is contributing to a labour-saving production process. Employment in the export-oriented readymade garment sector has remained virtually stagnant for the past several years despite export earnings more than doubling during the same period. In addition, women's employment share in the sector, according to the official labour force survey, has declined from 57 per cent to 46 per cent between 2013 and 2016.

The youth unemployment rate has reached a staggeringly high level of 11.4 per cent. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Bangladesh, estimated at about 30 per cent, is one of the highest in the world. The youth unemployment rate and NEET rates for women are considerably higher: 14.1 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively.

In light of the above developments, the importance of overseas employment cannot be overstated. As such, labour migration should be dealt with on a priority basis. There are several issues to consider – from looking for labour market opportunities to workers' skill upgradation to decent employment to safer migration and adequate support for migrant workers.

## **International labour market prospects for Bangladesh**

The major destinations of Bangladeshi migrant workers have been the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia, Singapore, and the Republic of Korea. In 2017, more than one million workers migrated from Bangladesh, reaching a record high for labour migration in a single calendar year. The country also experienced an impressive growth in workers' remittances inflow: from less than USD 2.5 billion in 2001 to USD 12.8 billion in 2017.

The analysis of prospects for future employment opportunities shows immense potential for Bangladeshi workers in major destination countries. Among others, the GCC countries and Malaysia are going through a large-scale infrastructural transformation, which is likely to generate demand for more workers in their construction sectors. In addition, due to the declining population growth rates and an increase in ageing population in Western and East Asian and Pacific countries, the demand for skilled workers in service sectors should increase. Despite these promising opportunities for Bangladeshi migrant workers, there are, however, some concerns about realizing the potentials. These include volatility and uncertainty of commodity and fuel prices affecting economic prospects in GCC countries, low skill level of Bangladeshi migrant workers constraining their employment opportunities in specialized service sectors, employment conditions in overseas markets often limiting workers' mobility from one job to another, workplace rights and safety – particularly of women, adversely affecting workers, and any abrupt changes in overseas labour market policies in destination countries generating unfavourable consequences for a labour-exporting country like Bangladesh. The cost of migration in Bangladesh is one of the highest in the world. Most of the workers migrating abroad are unaware of their rights at work, skill requirements, working conditions, or prospects of career progressions in destination countries. In the absence of information flows, aspirant migrant workers rely on middlemen, often falling victims to their unscrupulous practices.

## **LMIS needs assessment and existing global practices**

Lack of information affects labour market outcomes in terms of misallocation of resources, skill mismatches, and disputes resulting in strained employee-employer relationships. An LMIS in this respect constitutes an important policy tool to design and implement interventions, and to enhance monitoring and evaluation capacities concerning labour market processes. In a country like Bangladesh, it can contribute to tackling excessive costs of migration, helping aspirant migrants to choose and make an informed decision, formulating and implementing economic policies especially those related to employment generation, preparing workers in labour market participation and advancing their careers and job prospects.

The need for LMIS varies by users. Three broad groups of potential users in the context of Bangladesh would be (a) policymakers, (b) labour market participants, including employees and employers, and (c) labour market facilitators, for instance, recruiters, policy analysts, career counsellors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The use of LMIS is widespread. Both developed and developing countries are currently making use of it to achieve well-functioning labour markets and support their workers' skill development. Current practices of LMIS from several countries show that all are focused on their respective domestic labour markets only. In terms of the spread and depth of the information provided, users' facilities available in the system, and stakeholders involved, LMIS exercises vary quite widely across countries.

Based on existing practices, several LMIS features can be identified as most essential for a country like Bangladesh. These include: (a) government ownership and effective governance, (b) all-in-one-place source for labour market-related information, (c) wider coverage of data, (d) labour market trend analysis, (e) easy accessibility and effective dissemination, (f) effective collaboration among different stakeholders and intermediaries, and (g) sustainability of the overall process.

### Gaps in Bangladesh's current LMIS and moving towards an integrated LMIS

The current LMIS in Bangladesh, established and hosted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), is a recent initiative that aims to publish information and analytical studies based on microdata to assess labour market dynamics. It has launched an LMIS web portal to bring labour market information from diverse sources. While this is a commendable initiative, there are important gaps that need addressing. For instance, it provides only some basic and aggregate data and does not provide any information on employment opportunities, demand for labour by skill types, wages by various categories of jobs in different industries, training programmes available for workers and so on. Unlike the best practices in LMIS elsewhere, the existing system in Bangladesh does not offer any interactive modules to match jobseekers with employers. It also does not incorporate any information on overseas labour market opportunities. In its current format, it is difficult to understand how the workers and employers either as groups or individuals can find the existing system useful.

This study argues for Bangladesh to consider an Integrated Labour Market Information System (ILMIS) while addressing the shortcomings associated with the current LMIS and combining information both on the domestic labour market as well as international destinations. Many workers are open about their job market options between domestic and overseas markets and thus they are likely to benefit from a system that provides information on both the markets from a single source.

Based on international best practices, the study delineates an operational guideline for an ILMIS. Given all the processes involved, the guideline captures roles of four broad key stakeholders: (a) LMIS hosting organization, (b) data and information providers, (c) disseminators, and (d) a steering and monitoring body (SMB) overseeing LMIS activities. It is proposed that the LMIS hosting organization will collect information from the data providers, undertake analysis and then disseminate information for users. Effective dissemination of information will require support from and involvement of other stakeholders. Along with a dedicated web portal, the ILMIS host will share information through other relevant websites. An effective dissemination strategy should be developed for a wider coverage of the users, particularly those with no access to the internet. An effective and sustainable ILMIS in Bangladesh will require a strong commitment from all stakeholders which can be achieved through a high-level steering and monitoring body (SMB) overseeing the overall system.

This study outlines an implementation strategy for an ILMIS considering 10 core elements in it, namely: (a) developing the idea of an integrated LMIS, (b) securing a high-level government buy-in, (c) selecting an appropriate host, (d) articulating a vision for the ILMIS exercise, (e) developing an operational strategy, (f) securing resources, (g) developing the key ILMIS data indicators on which information – both qualitative and quantitative – will be gathered, (h) developing a results-based management (RBM) system for the ILMIS project, (i) undertaking monitoring and evaluation, and (j) assessing and ensuring sustainability. Based on the implementation strategies, the study articulates some time-bound priorities for operationalizing the ILMIS in Bangladesh. The key priorities in the immediate term (within the first two years) will be to develop and promote the concept of ILMIS, secure a higher-level buy-in, and selecting a host organization. The medium-term (three to five years) priorities will be to strengthen the system following the feedback from evaluation and expand the dissemination mechanism to ensure a wider outreach to labour market participants. In the long term, the ILMIS host should be more effective in generating resources for undertaking large-scale and in-depth exercises to further complement the data generation efforts of other organizations.

Following on the analysis presented, the study concludes with a set of 10 policy recommendations: (a) to incorporate overseas labour market in an integrated labour market information system (ILMIS) while addressing the gaps in the existing LMIS, (b) to make use of the ILMIS as an active labour market tool, (c) to develop an ILMIS reflecting Bangladesh's needs and realities rather than considering a template available elsewhere, (d) to establish an effective ownership and governance structure, (e) to select an appropriate host for the ILMIS to ensure its effective implementation and dissemination, (f) to strengthen the Information-generation capacities related to labour market development, (g) to build capacity of the key stakeholders in the ILMIS processes, (h) to ensure a continued and effective collaboration among the stakeholders, (i) to develop and adapt creative dissemination strategies to ensure wider use of the ILMIS, and (j) to use a results-based management system for the implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the ILMIS.

The importance of a well-functioning integrated labour market information system cannot be overemphasized for Bangladesh. Moving towards such a system would constitute a massive opportunity in transforming the way information can be generated and utilized in achieving better labour market outcomes, supporting workers' empowerment and economic development.





# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION





## 1.1 Background and Context

Employment generation and effective functioning of the labour market, ensuring participation of all different population groups (including women, vulnerable groups, and minority communities) in economic activities, is considered as one of the key determinants of achieving inclusive economic growth and development that most developing countries strive for. A vast population, comprising mostly low-skilled and semi-skilled workers, coupled with principal productive sectors' (such as agriculture and manufacturing) limited capacity in job creation, make it extremely difficult for Bangladesh to provide adequate and productive employment opportunities for all. The country requires 2 million additional jobs every year just to accommodate the new entrants to its labour force (GED, 2015). The challenge of employment generation is, however, much more profound than this. The women labour force participation rate is very low, at 36 per cent, (BBS, 2017) testifying subdued and suppressed gainful economic opportunities for women. As high as 40 per cent of people is still in agriculture, whose contribution to the national economy is already quite small (15%) and is set to shrink further. This huge underemployment problem means non-farm activities will have to absorb the influx of labour from agriculture. On the other hand, productivity growth accompanied by deepening of capital-intensive production processes has resulted in 'jobless' manufacturing growth, exerting further pressure on the labour market situation with the service sector being crowded in by informal and low-productive jobs.

Against these developments, employment opportunities in overseas markets provide Bangladesh with an important avenue to deal with its ever-growing labour market challenges. Over a span of four decades or so, almost 12 million Bangladeshis have gone abroad – to more than 140 countries across the globe – as migrant workers (BMET, 2017).<sup>1</sup> Along with the rising number of migrant workers, remittances sent by them through formal channels increased from USD 2.5 billion in FY2001 to USD 12.8 billion in FY2017 (Bangladesh Bank, 2017).<sup>2</sup> During this period, Bangladesh emerged as one of the top ten remittance-receiving nations in the world. The highest remittance inflow was recorded at USD 15.3 billion in FY2015. As a proportion to the gross domestic product (GDP), the share of remittances stood at 5.2 per cent in FY2017.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to positive macroeconomic effects, the beneficial effects of remittances at the household level cannot be overemphasized. There is a strong correlation between remittances and rising incomes, consumption and savings of migrant workers' households. Empirical studies suggest that households with at least one migrant worker enjoy a considerably higher level of living standards than non-migrant households (Haider, Hossain and Siddiqui, 2016; Wadood and Hossain, 2016). There is further evidence on the impact of remittances on poverty reduction and other socioeconomic welfare indicators in Bangladesh (Raihan et al., 2009).

Notwithstanding the above, Bangladesh is yet to take full advantage of international labour market opportunities. Many challenges remain in reaping the benefits of overseas employment and labour migration. There are concerns about low-skilled and semi-skilled workers' ending up with generally low-paying jobs,

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<sup>1</sup> This estimate is for the people migrated through the official or formal channels only. There is no credible estimate of migrant workers going abroad through informal channels.

<sup>2</sup> There are no methodologically sound estimates of remittances sent through informal channels. It is widely held that such inflows utilizing informal mechanisms are likely to quite significant and could be in billions.

<sup>3</sup> Although remittances in absolute value terms are just slightly over one-third of merchandise exports, the net domestic value-added content of the latter, unlike remittances, are much lower. A significant proportion of export earnings are used for procuring imported raw materials and intermediate inputs needed by the exporting industry in the production. In the woven readymade garments in particular, the domestic value addition is thought to be quite low, about 40-50 per cent. In contrast, remittances' net value addition is 100 per cent.

violation of human and labour rights of migrant workers, excessive costs of labour migration, and so on. The Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013 was enacted to ameliorate the situation, but its effective implementation has witnessed some challenges. Among others, it is generally recognized that lack of information to migrant workers on employment opportunities and recruitment practices prompt fraudulent and exploitative practices, particularly affecting women.

Lack of quality information is an obstacle not only for aspirant migrant workers but also for jobseekers in the domestic economy. Among others, the information on the demand for different types of skilled labourers, existing market wages, workers' rights and obligations, training opportunities for skill development, and support for workers in adverse circumstances are often not available to enable the labour market to operate efficiently. A better flow of information, articulated in a manner accessible to all and disseminated widely, could induce migrant workers to acquire relevant training and skills to secure higher wages and benefits, and to raise their awareness of issues that can help them to be well-prepared for job markets as well as help protect them against falling victims of malpractices. An effective labour market information system (LMIS) can be a planning tool for policymakers associated with different government ministries and agencies in considering interventions that can promote employment generation, supporting vulnerable population groups' participation in the labour market, planning for skill development of workers, and assessing and monitoring employment effects of different programmes.

Labour market information (LMI) is defined as “any information concerning the size and composition of the labour market or any part of the labour market, the way it or any part of it functions, its problems, the opportunities which may be available to it, and the employment-related intentions or aspirations of those who are part of it” (Thuy, Hansen and Price, 2001: p.57). Woods and O’Leary (2006) proposed a more elaborate definition of LMI. They suggested LMI to include any quantitative or qualitative information and intelligence on the labour market that can assist labour market agents in making informed plans, choices, and decisions related to business requirements, career planning and preparation, education and training offerings, job search, hiring, and governmental policies and workforce investment strategies.

Taking the labour market information at its core, LMIS is a compact and complete procedure that consists of activities ranging from data collection, processing and evaluation to dissemination of the relevant information. Woltermann (2004) defines it as an active labour market policy instrument that collects, evaluates and provides labour market information to the labour supply and demand sides. Sparreboom (1999) elaborates it further stating it as a process that deals with statistical and non-statistical information concerning labour market actors and their environment, as well as information concerning labour market institutions, policies and regulations that serves the needs of users and has been collected through the application of accepted methodologies and practices to the largest possible extent.

According to the ILO, the three main functions of LMIS are facilitating labour market analysis, monitoring and reporting on employment and labour policies, and incorporating a mechanism to exchange information or coordinate different actors and institutions that produce and utilize labour market information and analysis. An active LMIS, according to Woods and O’Leary (2006), consists of five crucial pillars, namely (a) collection of labour market information, (b) compilation of data and information, (c) reposition of information, (d) analysis of the labour market using different tools, and (e) proper dissemination. Based on these illustrations, the LMIS can



be regarded as a complete package of interlinked systems, which includes institutional provisions, arrangements, procedures and mechanisms to coordinate the collection, processing, evaluation, storage and dissemination of labour market information.

## 1.2 Objectives of the current study

Against the above backdrop, the objective of this study is to provide an assessment for Bangladesh in making the LMIS effective especially by incorporating the relevant information on labour migration including trends and prospects of employment in overseas markets, recruitment practices and welfare issues of migrant workers. Given that the existing LMIS focuses only on the domestic market, this study articulates the rationales for incorporating the information on international labour markets. As such, it conducts a need assessment for an integrated LMIS, develops some broad operational guidelines and implementation strategies, and presents a set of recommendations.

In dealing with the principal objective, the study discusses the salient features of the domestic labour market dynamics and highlights the importance of overseas employment for Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup> It presents an analysis of global migration trends with prospects for Bangladeshi migrant workers while recognizing major challenges for their effective and beneficial participation. It points out the gaps in the existing LMIS to justify the need for a functioning and integrated labour market information system (ILMIS). This study analyses LMISs for a number of countries and territories to identify some of the desirable features for an effective system. Finally, it proposes for an integrated and appropriate LMIS for Bangladesh outlining a possible implementation strategy.

## 1.3 Methodology

### Research methods

To achieve its objectives, the study has considered a comprehensive review of the relevant studies and secondary data, conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) and undertaken two international exploratory visits. It makes use of official statistics mainly from the labour force surveys to analyse the trends and dynamics of the labour market in highlighting the demand-supply gaps and the significance of overseas employment. The review work helped identify various salient features of labour migration from Bangladesh; potential opportunities for Bangladeshi migrant workers and challenges confronting their materialisation; better appreciate the nature of LMIS in different countries and analyse some of the good practices in making them useful for stakeholders involved.

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<sup>4</sup> In Bangladesh, LMI mainly includes information on workers' demand and supply, educational attainment, training and training needs, job-specific experiences, skills and wages, and such other information. Most of the labour market data are collected through primary surveys. The information obtained can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. For primary surveys households and business enterprises are mostly targeted to generate the required information. Most household surveys capture information on individual household members' such personal characteristics as educational attainment, work experiences, wages and salaries, and other related information, which then become important elements of LMI. In Bangladesh, the official labour force surveys generally target households for generating information. But, there are also enterprise-level surveys either by the official statistical agency (for instance, Survey of Manufacturing Industries) or by others (for examples, the World Bank's Enterprise Surveys) that also provide useful information.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) have been conducted as the primary source of information gathering and to gain further insights from experts' knowledge and first-hand experience. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to facilitate the discussions with KIIs. The discussions focused on the existing information gap between demand and supply in the labour market, sources of information, roles of different stakeholders in various labour market processes, institutional arrangements in dealing with labour and employment-related issues, the structure of an appropriate LMIS, possible implementation strategies, and implications of LMIS for policymaking. The selected key informants included policymakers, labour market experts, gender specialists, representatives from migrant workers' associations and employers' federation. In total, 26 KIIs were conducted for the current study.

Two international exploratory visits were undertaken to gather first-hand information and knowledge on the existing mechanisms and experiences in implementing the LMIS. Given the experiences of international labour migration, implementation of LMIS and number of Bangladeshi workers, the two countries selected for visits were Malaysia and the Philippines. Every year Malaysia recruits a large number of foreign-born workers. It is the fourth largest destination country for Bangladeshi migrant workers. The visit to Malaysia afforded an opportunity of directly interacting with Bangladeshi migrant workers to discuss their migration experiences and their need for various information starting from looking for an employment opportunity to their likely return to home after the completion of their current contracts.

On the other hand, the Philippines was considered one of the success cases in developing Asia in managing its labour migration. Many overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are working in different destination countries and these workers are known to be much better off than their counterparts from many other countries including Bangladesh. Besides, LMIS in the Philippines is widely regarded as one of the best practices among developing countries although it is operating to serve the need of the domestic market only while the information on the overseas markets comes from other sources. During the visit to the Philippines, discussions were held with government officials who were closely associated with LMIS implementation, and with other stakeholders who were working on international labour migration and challenges experienced by migrant workers.

This study also benefited from two multi-stakeholder consultations that were held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. One consultation took place at an early stage of the study (January 2018) to introduce the objectives of the proposed study and to seek views, suggestions and inputs from the relevant stakeholders' representatives including the government ministries and agencies, employers' federation, workers' associations, international organizations, recruiting agencies and other think-tanks working on labour issues. This consultation focused on the nature of existing information gaps, use of information in empowering workers and particularly aspirant migrant workers, and the role of information in tackling various labour market irregularities. The consultation was also an opportunity to introduce the concept of an integrated LMIS combining domestic and international labour markets together. The likely implementation challenges and key mitigation strategies were also discussed in the consultation. The second consultation, held in April 2018, was undertaken to share the findings of the first draft of the study. This meeting discussed the importance of international labour market need for an integrated LMIS, and considered various challenges in making the system effective for Bangladesh. The feedback from the consultation workshops has been incorporated in the study.

## 1.4 Report structure

The current report consists of six chapters. After this Chapter on introduction, Chapter 2 highlights the major trends in the Bangladesh labour market; Chapter 3 analyses the characteristics of foreign labour markets, including the trends and prospects of Bangladeshi migrant workers; Chapter 4 assesses the need of an LMIS from the perspective of Bangladesh and identifies key desirable features of an LMIS from the existing practices in different countries; Chapter 5 provides some operational guidelines for establishing an appropriate and integrated LMIS along with a possible and practical implementation strategy; and finally, Chapter 6 highlights recommendations emanating from this study.



# CHAPTER II

## EMERGING TRENDS IN BANGLADESH'S LABOUR MARKET: **RENEWED EMPHASIS ON INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION**





Bangladesh, with more than 160 million inhabitants, is the eighth most populous country in the world, comprising approximately 2 per cent of the global population. Every year 2 million additional people join its current working-age population of 106 million, which is the sixth biggest in the world. The present size of the labour force, estimated at 62.1 million, is expected to rise to 67.7 million within 2020.<sup>5</sup> Given this big and growing labour force, employment generation constitutes as the first and foremost priority for Bangladesh. The national development plans and various policy statements emphasize on creating two million additional jobs every year with the objective of providing productive employment for the new entrants to the labour market.

Like in many other developing countries, industrialisation is considered as an important driver of employment growth and poverty reduction in Bangladesh. As Bangladesh is going through an economic transformation in which the share of agriculture in the national economy is declining, the manufacturing sector is widely regarded to have a greater potential in absorbing surplus labour. The services sector also plays an important role but in a low-income country like Bangladesh, jobs in this sector are mostly informal in nature, plagued with problems like low productivity and employment with unfavourable characteristics.

Bangladesh has demonstrated a remarkable growth performance as its economy has grown on average at an annual rate of 5.6 per cent since the 1990s. The corresponding growth for the past 10 years has even been higher at 6.3 per cent, with the country recording above 7 per cent growth for the latest two fiscal years of 2015–2016 and 2016–2017. The manufacturing growth has been even more robust.<sup>6</sup> This impressive growth record should help employment generation, leading to fulfilling the policy objectives of generating additional jobs needed by growing labour force.

However, in contrast to the expectation about an employment-intensive growth paradigm, Bangladesh is coming to terms with a situation where jobs are being generated at a much slower pace. This has profound policy implications for labour market developments, income distribution and poverty alleviation. This chapter sheds light on some emerging labour market trends to exemplify the pressing nature of the problem that the country is confronted with and, against this backdrop, the renewed emphasis on international labour migration.

## Emerging labour market trends

### Demographic transition: passing the dividend

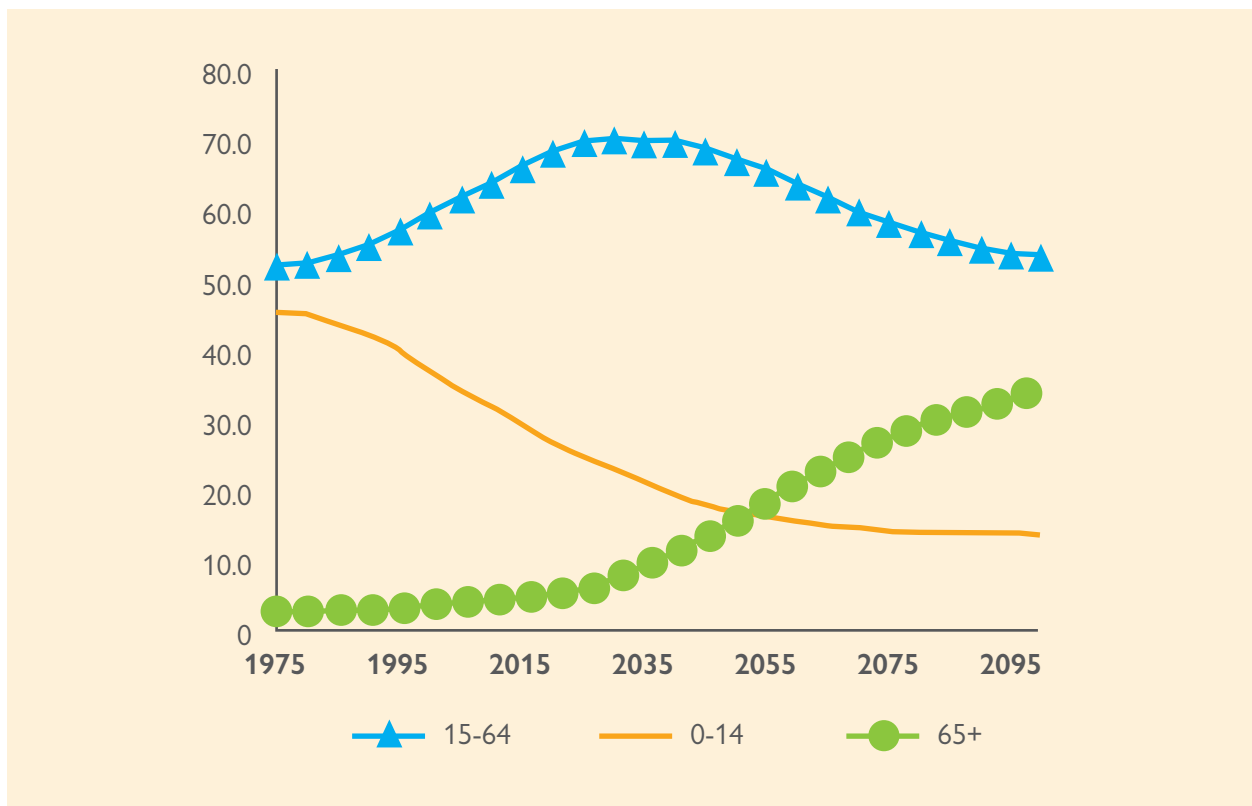
Since the early 1990s Bangladesh has been going through a demographic transition in which the share of working-age population (15–64 years) has been larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older) (Figure 1). This demographic dividend is projected to last until the late-2030s (Figure 1 and Figure 2). So far, Bangladesh has been unable to utilize the full potential of the demographic dividend as it cannot create an adequate number of productive jobs for the working-age population. In addition, a significant proportion of the working-age population is absent from the labour market, particularly because of women's very low labour market participation.

<sup>5</sup> About 44 million working-age people are currently not participating in the labour force.

<sup>6</sup> The growth figures mentioned are based on the official national income statistics.

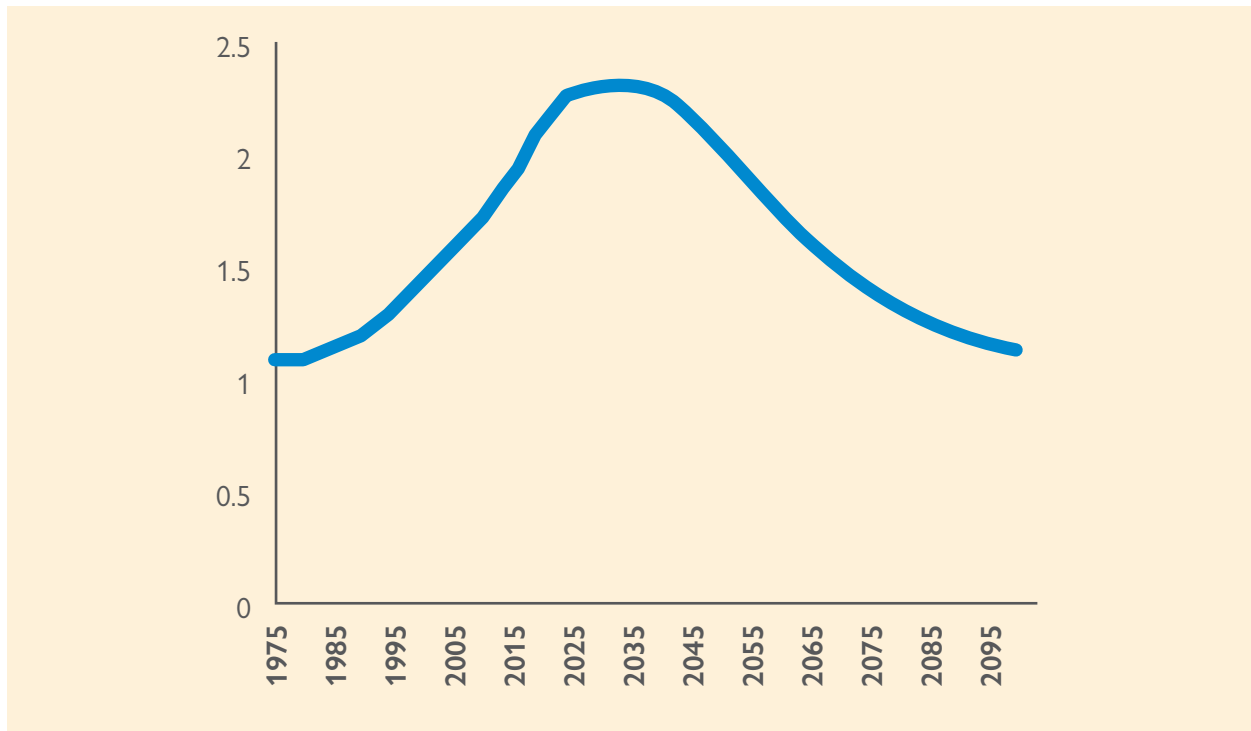
Official statistics provided by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reveals that the employment elasticity of growth has witnessed a dramatic fall from close to 1 per cent in early 2000s to just 0.12 per cent during 2013–16 (Figure 3). Hence, a high growth rate was not enough to foster employment expansion. The resultant consequences of domestic labour market stagnation could be much worse had workers' migration from the country been less than impressive: since 2001, more than 8 million Bangladeshis have gone to around 140 destination countries as migrant workers.

**Figure 1: Population composition by broad age groups (% of the total population)**



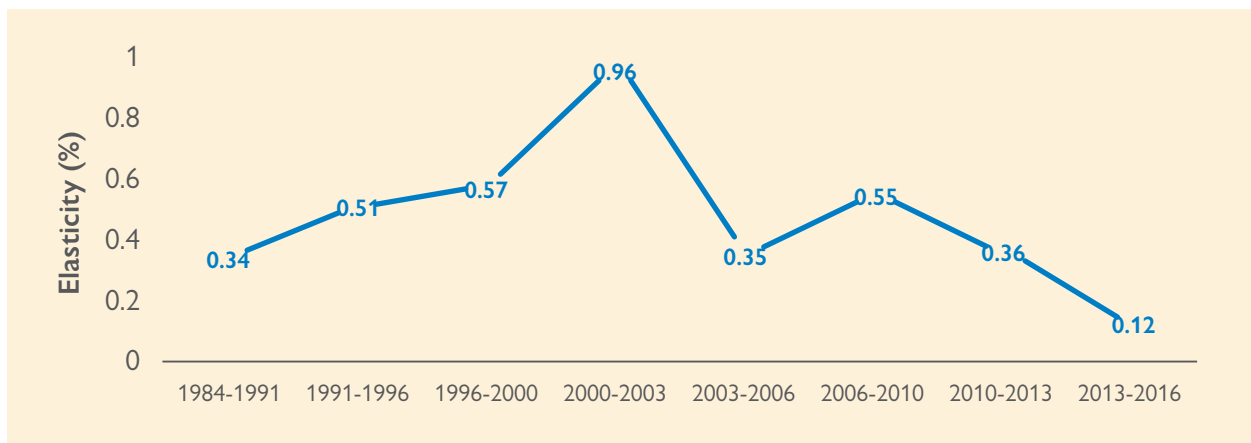
Source: Authors' calculation using UNDESA data.

**Figure 2: The demographic dividend – the ratio of working-age to dependent population**



Source: Authors' calculation using UNDESA population projections

**Figure 3: Employment elasticity of growth (%)**

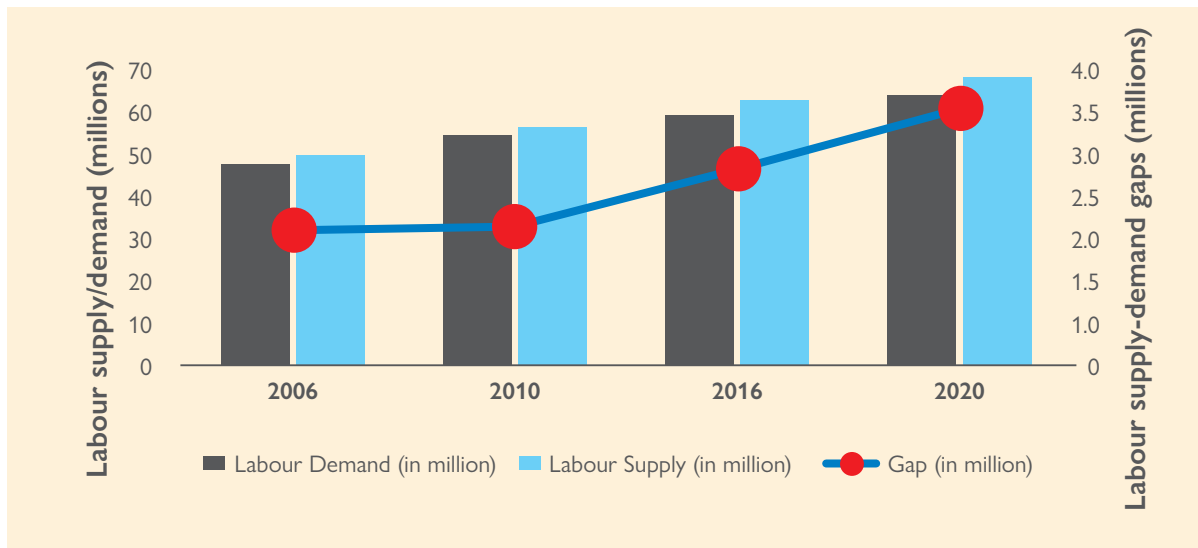


Source: Authors' estimates using BBS national accounts and LFS data.

## Challenge of Employment Generation

As mentioned above, the headline policy statement of the need for creating 2 million jobs a year is only a partial picture of the employment creation challenge that Bangladesh faces. The annual rate of growth of employment in the Seventh Five-Year Plan (2016–2020) is projected using an employment elasticity of 0.45, which appears to be much bigger than 0.12 per cent achieved during 2013–2016 (GED, 2015). Even when a higher elasticity of 0.25 per cent (the average of 2010-13 and 2013-16) is considered along with a long-run robust annual GDP growth of 6.5 per cent, the labour supply-demand gap in 2020 will be – as shown in Figure 4 – 3.5 million.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 4: Estimation of labour demand and supply in Bangladesh (in million)**



**Source:** Authors' estimates.

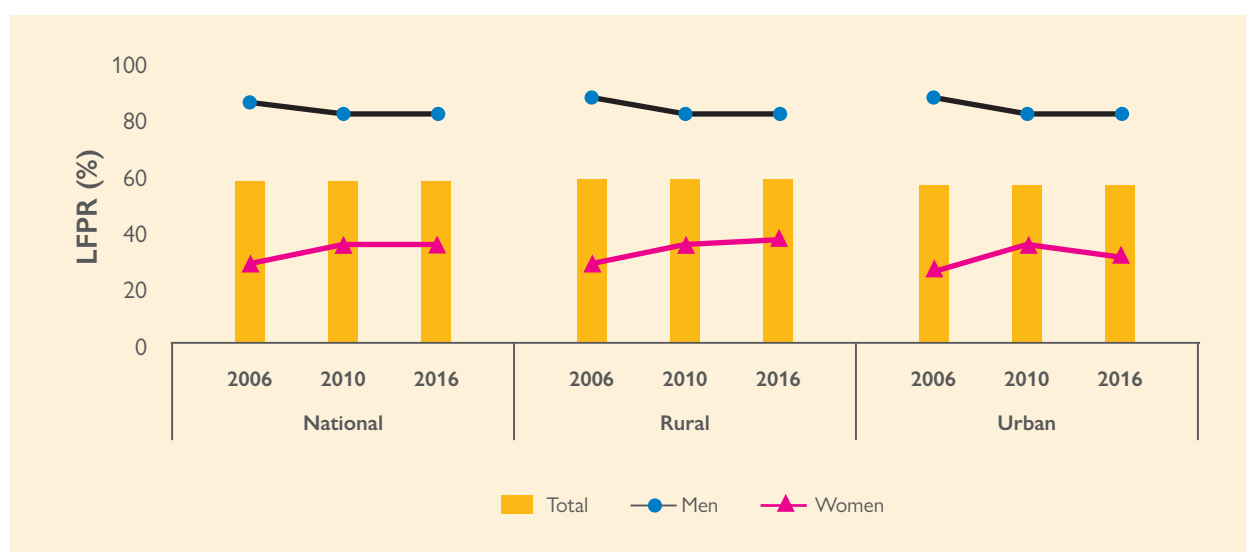
**Note:** The vertical axis on the left shows the labour demand and supply for corresponding years in millions. The gap between labour demand and supply has been shown on the right-hand-side vertical axis. The labour supply projections have been done for 2020 using UN DESA data (following constant fertility and constant mortality assumptions). The labour demand has been projected assuming a moderately high GDP growth rate along with a constant employment elasticity of 0.25.

The estimated supply-demand gap, however, does not take into consideration the surplus labour to be absorbed from other sectors. For example, more than 40 per cent of the workforce is still in agriculture, whose share in the national economy is already quite small (less than 15%) and is likely to shrink further. There is a huge underemployment problem in the sector, which means non-farm activities will have to absorb the influx of labour from agriculture. Productivity growth may also exert further pressure on the labour market situation. These additional workers that need to be provided with productive employment are not included in the above labour supply-demand gap analysis or in the national target of creating an additional 2 million jobs a year.

<sup>7</sup> Our estimates show the size of total labour demand to be 64.2 million in 2020 as against the projected labour force size of 67.7 million leaving 3.5 million workers out of employment.

Another important omission in assessing labour supply-demand gaps is a low level of labour force participation.<sup>8</sup> Currently, as many as 44 million people (almost 42% of the working-age population) are outside the labour force. That is, they are not actively looking for employment. Over the past decade, men participation rate in the labour force has declined by approximately 5 percentage points from 86.2 per cent to 81.9 per cent.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the women labour force participation rate in Bangladesh has been very low and is currently at 35.6 per cent level, which is one of the lowest in the world (Figure 5).<sup>10</sup> Lack of education and training, the prevalence of early marriage in the country, and other socioeconomic and cultural norms under a patriarchal society are some of the factors contributing to women's limited labour market participation (Mahmud and Bidisha, 2016; Rahman and Islam, 2013).

**Figure 5: Labour force participation rate (%)**



Source: Authors' representation using Labour Force Survey data.

This low level of labour force participation also implies the demographic dividend is not being utilized. If a portion of the working-age population is unemployed, the economic gains will be less than optimal. Given the existing supply-demand gaps along with the massive underemployment problem, the benefits of having higher working-age population cannot be materialized, at least in the short to medium term, without further expansion of international labour migration.

<sup>8</sup> Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is the proportion of economically active population (Aged 15–64) who are either employed or actively looking for work).

<sup>9</sup> This fall in male LFPR can largely be attributed to the increase in higher education enrolment of the youth age group. Increased income due to remittances have also been found as a major contributor to reduced labour market participation decisions (Raihan et al., 2016).

<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that the female LFPR fell by 3.2 percentage points in the urban area. One reason behind this could be the sluggish employment generation in the readymade garment sector, more discussion on which can be found later. The share of textile and wearing apparel sector in urban employment declined by 2 percentage points from 15.8 per cent in 2013 to 13.8 per cent in 2016.

## Jobless Manufacturing Growth

Since the early 1990s, the manufacturing output in real terms rose by more than six-fold with its share in GDP rising from 13 per cent to 21 per cent. During 2013–2017, it grew at an impressive annual average rate of 10.4 per cent as against GDP growth of 6.6 per cent. However, official statistics show a decline in the manufacturing employment from 9.5 million in 2013 to 8.6 million in 2016.

One of the principal reasons for weak employment generation in the manufacturing sector is being increasingly attributed to the use of more capital-intensive technologies and automation resulting in labour-saving production processes. For instance, Razzaque and Dristy (2018), point out that while readymade garment exports, the country's largest manufacturing activity, more than doubled from USD 12.5 billion to USD 28 billion within a short span of six years (2010–2016), employment in the sector, as evident in the data reported by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), barely increased during the same period and has remained virtually stagnant around 4 million.

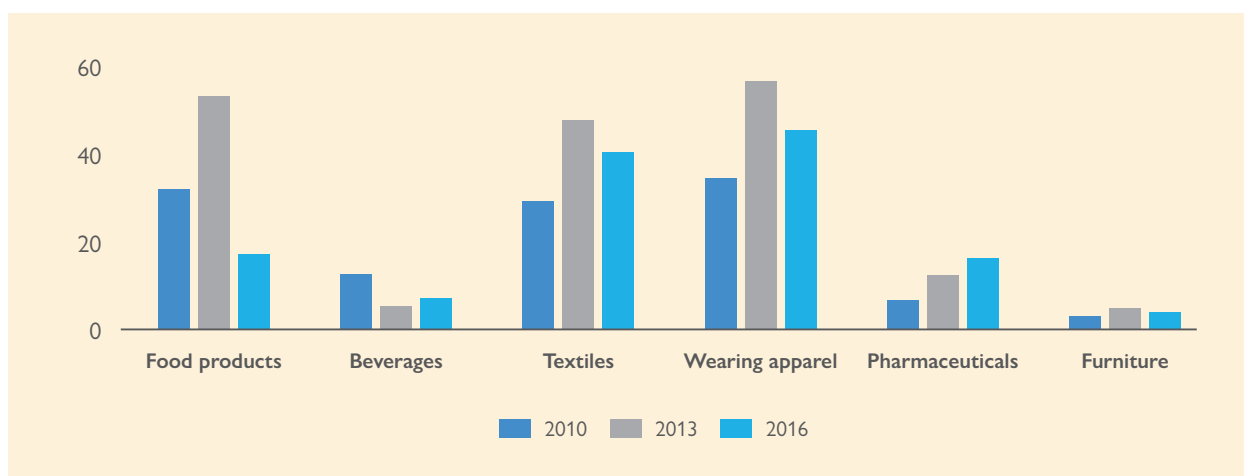
Razzaque and Dristy (2018) also estimated that a million-dollar apparel exports required on average 545 workers in the early 1990s, but the corresponding figure for 2016 had come down to just 142. They showed that despite reduced employment intensity, Bangladesh's garment production remains more labour-intensive than that of its comparators. This means more automation will likely to take place as export production technologies across countries seem to converge and countries cannot remain competitive in the global market without using the state-of-the-art technologies. Automation and capital deepening production processes are also spreading in the non-export industries, which will further stifle employment generation potential. In other words, the same level of existing employment can only be retained with much higher levels of output growth.

Globalization and technological progress mean many countries are no longer following or replicating the 'traditional' development paths. While economic development in most Western developed countries and rapidly industrializing East Asian economies has generally reflected sequential progress from primary and traditional activities to more productive manufacturing and modern services, low-income countries are facing difficulties to embark on or consolidate such forms of transformation. Many are undergoing a phase of premature deindustrialization – that is, they are becoming services-oriented economies without having any proper experience of industrialization. Rodrik (2015) alludes to different types of deindustrialisation: (a) a declining manufacturing share in GDP; (b) a falling share of manufacturing employment; and (c) both falling employment and falling output shares of manufacturing. Unlike today's developed countries, whose manufacturing shares in output and employment peaked at a very high level of per capita income, for developing countries, except for East Asia, manufacturing employment and/or value added have begun to shrink at much lower levels of income. Considering the reduced significance of manufacturing employment, Bangladesh appears to have been caught in a premature deindustrialization process as explained above. This should be a major concern as policymakers in Bangladesh aim to use manufacturing as a vehicle for generating employment opportunities that would lead to absorbing surplus labour from agriculture and other informal sectors. It is in this context that Bangladesh's dependence on overseas labour markets will deepen to provide productive employment for its workforce.

## Defeminization of manufacturing employment and feminization of migrant workforce

Bangladesh witnessed a spectacular rise in the share of women wage-workers in the formal manufacturing sector largely due to the rapidly rising number of women workers in the readymade garment sector constituting 75–80 per cent of the workers in the industry. However, recent evidence suggests a great defeminization of the garment workforce has taken place during the past years. According to the BBS labour force survey, the women's share of employment in the sector fell from 57 per cent in 2013 to 46 per cent in 2016. Given their social and economic vulnerability and weak state of empowerment, women often accept jobs with greater risks and harsher working conditions. This was the case of readymade garment industry at an earlier stage (until the 1990s); however, evidence also exists in other sectors. In agriculture, women constitute the bulk of the unpaid family labour. With the falling share of agricultural employment in total employment, the share of unpaid family labour for men has declined considerably from 12 per cent in 2006 to 7 per cent in 2016 (Figure 7). For women, this decline has been from about 66 per cent to 55 per cent during the same time (Figure 8). Meanwhile, as working conditions improve, benefits tend to bypass women. Women's lower skills, as well as less mobility, often act as constraints for their relatively fewer gains from labour market transitions (Figure 6). Women have also seen their employment share declining in other sectors such as food products and textiles. As women traditionally dominate the export-oriented apparel production workforce, the increased capital intensity will result in a greater number of their job losses. Another reason could be that women are mostly involved in repetitive tasks, which are at greater risk of automation (Razzaque and Dristy, 2018).

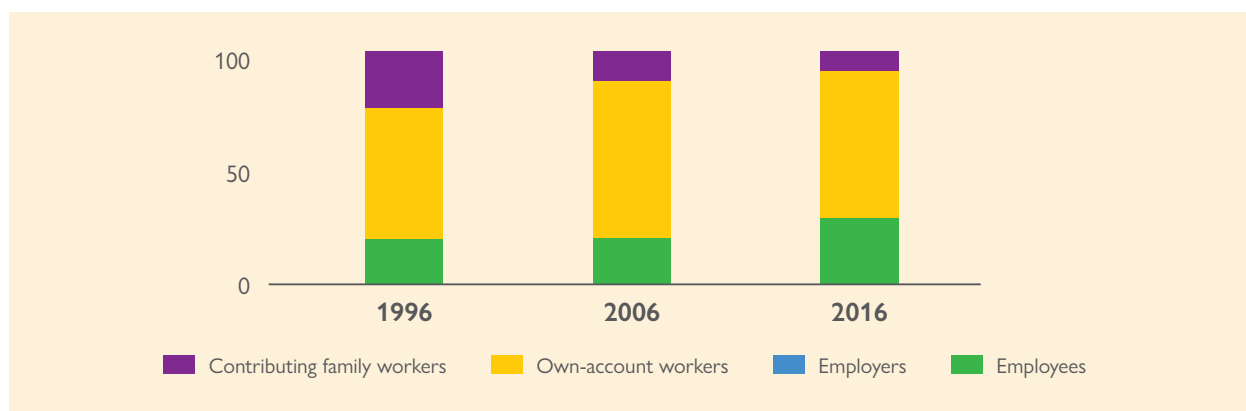
**Figure 6: Women share in employment in various manufacturing sectors (%)**



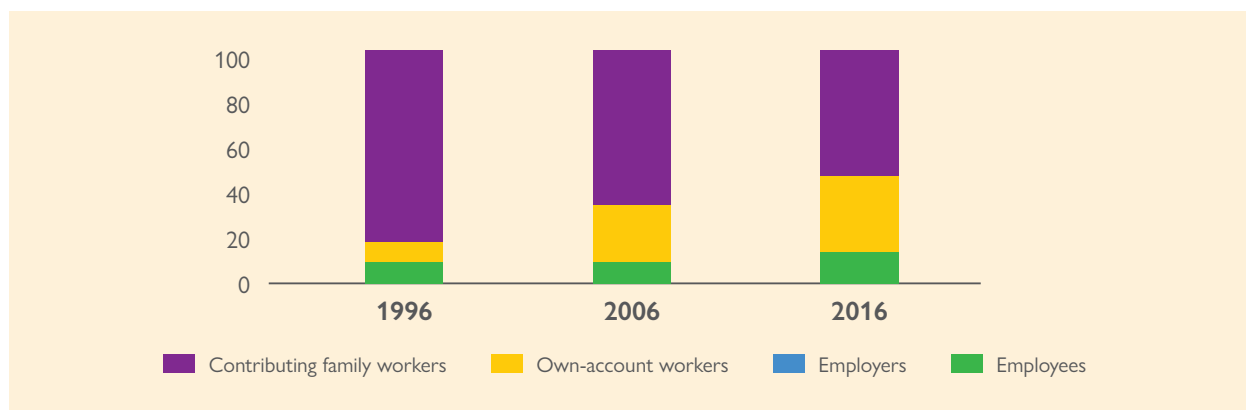
Source: Authors' presentation based on data from BBS labour force surveys.



**Figure 7: Sectoral employment distribution for men (%)**



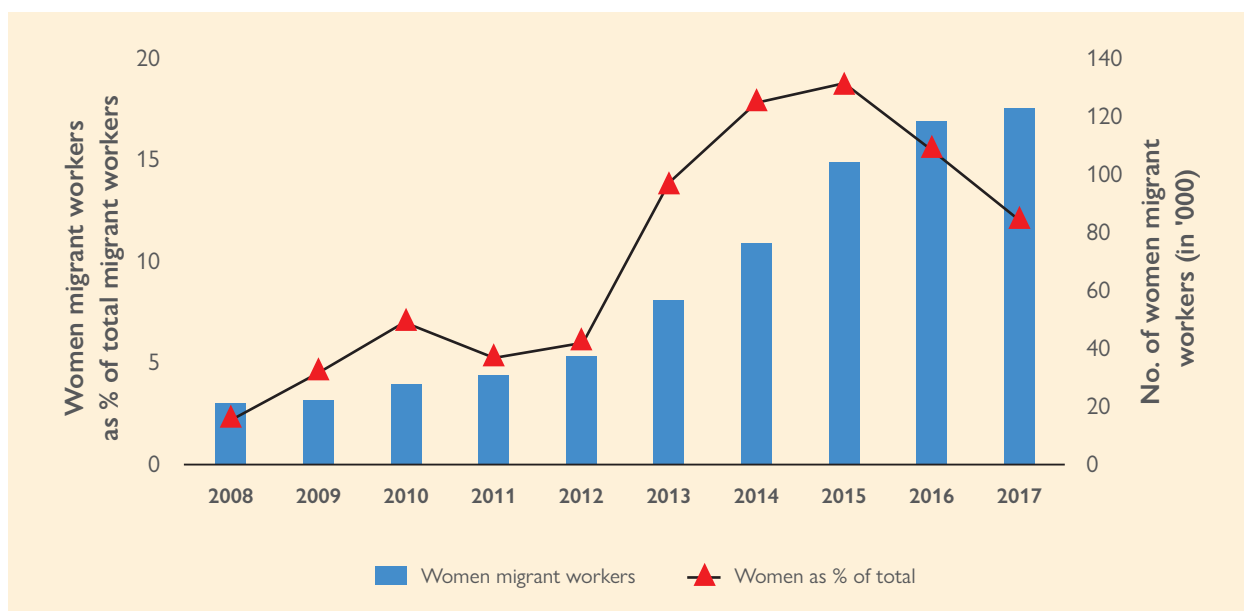
**Figure 8: Employment distribution for women**



Source: ILO modelled estimation obtained from ILOSTAT.

Defeminization of manufacturing employment could push women into more precarious situations. In Bangladesh, women's falling share in the readymade garment sector appears to have coincided with their rising participation in international labour migration. Over the past 10 years, the proportion of women in total migrant workers has increased from less than 2 per cent to more than 12 per cent. In 2015, this share reached a peak of 19 per cent (Figure 9). There have been numerous newspaper reports and anecdotes of women migrant workers facing a higher risk of violence and sexual harassment at work place. They also fall victims of severe exploitation by unscrupulous intermediaries in looking for jobs abroad. The labour market trends of defeminization of formal workforce, growing number of women in the migrant workforce, and women's increased vulnerability in accepting riskier jobs at home and overseas labour markets need to be given careful policy attention.

**Figure 9: Women migrant workers and their share in total labour migration**

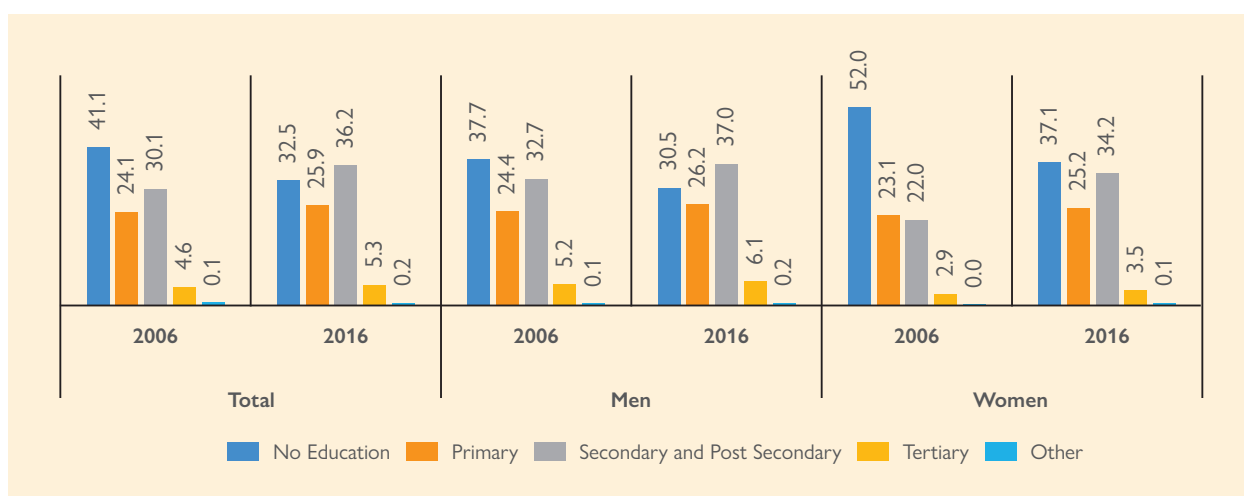


Source: Authors' calculation from BMET data.

### Low Education and Skill Base of the Workforce

Low education of workers and their concentration in low-skill jobs have become defining characteristics of Bangladesh's workforce with adverse consequences for labour market outcomes. As high as 37 per cent of the women employees and 31 per cent of men in 2016 do not have any education (Figure 10). Although educational attainment in terms of the number of school years attended on average has risen, the quality of education remains a challenge in developing a good human resource base for the country.

**Figure 10: Education level of the employed population aged 15+ (%)**



Source: Authors' calculation using data from labour force surveys by BBS.

According to a recent employment projection exercise (BIDS, 2017), currently, there is a shortage of 119,479 skilled workers in the readymade garment (RMG) sector, while the corresponding figures for the information and communication technology (ICT) and leather sectors are 88,000 and 62,246, respectively.<sup>11</sup> The estimated skill-gap in the agro-food sector is at 76 per cent, followed by 40 per cent in information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITES) sectors, and 36 per cent in the light engineering industry.<sup>12</sup> According to the study, more than 5.6 million workers need to be trained by 2025. Many export-oriented firms are now becoming increasingly dependent on foreign nationals to fulfil managerial, mid-to-higher level and other technical positions.<sup>13</sup> The problem of skill shortages has also been acknowledged in the Seventh Five Year Plan (GED, 2015).

The above skill shortage estimates which correspond to the need of the domestic economy demonstrate that the current skill content of the workforce will not help Bangladeshi migrant workers attract better and remunerative jobs abroad. Low-skilled workers, particularly women, are often confronted with difficult working conditions. This feature of the labour market would strongly call for effective training programmes and improved quality of education to improve the economic well-being of workers both in country and destination, as well as productivity growth of the economy.

## A Staggering Level of Youth Unemployment

In recent years, the youth unemployment rate has reached as high as 11.4 per cent in 2016 compared to the 4 per cent reported for the total population (Figure 11). The youth unemployment rate among women is even higher at 14.1 per cent. The rising trend in the youth unemployment rate poses a serious threat towards the achievement of sustainable socioeconomic development Bangladesh has achieved over the years. In addition to unemployment, underemployment is also very high amongst the youth population. Again, the underemployment of women is much higher (Figure 12). The issue of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is another massive challenge. The NEET rate in Bangladesh is one of the highest in the world. About 60 per cent of the total youth population that are women were out of employment, education or training in 2006 which came down to 30.7 per cent in 2013 (Figure 13). However, since 2013 it has increased again by 17 percentage points in 2016, mainly due to rising inactive women youth population.

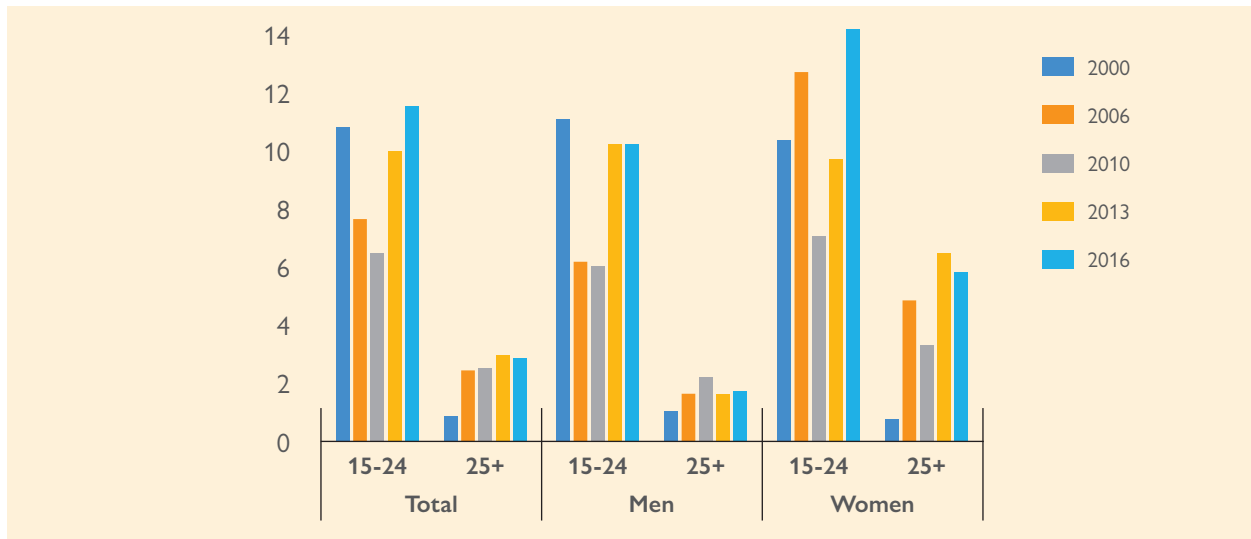
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<sup>11</sup> BIDS study report: Labour Market and Skill Gap in Bangladesh (Macro and Micro Level Study), Ministry of Finance, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh: May 2007.

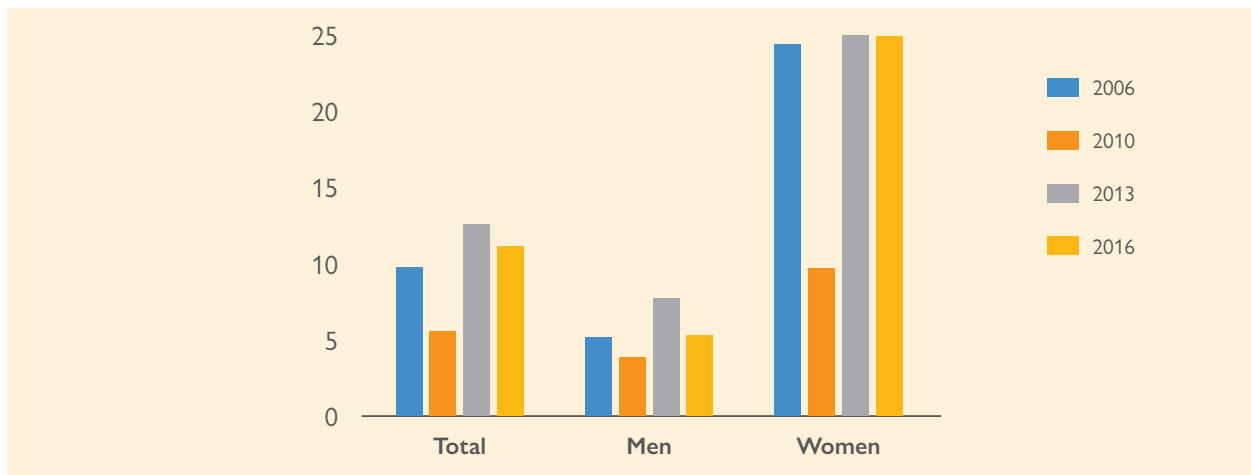
<sup>12</sup> According to ADB (2016a), Bangladesh does not have a deep pool of specialized human capital needed to drive core pharmaceutical processes, such as technical manufacturing, reverse-engineering, quality assurance, active pharmaceutical ingredient production, and innovative research.

<sup>13</sup> The number of work permits issued from BIDA in favour of expatriates employed in private sector industrial enterprise during the fiscal year of 2016–2017 was 4,248 (including new contracts and extensions). These foreign nationals represent 65 countries, of which more than one-third (1,534) comprised Indian nationals followed by Chinese (911). Information on people working informally is not available. Employing foreign professionals is expensive and has implications for firms' export competitiveness. In addition, remittance outflows from Bangladesh through the official channels reached a peak of USD 4 billion in 2012, and was estimated to be USD 2 billion in 2016. Outflows through informal channels are not known but is widely perceived to be high as well.

**Figure 11: Unemployment rate (%)**

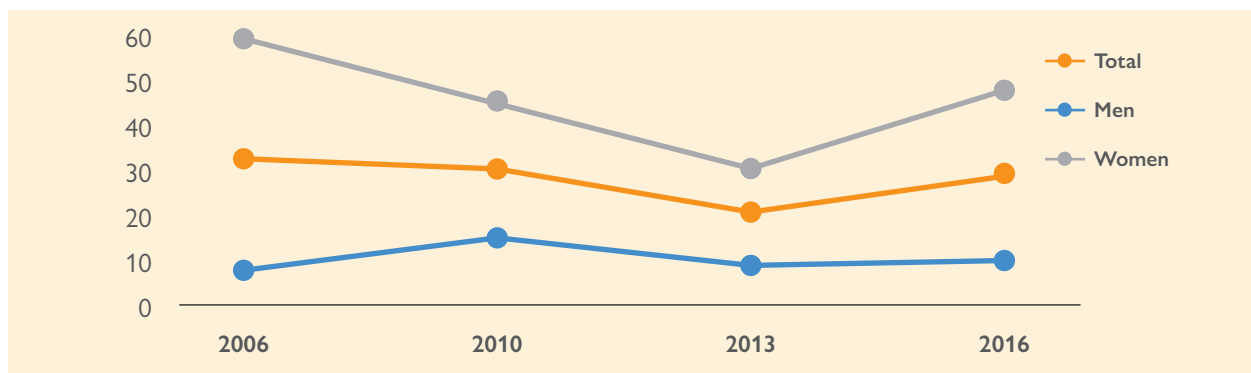


**Figure 12: Underemployment by sex (as % of total employment)**



Source: Authors' calculation based on LFS

**Figure 13: Youth NEET in Bangladesh (% of the youth population)**



Source: ILOSTAT and labour force surveys.

The high youth unemployment and NEET rate could imply an impending long-run unemployment and underemployment crisis. Unemployment amongst youth population is likely to be translated into excessive demand for overseas employment by low-skilled workers with little work experience.

### **Conclusion: Revisiting the role of international labour migration**

The emerging labour market trends portray an unfavourable situation for Bangladesh in which the demographic dividend could be a missed opportunity. In the absence of job opportunities, there are no tangible returns from a higher share of the working-age population. In about two decades, this phase of demographic transition will end when the share of the ageing population will rise significantly. This will constrain the country's already limited capacities to put in place an effective social support and protection systems to cater the growing number of elderly as well as poor and vulnerable population groups.

It is not only about creating jobs for those who are entering the labour force, but also about absorbing unemployed and underemployed populations into productive employment. Only when these are taken into consideration does the true magnitude of the employment generation challenge gets revealed. This indicates that the objective of inclusive growth will be difficult to achieve when so many people, including women, cannot have access to gainful employment opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

Considering the current job market scenario within the domestic economy, overseas employment is of special significance for Bangladesh. Indeed, the emerging trends categorically portray that without enlarged opportunities abroad it will not be possible to create enough employment to take advantage of the demographic dividend. As such, labour migration should be dealt with on a priority basis. There are several issues to consider – from looking for labour market opportunities to workers' skill upgradation to decent employment to safer migration and adequate support for migrant workers. The growing number of women migrants are at a greater risk associated with working and living conditions, violence and abuses, and exploitation by intermediaries. The discussions in this chapter call for a robust LMIS for planning employment generation, skill development and productivity enhancement. It also becomes obvious that an LMIS focusing just on the domestic labour market will critically fall short of the need. It is in this backdrop that this study argues for an integrated LMIS by incorporating the component of the overseas market.

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<sup>14</sup> According to estimates provided by the World Bank (2017b), if the low level of labour force participation rate particularly of women increases from the current level of 36 per cent to 45 per cent, the country's GDP growth would be 1 percentage point higher.

# CHAPTER III

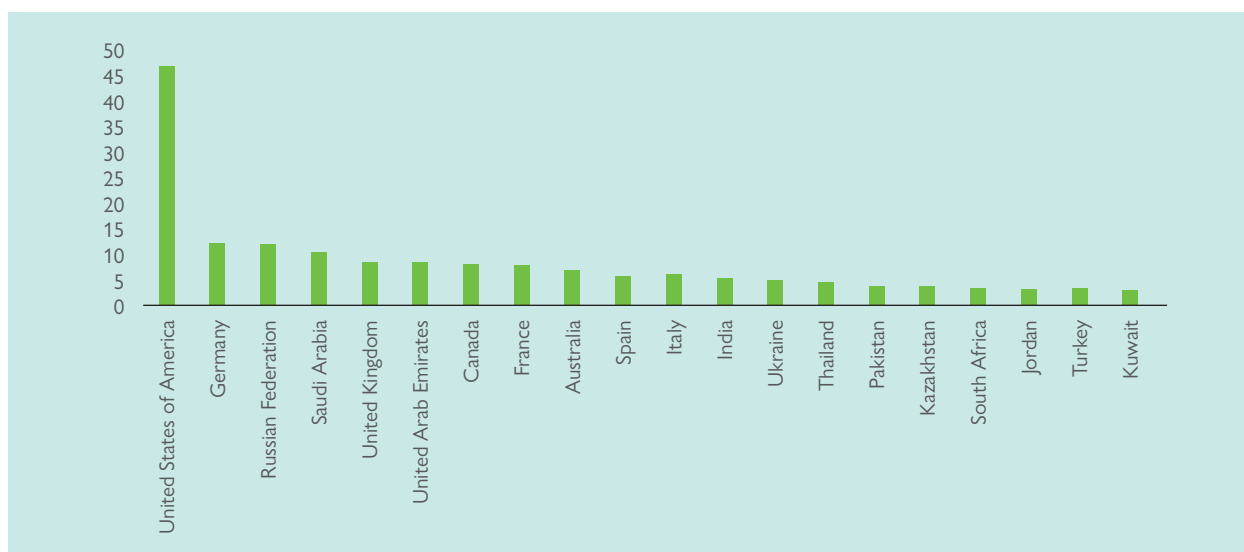
## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION AND **PROSPECTS** **FOR BANGLADESH**



### 3.1 International labour migration: trends and dynamics

Between 2000 and 2015, international migrant population – people living in a country other than their country of birth – increased by about 41 per cent, from 71 million to 244 million, representing 3.3 per cent of world population (IOM, 2018). Two-thirds of the migrant population is residing in just 20 countries. The United States of America (USA) is the largest host country of immigrants, hosting about 47 million migrants in 2015 and accounting for 19 per cent of the total migrant population (Figure 14). Germany (12 million) and the Russian Federation (11.6 million) host the second and third largest number of international migrants, followed by Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (10.2 million), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (8.5 million), United Arab Emirates (8.1 million), Canada (7.8 million), Australia (6.8 million) and so on. Among all countries, India appears as the largest country of origin for international migrants with more than 15 million emigrants worldwide in 2015 (Figure 15). Mexico ranks second with 12.3 million migrants in the world employment market. Bangladesh with an emigrant population of about 7.2 million in 2015 is the fifth largest country of origin. Pakistan ranks sixth in the list with 5.9 million emigrants worldwide.

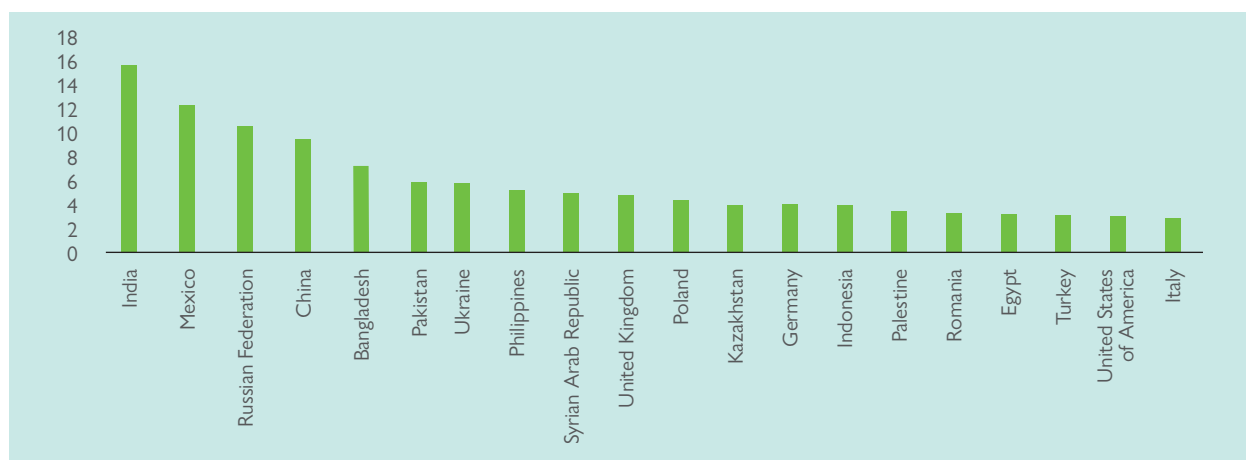
**Figure 14: Major countries of destination of migrant populations, 2015 (millions)**



Source: Authors' compilation using data from Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations (2015).



**Figure 15: Major countries and territories of origin of the migrant population, 2015 (millions)**



Source: Authors' compilation using data from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations (2015).

A positive net migration is a major source of the additional workforce for the more developed countries, as the population growth rate in those countries is low.<sup>15</sup> Since 1950 developed countries have been gaining additional workforce through a positive net migration.<sup>16</sup> Net migrants outflow from less developed regions grew rapidly from 2.5 million in 1960–1965 to above 16 million in 2005–2010, as net out-migration per annum reached 3.3 million (Figure 16).<sup>17</sup> However, the yearly migrant's outflow declined to 11 million during 2010–2015. The fall in the migration could be attributed to the global financial crisis and increased restrictions imposed on immigrants in many Western developed countries.

**Figure 16: Trends of net migration from the less developed region, 1950-2015 (millions)**



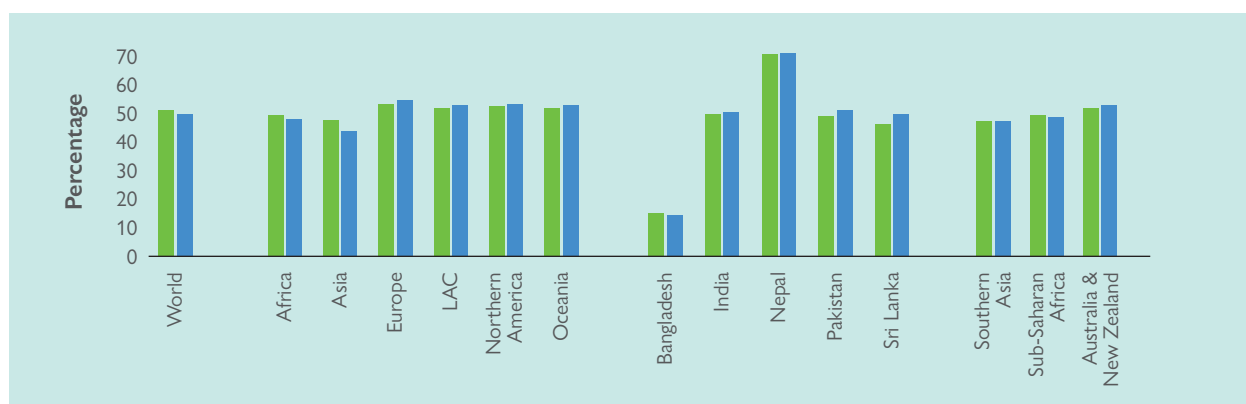
Source: Authors' presentation based on data from The World Population Prospects: 2015 Revision.

<sup>15</sup> More developed regions comprise Europe, Northern America, Australia/New Zealand and Japan.

<sup>16</sup> Net migration, for a given country and period, refers to the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants. If immigration is higher than emigration, the net migration is positive and the country gains population due to net immigration; when more people emigrate than immigrate, the country loses population through negative net migration called net emigration.

<sup>17</sup> Less developed regions comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (except Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

**Figure 17: Percentage of women participation in international migration, 1995 and 2015 (% of total)**



**Note:** LAC= Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Source:** Authors' analysis based on data from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations (2015).

The trend of international migrant stock shows that the share of women migrants has reduced slightly during the last two decades from 49.2 per cent in 1995 to 48.2 per cent in 2015 (Figure 17). Europe hosts the largest share of women migrants; approximately 52 per cent of the total migrant stock in the continent. The share of women migrants is the least in Asia. This share has fallen from 45.8 per cent in 1995 to 42 per cent in 2015. Latin America and the Caribbean countries, Northern America and Oceania host more women migrants than men. Among the South Asian countries, Bangladesh's share of women migrants as a percentage of total migrant stock is the lowest. In 2015, only 13.3 per cent of Bangladeshi migrant stock were women whereas the share was 48.4 per cent for India, 69 per cent for Nepal, 48.9 per cent for Pakistan and 47.7 per cent for Sri Lanka. The predominance of men migrant worker in Asia has been fuelled by the demand for men workers in the oil exporting countries. A lower proportion of women in international migration from Bangladesh could also be attributed to, among others, social and cultural issues and inadequate government support for migration of women (Blanchet, Razzaque and Biswas, 2008).

With rising migrant populations, international migration has grown to be a complex phenomenon encompassing a multiplicity of economic, social and security aspects for nation states (IOM, 2018). This has been accentuated further as the benefits of globalisation have been called into question, giving rise to political upheavals in Europe and the United States (Razzaque, 2017). The globalisation backlash and associated policy reversals seem to have brought a new spotlight on international migration. Making migration safer and better-regulated is now among key global priorities as the United Nations members aim to develop a Global Compact on Migration as well as a separate Global Compact on Refugees by the end of 2018. In the meantime, displacement of population groups, both internal and across borders, due to civil and transnational conflicts, and violent extremism against minority communities continue to persist.<sup>18</sup> This includes the close-to-one million Rohingya refugees who, since August 2017, have fled a brutal violence and terror against them in their country in Myanmar to seek refuge in Bangladesh. Along with this, migration through informal channels, including trafficking, involving the refugees, displaced and other groups remain a major feature of people's movement

<sup>18</sup> According to the World Migration Report 2018, the total number of people estimated to have been displaced globally in 2016 was the highest on record while the estimates for 2017 would likely to remain as high as the 2016 global figure, if not reaching higher.

across the borders. The World Migration Report 2018 aptly observes, “[I]n a period of heightened internal and international displacement (and related irregular migration), the enormous benefits of migration can become somewhat lost in the debate” (IOM 2018, p.3). How policies are used in the future to tackle these issues could influence the prospect of international migration and the associated benefits accrued to both migrants’ sending and destination countries.

## 3.2 International labour migration from Bangladesh

About 12 million of Bangladeshi workers migrated worldwide between 1976 and 2017.<sup>19</sup> The most important destinations have been the GCC countries (Figure 18). Saudi Arabia is the largest host of Bangladeshi migrant workers at present. Between 1976 and 2017, a total of 3.4 million Bangladeshi workers went to Saudi Arabia (almost 30% of total outmigration).<sup>20</sup> During the same period 2.4 million (20.6%) workers went to the United Arab Emirates, 1.4 million (11.8%) to Oman, 0.9 million (7.7%) to Malaysia, 0.7 million (6%) to Singapore, 0.7 million (5.9%) to Qatar and another 0.6 million (5.1%) to Kuwait.

Figure 19 shows the annual outflow of migrant workers and remittances inflow from 1976 to 2017.<sup>21</sup> Between 1981 and 1990, the yearly average flow of outmigration was 72,000 per year. It increased by 3 folds to 215,000 workers per annum during 1991–2000. Since 2000, the average yearly outmigration was 467,000 workers. Bangladesh experienced a large decline in manpower exports due to the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, which coincided with restrictions from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in hiring labour from Bangladesh. Since 2015, the manpower export has again been on the rise. On the basis of the calendar year (January–December), the country sent a record high of above 1 million workers in 2017 to different destination countries.

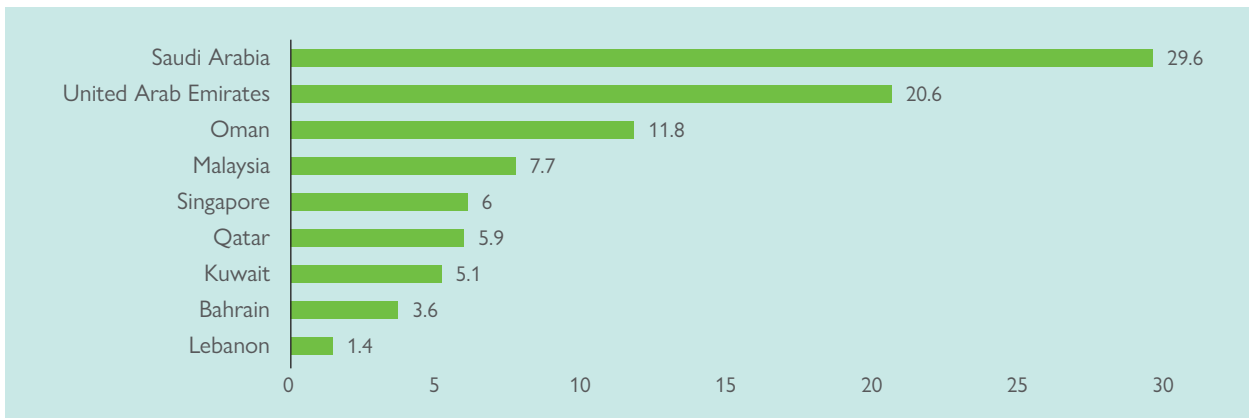
Bangladesh has also experienced impressive growth in workers’ remittances. Since 2000, remittance flows increased by 5 folds with an average annual growth rate of 13.4 per cent. During FY2016 and FY2017, however, remittances declined by 14.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively. This followed a global development depicting declining oil prices and weakness in world exports. Saudi Arabia is the largest source of remittance for Bangladesh, accounting for almost 18 per cent of total inflows in FY2017. Other major sources of remittances are the United Arab Emirates (16.4%), the United States (13.2%), Malaysia (8.6%), Kuwait (8.1%), and Oman (7%) (Figure 20).

<sup>19</sup> The information provided incorporates all migrant flows from Bangladesh between 1976 and 2017. There is no information on migrants’ stock at a specific point in time.

<sup>20</sup> This information is from BMET. The limitation of BMET data is that it only captures the number of people leaving the country and does not count the ones who return permanently.

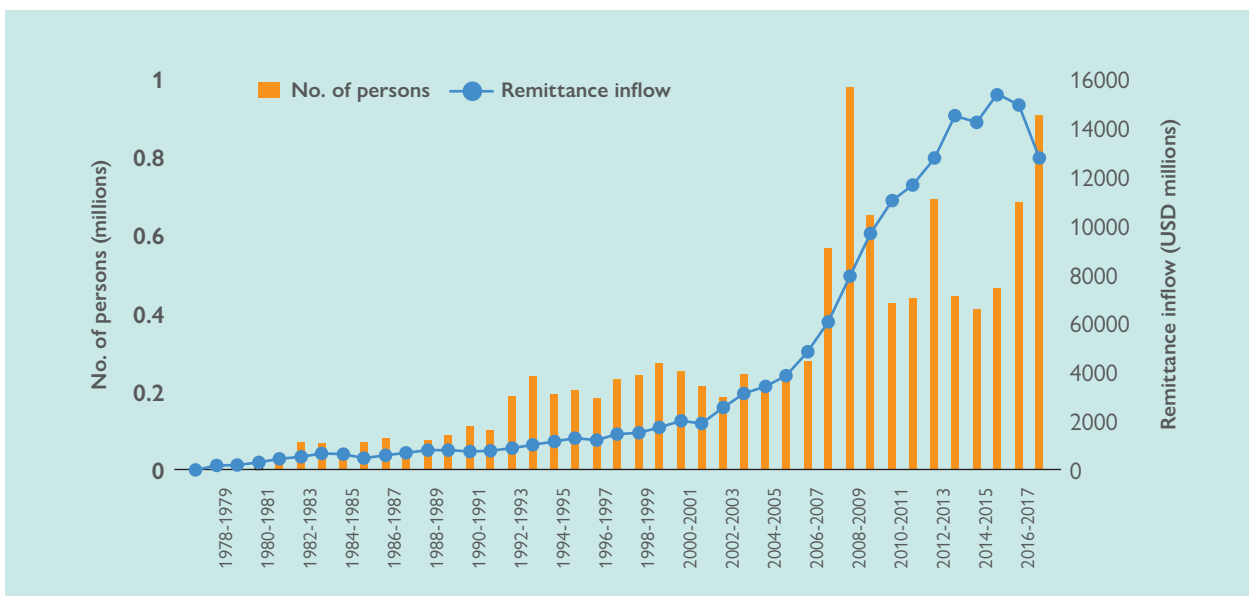
<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that, the country’s central bank, Bangladesh Bank, follows fiscal year (July – June) to report data on migrant workers and remittances, while BMET follows calendar year (January – December).

**Figure 18: Major destinations of Bangladeshi migrant workers (1976–2017) (millions)**



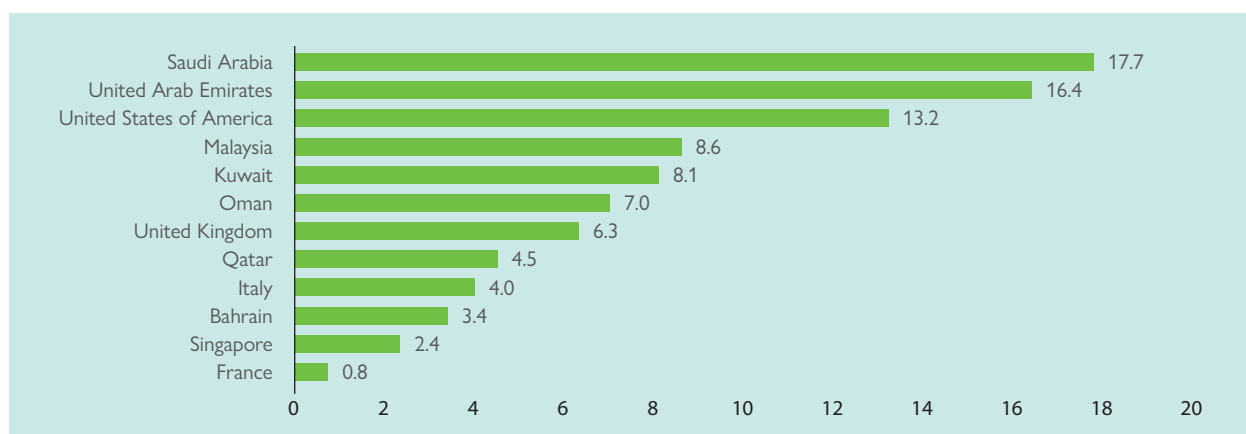
Source: Authors' presentation using data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

**Figure 19: Yearly overseas employment and remittance inflows, FY1977–FY2017**



Source: Authors' presentation based on data from the BMET and Bangladesh Bank.

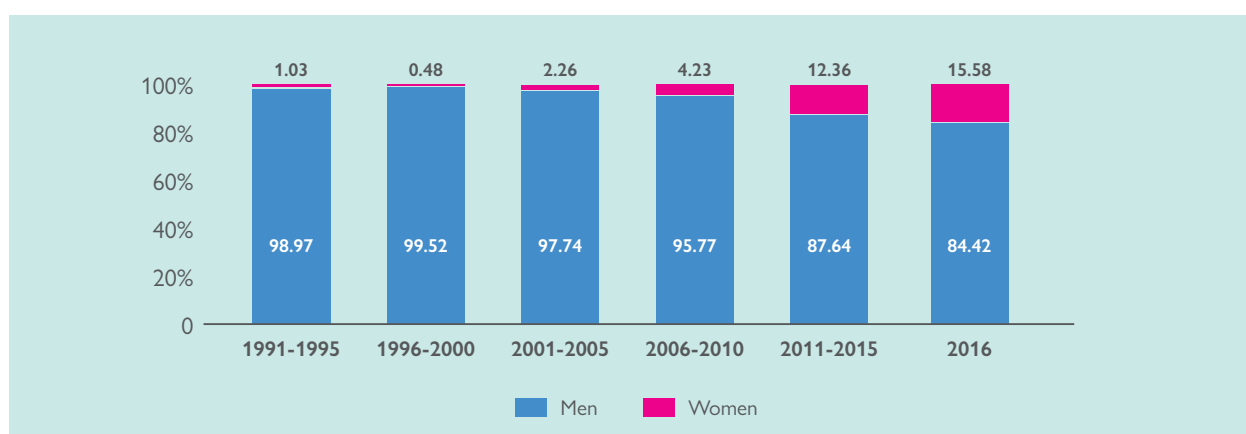
**Figure 20: Remittance inflow by major countries, FY2017 (% of total inflow)**



Source: Authors' presentation based on data from Bangladesh Bank.

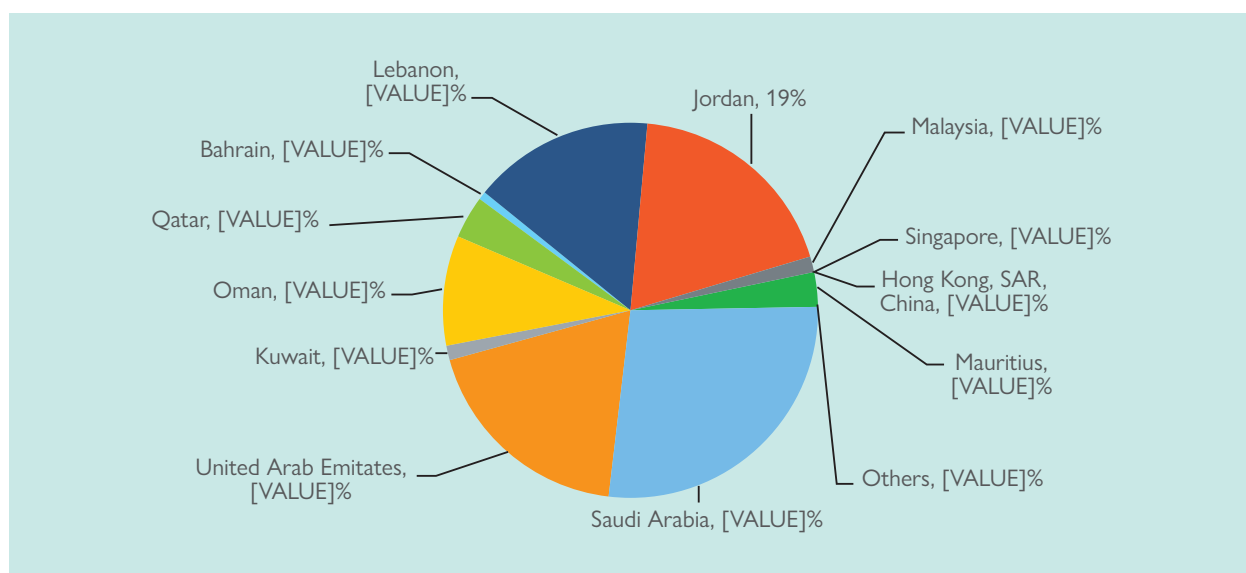
Historical data reflect the predominance of men migrant workers from Bangladesh. Figure 21 describes the five-yearly average shares of men and women migrants. Documentation of the outward women migrant workers from Bangladesh began in 1991. Prior to that, most of such migration was unofficial, undocumented or irregular. However, the number of women migrant workers was largely stagnant until 2003 with an average yearly official outflow of fewer than 2,000 workers per year for the period of 1991–2003 (constituting less than 1% of total migrants). Women participation in migration increased rapidly reaching 118 thousand in 2016 (16% of total migrants). The predominance of men migrants might be attributed to lack of experience of women workers, absence of policy directions on women's migration until as late as the early 1990s, apprehensions of insecurity and sexual abuses in destination countries and most importantly cultural factors associated with patriarchal norms that discourage women's mobility (Blanchet, Razzaque and Biswas, 2008). While for men migrant workers, new destination countries like Singapore and Malaysia have emerged; for women, the destinations remain mostly GCC countries. The largest host of Bangladeshi women migrants are Saudi Arabia (27%), followed by Jordan (19%), the United Arab Emirates (19%), Lebanon (16%), and Oman (9%) (Figure 22).

**Figure 21: Distribution of Bangladeshi migrant workers by sex (% of total migrants)**



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from BMET.

**Figure 22: Distribution of women migrant workers by destination countries and territories, 1991–2016 (% of total female migrant workers)**



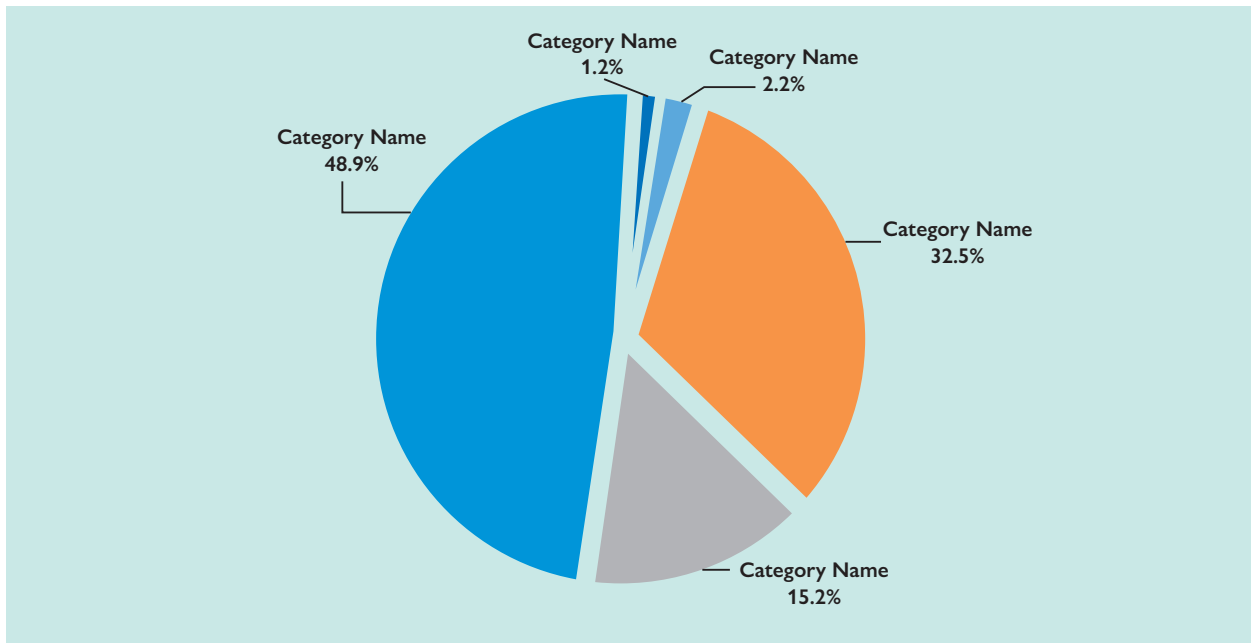
Source: Authors' analysis based on data from BMET.

## Skill Composition of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers

BMET classifies workers into four categories, namely professionals, skilled, semi-skilled, and less-skilled.<sup>22</sup> Professional workers include doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses, programmers; and skilled workers include garment workers, technicians, drivers, electricians and people from similar other professions. Semi-skilled workers include tailors, gardeners, farmers and different types of helpers in various trades. And, finally, less-skilled workers are mostly porters, hotel assistants, cleaners, cart loaders, carton pickers and others. The BMET data show most of the Bangladeshi migrant workers going abroad are less-skilled or semi-skilled (Figure 23). During the past four decades of 1976–2016, almost half of all Bangladeshi migrant workers fell within the category of less-skilled while another 15 per cent of workers were semi-skilled. Only 2.2 per cent of workers were high-skilled professionals and another 32 per cent were skilled. The Survey on the Use of Remittance (SUR) 2013 sheds further light on the status of training acquired by migrant workers before leaving the country. According to it, almost 88 per cent of Bangladeshi migrant workers does not receive any training before leaving the country (Figure 24). Only 6 per cent of the workers take some vocational training, 2 per cent receive language training, and another 2 per cent take driving lessons. This reflects the generally low level of skill attainment by workers in Bangladesh. This is one area where Bangladesh lags behind other countries, for instance, the Philippines, which has an elaborated state-sponsored workers' training programmes (see Box 1).

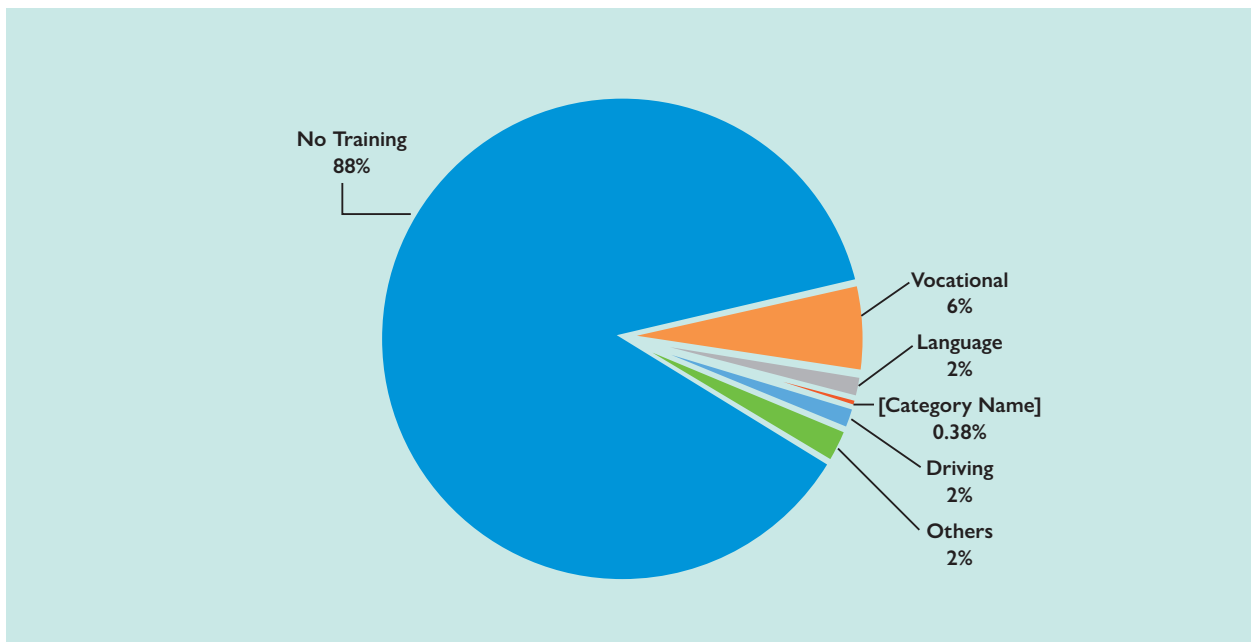
<sup>22</sup> "Skilled" workers are those who possess a broad range of knowledge and practical skills to accomplish tasks by applying all acquainted methods, tools, materials, and information. These types of workers are able to find solutions to problems through applying knowledge from past experiences and are able to undertake overall responsibility for the completion of task assigned. "Semi-skilled" workers have moderately broad knowledge and the practical skills to solve problems by using simple rules and techniques under supervision with some autonomy. "Less-skilled" workers possess extremely limited general knowledge and a minimum range of skills to carry out simple task under direct supervision in a well-defined and structured context (Barkat and Ahmed, 2014).

**Figure 23: Skill category-wise overseas employment, 1976–2016 (%)**



Source: Authors' presentation based on data from BMET.

**Figure 24: Distribution of expatriates by training received, 2013 (%)**



Source: Authors' presentation based on data from SUR, 2013.

### Box 1: The Philippine Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA)

Worker's skill development has received serious policy attention in the Philippines. The Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA) is the government agency mandated to manage and supervise technical education and skills development in the country. TESDA is responsible primarily for formulating and implementing fully integrated technical education and skills development policies, plans and programmes. TESDA develops competency standards and qualifications, training standards and assessment instruments for registration, accreditation, and delivery of various programmes. It also funds programmes and projects for technical education and skills development. It supports TVET institutions (TVIs) through trainers' development, curricula and materials development, career guidance and placement, and scholarship programmes. There are four modalities of training provided by TESDA, namely: (a) school-based training; (b) centre-based training; (c) enterprise-based training; and (d) community-based training.

TESDA prepares and publishes the Labour Market Intelligence Report (LMIR). The LMIR provides insights into current trends, issues and challenges existing in the local and international labour markets. It is also used in determining priority skills for the development of training regulations and formulation of policies in aligning technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes with labour market priorities. Besides, TESDA undertakes regular surveys to receive feedback on the level of satisfaction of the employers of TVET graduates. These surveys also provide assessments for the TVET programmes and inputs for their further improvement to meet industry requirements.

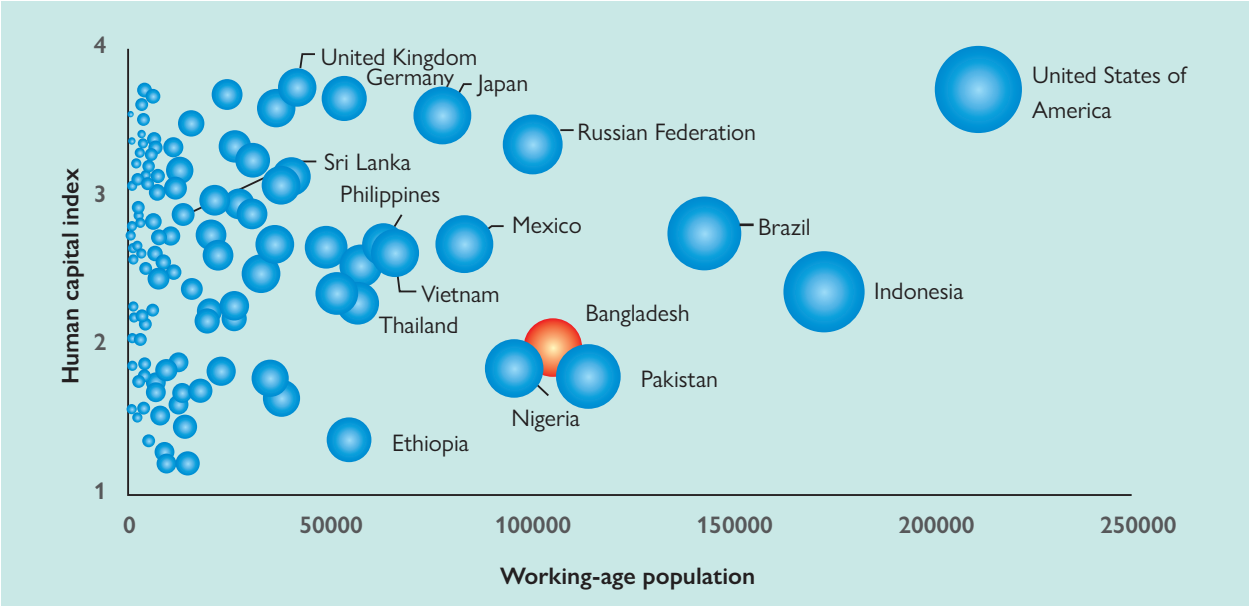
TESDA regulates and monitors over 7,000 TVET providers in the country. It has its own training centres. In 2016, a total of 2.27 million trainees enrolled in TVET programs under TESDA, of which 2.15 million graduated. The certificates provided by TESDA are internationally recognized. TESDA does not offer specialized programmes for overseas aspirant migrant workers. Rather, all TVET graduates look for jobs in domestic as well as overseas markets. However, TESDA has reintegration programmes for the returnee overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). TESDA also two other specialized training centres, namely - TESDA Women's Centre (TWC) and Language Skills Institute (LSI). TWC aims to advance the economic status of women through training, entrepreneurial development, developing gender-sensitive policies, conducting programmes and development projects on women empowerment, and through research and advocacy. On the other hand, TSI provides training on workplace communications for jobs within the country as well as overseas. TESDA also helps in job placement for graduates. It regularly arranges job fairs in collaboration with the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE).

**Source:** Authors' discussion with TESDA officials and <http://www.tesda.gov.ph/>.



Amongst global economies, Bangladesh performs poorly in terms of human capital attainment of its workforce (Figure 25). Despite having a large workforce, Bangladesh has a very low human capital index comparable to those of Nigeria and Pakistan. But, countries such as the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam have much higher levels of human capital attainment.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 25: Skill category-wise overseas employment, 1976–2016 (%)**



**Note:** Bubble sizes represent working-age population sizes. India and China are not included in this analysis since they appeared to be outliers, having very large working-age populations. The median (50%) prediction interval data has been used for working-age populations and for most recent years as available.

**Source:** Authors' analysis based on data from Penn World Table (PWT) and Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, United Nations, (2017).

This low-level of human capital attainment is reflected in Bangladeshi migrant workers' undertaking mostly low-skilled and semi-skilled, and low paid jobs. With the current skill composition, Bangladesh is likely to face challenges in exporting labour services in the future. Immigration and labour policies in most destination countries including Malaysia, Singapore, and other developed nations seem to favour skilled workers. Among others, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have moved towards more skill-intensive migrant labour supplies and their workers on average tend to earn much higher than that of Bangladeshi workers. Upgradation of the human capital base is dependent on public investment in education and training. In Bangladesh, the share of public spending in GDP currently stands at 2.5 per cent. Until 2000, this share was less than 2 per cent. On the other hand, many developing countries have consistently maintained a higher level of public spending for decades. Therefore, compared to them, Bangladesh has underinvested in education and training for a prolonged period. Despite the recent improvements in expenditure, quality of education has remained a major concern for Bangladesh. Addressing underinvestment and ensuring quality will be critical in improving the state of human capital and will yield higher returns to the country's workforce.

<sup>23</sup> Data on human capital Index have been collected from the Penn World Table (PWT) database (1=worst; 4=best).

## Employment Status of Bangladeshi Workers in Major Destination Countries

A majority of Bangladeshi migrant workers are employed as wage labourers (mostly in construction projects) or domestic workers/helpers in destination countries (Table 1). In the largest destination country of Saudi Arabia, close to 60 per cent of migrant workers mostly work as a labourer with about 40 per cent of them having lower than high-school level education. Almost 90 per cent of these workers does not have any formal training. In other major destinations, workers are mostly labourers except for Canada, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States, where most migrants are engaged in semi-skilled work, white-collar jobs and businesses. These workers have relatively higher levels of education. For example, in Canada, more than 70 per cent of the Bangladeshi migrant workers have at least higher secondary education. More than 55 per cent of the Bangladeshi migrant workers in the United States has an education level equivalent to higher secondary or above.

Overall, the share of trained migrant workers is less than 15 per cent. Singapore turns out to be an exception with 43 per cent of the Bangladeshi workers having some vocational training while another 3.5 per cent receiving language training. One of the reasons behind a higher portion of the workers with training is the requirements set by the employers in Singapore.

**Table 1: Distribution of Bangladeshi workers in the country of destinations (CODs) by occupation, education level and training status (% of total Bangladeshi workers in the respective COD)**

Country	Occupation (% of total)		Education level (% of total)		Training received (% of total)	
<b>Bahrain</b>	Job holders	29.5	No education	8.59	No training	92.58
	Business owners/employees	7.27	Primary	22.71	Vocational	3.24
	Labourers	60.16	Lower secondary	53.53	Language	0.65
	Students/part-time workers	0	Secondary	9.52	Computer	0.42
	Domestic workers	0.45	Higher secondary	3.78	Driving	0.48
	Others	2.62	Graduate and above	1.06	Others	2.62
<b>Canada</b>	Job holders	50.55	No education	0	No training	76.33
	Business owners/employees	3.54	Primary	0	Vocational	0
	Labourers	37.87	Lower secondary	3.54	Language	11.7
	Students/part-time workers	8.04	Secondary	16.25	Computer	10.72
	Domestic workers	0	Higher secondary	36.07	Driving	0
	Others	0	Graduate and above	44.14	Others	1.25
<b>Italy</b>	Job holders	49.71	No education	2.96	No training	94.93
	Business owners/employees	16.7	Primary	14.54	Vocational	0.14
	Labourers	27.68	Lower secondary	39.69	Language	2.21
	Students/part-time workers	0.76	Secondary	23.31	Computer	1.21
	Domestic workers	0.17	Higher secondary	13.95	Driving	0.43
	Others	4.99	Graduate and above	5.55	Others	1.08

Country	Occupation (% of total)		Education level (% of total)		Training received (% of total)	
Jordan	Job holders	21.59	No education	15.65	No training	n.a
	Business owners/employees	0	Primary	46.27	Vocational	n.a
	Labourers	41.39	Lower secondary	32.18	Language	n.a
	Students/part-time workers	0	Secondary	5.91	Computer	n.a
	Domestic workers	33.09	Higher secondary	0	Driving	n.a
	Others	3.93	Graduate and above	0	Others	n.a
Saudi Arabia	Job holders	30.15	No education	11.03	No training	89.67
	Business owners/employees	7.33	Primary	28.11	Vocational	4.59
	Labourers	58.41	Lower secondary	35.63	Language	1.09
	Students/part-time workers	0.51	Secondary	15.18	Computer	0.33
	Domestic workers	0.58	Higher secondary	7.38	Driving	2.12
	Others	3.01	Graduate and above	2.52	Others	2.21
Kuwait	Job holders	29.2	No education	9.27	No training	89.22
	Business owners/employees	5.78	Primary	27.11	Vocational	3.32
	Labourers	59.43	Lower secondary	38.04	Language	2.47
	Students/part-time workers	0.58	Secondary	18.28	Computer	0.02
	Domestic workers	1.53	Higher secondary	5.92	Driving	3.65
	Others	3.47	Graduate and above	1.2	Others	1.31
Malaysia	Job holders	18.36	No education	13.87	No training	91.67
	Business owners/employees	1.51	Primary	31.64	Vocational	5.32
	Labourers	77.79	Lower secondary	33.84	Language	1.63
	Students/part-time workers	1.01	Secondary	12.04	Computer	0.05
	Domestic workers	0	Higher secondary	6.67	Driving	0.26
	Others	1.32	Graduate and above	1.64	Others	1.07
Oman	Job holders	25.2	No education	9.3	No training	95.26
	Business owners/employees	4.35	Primary	33.75	Vocational	1.52
	Labourers	68.94	Lower secondary	37.21	Language	0.52
	Students/part-time workers	0.07	Secondary	12.71	Computer	0.13
	Domestic workers	1.1	Higher secondary	6.61	Driving	0.73
	Others	0.34	Graduate and above	0.4	Others	1.84
Qatar	Job holders	29.17	No education	9.01	No training	90.6
	Business owners/employees	5.81	Primary	18.36	Vocational	2.31
	Labourers	58.83	Lower secondary	42.67	Language	1.3
	Students/part-time workers	2.65	Secondary	18.14	Computer	0
	Domestic workers	0.6	Higher secondary	8.89	Driving	3.85
	Others	2.95	Graduate and above	2.14	Others	1.93
Singapore	Job holders	23.07	No education	3.95	No training	42.42
	Business owners/employees	0.61	Primary	7.84	Vocational	43.08
	Labourers	75.34	Lower secondary	30.43	Language	3.49
	Students/part-time workers	0.18	Secondary	30.72	Computer	0.98
	Domestic workers	0	Higher secondary	24.84	Driving	1.11
	Others	0.79	Graduate and above	2.21	Others	8.92

Country	Occupation (% of total)		Education level (% of total)		Training received (% of total)	
United Arab Emirates	Job holders	32.27	No education	8.36	No training	90.08
	Business owners/employees	2.95	Primary	28.03	Vocational	5.49
	Labourers	61.66	Lower secondary	39.1	Language	0.82
	Students/part-time workers	0.03	Secondary	16	Computer	0.07
	Domestic workers	1.82	Higher secondary	6.1	Driving	1.27
	Others	1.27	Graduate and above	1.96	Others	2.27
United Kingdom	Job holders	33.33	No education	6.11	No training	88.28
	Business owners/employees	10.56	Primary	13.34	Vocational	2.42
	Labourers	45.15	Lower secondary	18.89	Language	6.44
	Students/part-time workers	6.51	Secondary	19.38	Computer	1.38
	Domestic workers	1.33	Higher secondary	21.41	Driving	0.43
	Others	3.11	Graduate and above	20.58	Others	1.05
United States of America	Job holders	48.21	No education	0	No training	87.82
	Business owners/employees	1.35	Primary	18.11	Vocational	1.25
	Labourers	39.51	Lower secondary	12.92	Language	5.3
	Students/part-time workers	7.07	Secondary	13.72	Computer	0.59
	Domestic workers	0.92	Higher secondary	17.66	Driving	3.7
	Others	2.94	Graduate and above	37.58	Others	1.33

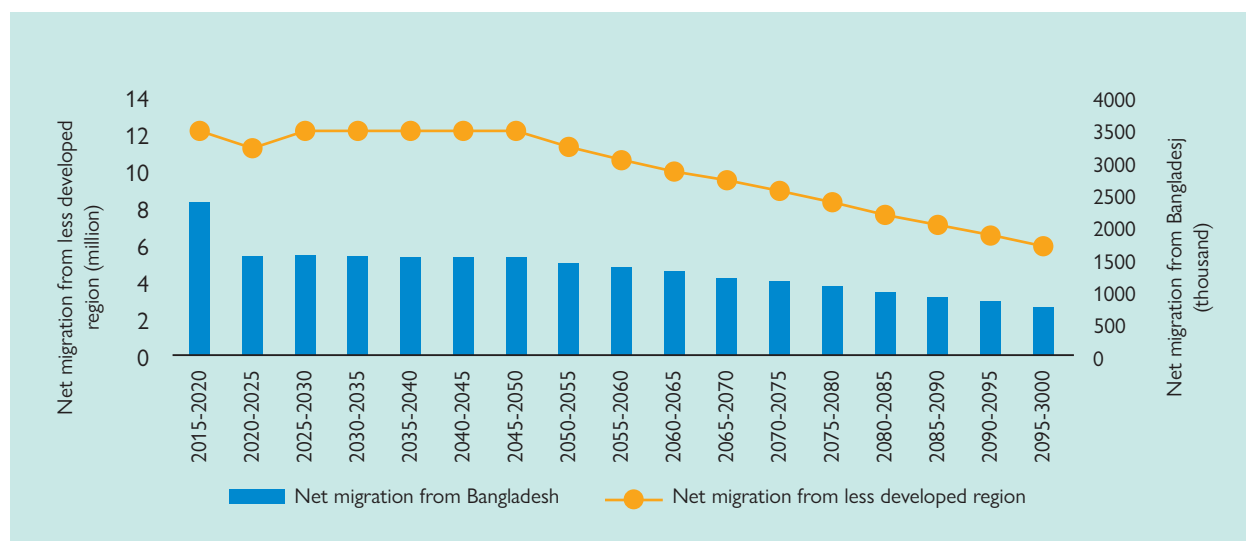
Source: Authors' compilation using data from Survey on Investment from Remittance (SIR), 2016 and Survey on the Use of Remittance (SUR), 2013.

### 3.3 Global migration: projections and prospects for Bangladesh

#### Projection of net migration

The United Nations provides projections of worldwide net migration flow by regions and countries. Figure 26 shows the net migration from less developed to more developed regions, and net migration from Bangladesh for the period 2015–2100. The size of net outflow from less developed regions to developed regions is projected to be 2.3 million per annum during 2025–2050, after which it is likely to decline. The projected number of migrants from Bangladesh demonstrates a similar trend with a constant outflow of approximately 300,000 per annum from 2020 to 2050 before facing a decline. The information in Figure 26 considers both inflow and outflow of migrants to derive net migration. Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that Bangladesh is likely to do well in sending migrant workers in the near future. As shown above (Figure 19), during the past 10 years Bangladesh has sent on average more than half-a-million migrant workers every year.

**Figure 26: Projection of net migration from Bangladesh and other less developed regions to more developed regions**



Source: Authors' analysis based on data from The World Population Prospects: 2015 Revision.

### Market analysis and near-term outlook for Bangladeshi migrant workers

Major destination markets for Bangladesh's migrant workers can be analysed based on possible future economic prospects of the economies concerned, and any major development projects that are being undertaken or planned in those countries. In fact, the demand for foreign labour in many destination countries to a large extent depends on large-scale infrastructural projects. Table 2 compiles a detailed analysis of the current profile of Bangladeshi migrant workers' skill supplies, prospects for labour migration to selected countries and perceived challenges.

Saudi Arabia, the largest labour market for Bangladesh, plans to build a major economic city across the territory of Egypt and Jordan borders at an estimated cost of USD 500 billion. There are other ongoing big development projects including King Abdullah Economic City, Ha'il Economic City, and Medina Economic City. These projects should create employment opportunities for migrant workers with different skill levels.

**Table 2: Labour market needs and potential opportunities for Bangladeshi migrant workers in key destination countries**

Destination country	Types of workers' skill supplied by Bangladesh	Potential sources of employment growth in destination country	Required professionals/skilled workers	Perceived challenges for labour migration
<b>Jordan</b>	Garment workers, construction labourers	Jordan has been undertaking several large projects in the fields of energy, railway and water. The construction sector, energy, and garments industry have been projected to grow over the next couple of years. There is also a lot of emphasis on expanding the tourism sector.	Hotel staff, managers, accountants, engineers and construction workers.	Jordan faces record high unemployment and sluggish growth as its economy continues to be impacted by the Syrian crisis, including the presence of more than 655,000 registered Syrian refugees. Tight fiscal and monetary policies are expected in the medium term. All this makes prospects for migrant workers challenging.
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	Farm labourers, farmers, technicians, caretakers, carpenters, cleaners, construction workers, electricians, drivers, house workers/domestic helpers.	Saudi Arabia recently announced plans to build a USD 500 billion megacity called "NEOM". With an estimated area of 26,500 square kilometres the city will be built in the north-western region across the Egyptian and Jordanian borders. More than 80 other mega projects are underway or planned as part of "Vision 2030" including King Abdullah Economic City, The Knowledge Economic City, Jahan Economic City, Jubail II industrial project, Riyadh Metro and so on. The country aims to diversify its economy reducing dependency on oil export and making itself an infrastructural hub. Manufacturing and service sectors have high growth potential.	Architects, accountants, managers, electricians, engineers, hotel staff, salesmen.	Bangladesh does not send many skilled workers to Saudi Arabia. Also, Bangladesh lacks human capital that would be in demand in specialized segments of the labour market. Nevertheless, Bangladesh's comparative advantage should feature prominently in low- and semi-skilled work categories. In this case, visa and work permits for increasing number of Bangladeshi migrant workers could also depend on the bilateral relationship and engagements.
<b>Kuwait</b>	Labourers, cleaners, cooks, drivers, domestic workers, salespersons, welders, technicians	Kuwait Nuclear Power Plants, City of Silk, Pan-GCC Railway, Sabah Al Ahmed Future City are the major ongoing infrastructure projects in Kuwait. It has launched "New Kuwait 2030" vision to transform the country into a financial and economic hub aiming to spread the private sector based economic activity. As part of the initiative, the country is investing in tourism and hospitality sector aiming to attract more than 440,000 tourists by 2025 and creating job opportunities for 30,000 workers.	High-skilled technicians, engineers, computer programmers, health technicians, electricians, hotel staff, automobile mechanics and tourist guides.	The government of Kuwait plans to reduce high dependency on expatriates from the current level of 70 per cent to 60 per cent by 2030 which can affect prospects for foreign workers.

Destination country	Types of workers' skill supplied by Bangladesh	Potential sources of employment growth in destination country	Required professionals/skilled workers	Perceived challenges for labour migration
<b>Malaysia</b>	Workers, farm workers, cleaners, construction workers, factory workers, production operators, restaurant staff	A large number of mega infrastructural projects have been undertaken by the Malaysian government. The sectors are expected to generate a large employment boom in the coming years.	High-skilled construction workers, computer programmers, software developers, technicians, machine operators and others.	The government regulations in Malaysia are anticipated to be stricter in the coming years. According to some sources, there are already a large number of undocumented Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia. With stricter policies, it will be challenging to regularize these workers.
<b>Qatar</b>	Labourers, construction workers, cooks, drivers, masons, fitters, carpenters, service sector employees, engineers	In preparation for the world cup football 2022, major construction projects have been undertaken in transport, real estate, and port infrastructure developments.	High-skilled construction workers, engineers, health-care providers, IT experts, hotel staff, tourist guides and so on.	In terms of per capita income, Qatar is one of the richest countries in the world. The prospect of rising oil prices and the government's infrastructure investment push in preparation for the 2022 World Cup should prompt growth further along with increased demand for workers in the short to medium terms. Nevertheless, the geo-political issues leading to embargoes against it would continue to weigh on the outlook with potential for subdued economic activities and demand for migrant workers.
<b>Republic of Korea</b>	Factory workers	Construction, health-care services, housekeeping and similar other service sectors have been projected to draw high demand for foreign labours. The Manufacturing as well as the ITES sectors of Republic of Korea are expanding very rapidly opening opportunities for skilled ITES professionals.	Electrical engineers, IT experts, programmers, health-care service providers, domestic helpers and so on.	Matching skills in accordance with future demand by Republic of Korea would be challenging for Bangladesh given the educational training system and the quality of education in the country. Competition with other emerging countries like India, the Philippines and Viet Nam would be fierce in the coming years.
<b>Singapore</b>	Construction workers, electricians, welders/fabricators, drivers, house workers/domestic helpers.	High-tech manufacturing sectors and IT industries have helped Singapore to shore up the recent weakness in construction and oil-related activities. Electronics, ship repairing, marine and offshore industries will be the driving force of growth of Singapore economy.	Health-care service providers, programmers, managers, engineers, ICT experts, skilled construction workers.	The construction sector in 2017 shrank by more than 8 per cent, making many Bangladeshi workers vulnerable to job losses. The outlook for the sector remains weak in the short to medium term. Electrical and electronic sectors and the financial industry is likely to do better but most of these skilled jobs are acquired by other country nationals given Bangladesh's weak supply-side capacity.

Destination country	Types of workers' skill supplied by Bangladesh	Potential sources of employment growth in destination country	Required professionals/skilled workers	Perceived challenges for labour migration
<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	Service sector workers, construction workers, cooks, drivers, cleaners, machine operators, tailors, salesmen, agricultural workers, electricians, helpers, masons, house workers/domestic helpers.	A large number of transport and infrastructural projects are underway in the United Arab Emirates. Dubai is hosting the "World Expo 2020". About 700,000 construction workers will be needed to work in the Expo. It has made major investments in the real estate sector. The world's largest solar panel is to be established by 2020. The current major projects in United Arab Emirates include 'Deira Islands Mall' and 'Silicon Park' in Dubai and 'Abu Dhabi Mall' in Abu Dhabi.	High-skilled construction workers, architects, communication managers, hotel staff, medical technicians, accountants, and so on.	After several years of a de facto ban, the United Arab Emirates is re-opening its market for Bangladeshi workers. In semi-skilled and skilled categories, Bangladesh will have to compete with India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and other countries.
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Cooks, cleaning workers, high-skilled professionals	United Kingdom favours high skilled labour migration. After Brexit, several new sectors may emerge for non-EU migrant workers.	Salesmen, hotel staff, managers, accountants and bankers, actuarial analyst, chefs, engineers, IT specialists, nurses, health-care providers and farm workers.	Along with opportunities, British immigration policies could be stricter post Brexit, resulting in unfavourable impact on immigrant workers, particularly in low-skilled categories. However, there could be market opening for semi-skilled and skilled workers.

**Source:** Authors' analysis using information from ADB (2016b) and other sources including newspapers and websites.



The infrastructural booms in the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar are also opening opportunities for construction workers, electricians, technicians, engineers, designers and other service providers. Besides, Dubai will host the World Expo 2020 and Qatar will host World Cup Football 2022. Large scale infrastructural projects, currently underway as preparations for these events, are going on full-swing, creating employment opportunities for foreign migrant workers. In the future, these countries are expected to demand more workers in tourism and hospitality industries and other service sectors, for example, restaurants, housekeeping, cleaning and security providers.<sup>24</sup> Kuwait is also going through an economic transformation to achieve various ambitious targets under its “New Kuwait 2035” vision. Similarly, several public infrastructural projects in Malaysia, and growing manufacturing and ICT service sectors in Singapore will be likely to facilitate economic growth in their respective countries, generating employment opportunities for migrant workers. The likely challenges for utilizing these opportunities for Bangladesh emanate from its weak human capital base to fulfil the demand for skilled and trained workers and, to some extent, weaker negotiating capacity in ensuring more and better jobs for migrant workers.<sup>25</sup>

### Exploring new markets/countries of destination

Along with traditional destinations there is now policy attention for labour market diversification for Bangladesh’s migrant workers. Employment opportunities in non-traditional and emerging markets are being considered proactively. Table 3 provides a list of major global migrant destination countries along with a comparative scenario of Bangladeshi migrants’ share in total migrant stock in the respective destination country. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other GCC countries host relatively larger share of Bangladeshi migrants. About 11.2 per cent of all migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates are Bangladeshis while the corresponding share in Saudi Arabia is about 10 per cent. Although Bangladesh is one of the top five migrant origin countries, it does not send many to top destination countries like the United States, Germany or Russian Federation (Table 3).<sup>26</sup> Only 0.4 per cent of US immigrants are Bangladeshis whereas the share is 4.5 per cent and 4.2 per cent for China and India respectively. Fewer than 3 per cent of Bangladeshi migrants are in the United Kingdom and Italy, and it is less than 1 per cent in other major countries such as Australia, Canada, Jordan, South Africa, Turkey and Thailand.

In the major developed destination countries along with other developing regions, significant employment opportunities are likely to emerge in the health services sector due to an increase in the ageing population. It is estimated that the world’s demand for health workers by 2030 will be above 80 million as against the supply of about 65 million, leading to a shortage of 15 million (Figure 27). Even the developing regions will experience supply–demand mismatches. For instance, a shortage of about 3 million is projected for South Asia while the corresponding figure for South–East Asia is 2 million. The growth in the demand for health workers will fuel a global competition for skilled health workers. There is an opportunity for Bangladesh to utilize this market. However, the challenge is the lack of trained and skilled health-care professionals and service providers.

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<sup>24</sup> It needs to be recognized that new areas of employment opportunities are likely to emerge as well. For instance, in some destination countries, particularly in middle-eastern countries, with rapid prosperity and economic expansion, more women citizens are likely to take up paid employment. This could result in rising demand for child care and other household support services offered by migrant workers.

<sup>25</sup> Often destination countries unilaterally impose restrictions on labour import from certain countries. For example, the United Arab Emirates had not been recruiting from Bangladesh for the past several years and has only very recently indicated re-opening its market.

<sup>26</sup> One possible reason for weak participation of Bangladesh in these destinations could be that these countries demand mostly professionals and skilled manpower. Immigration policies of these countries also do not allow temporary movement of low-skilled workers.

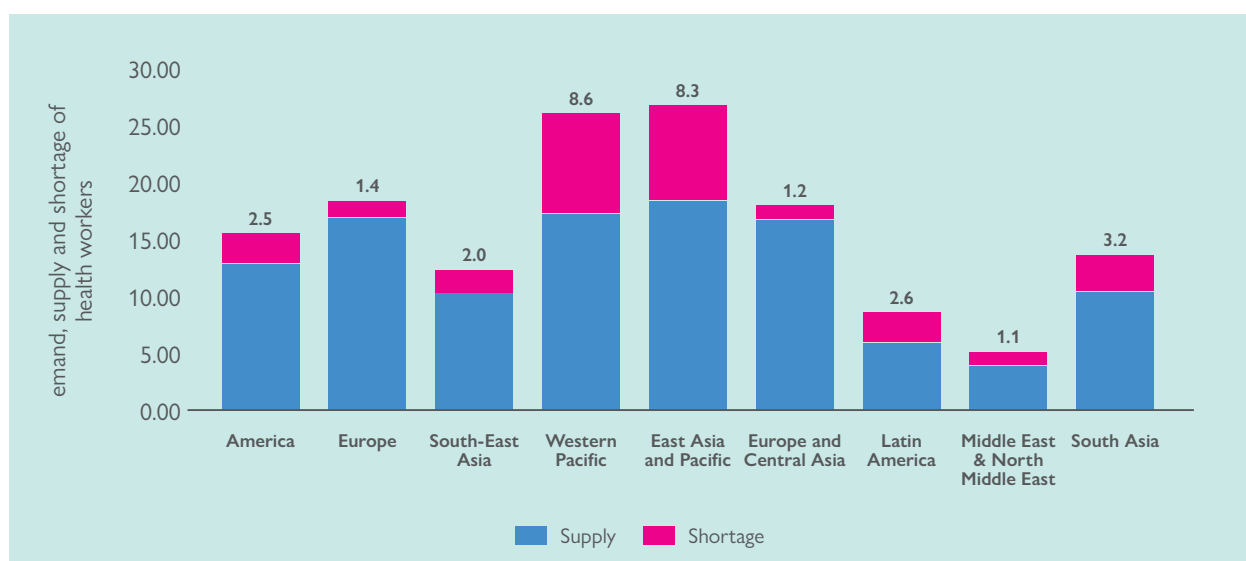
**Table 3: Share of Bangladesh and other comparators' migrants in major migrant destination countries and territories (% of total migrants)**

Major country destination	Total migrant workers (millions)	Share of migrant workers (%)					The major country/territory of origin (%)
		Bangladesh	China	India	Pakistan	Philippines	
Australia	6.76	0.55	6.67	5.77	0.65	3.29	United Kingdom (19.06)
Bahrain	0.7	11.13	0	42.98	10.61	6.83	India (42.98)
Canada	7.84	0.65	9.08	7.93	2.24	6.96	China (9.08)
China	0.98	0.41	0	0.92	0.45	7.47	Hong Kong, SAR (27.63)
France	7.78	0.06	1.41	0.62	0.31	0.2	Algeria (18.38)
Germany	12.01	0.06	0.85	0.57	0.42	0.47	Poland (16.08)
Greece	1.24	0.79	0.27	0.82	2.52	0.68	Albania (35.2)
Hong Kong, SAR, China	2.84	0.02	81.3	0.63	0.27	4.15	China (81.3)
Ireland	0.75	0.43	1.7	2.65	1.24	2.05	United Kingdom (34.14)
Italy	5.79	1.68	3.46	2.36	1.46	2.48	Romania (17.65)
Japan	2.04	0.43	31.92	1.11	0.55	10.29	China (31.92)
Jordan	3.11	0.39	0.31	0.2	0.11	0.13	Palestinian territories (68.85)
Saudi Arabia	10.19	9.5	0	18.6	11.03	4.79	India (18.60)
Kuwait	2.87	12.22	0	37.04	10.9	6.33	India (37.04)
Lebanon	2	0.15	0.12	0.08	0.04	0.05	Syrian Arab Republic (62.84)
Malaysia	2.51	14.26	0.41	5.28	1.07	0.86	Indonesia (42.57)
New Zealand	1.04	0.15	8.91	6.71	0.28	3.73	United Kingdom (25.49)
Oman	1.84	18.76	0	42.15	15.42	4.66	India (42.15)
Qatar	1.69	9.49	0	38.25	7.89	8.8	India (38.25)
Republic of Korea	1.33	1.03	56.55	0.53	0.92	2.93	China (56.55)
Russian Federation	11.64	0.004	0.48	0.05	0.01	0	Ukraine (28.08)
Singapore	2.54	3.17	17.63	5.9	5.08	0.61	Malaysia (44.18)
South Africa	3.14	0.09	0.8	1.38	0.34	0.05	Zimbabwe (15.13)
Spain	5.85	0.17	2.61	0.57	0.96	0.71	Morocco (11.96)
Sweden	1.64	0.45	1.87	1.37	0.7	0.75	Finland (9.88)
Thailand	3.91	0.03	2.56	0.2	0.05	0.03	Myanmar (50.56)
Turkey	2.96	0.01	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.02	Syrian Arab Republic (52.9)
Ukraine	4.83	0	0.14	0.08	0	0	Russian Federation (67.77)
United Arab Emirates	8.1	11.2	0	43.23	10.67	6.86	India (43.23)
United Kingdom	8.54	2.69	2.14	9.09	6.33	1.63	India (9.09)
United States of America	46.63	0.4	4.51	4.22	0.7	4.07	Mexico (25.84)

Source: UN DESA, 2015.

Note: Countries in the row represent major destinations of global migrants. Countries in the column show the share of these countries in major destinations.

**Figure 27: Demand, supply and shortage of health workers by region, 2030 (millions)**



**Source:** Authors' presentation using data from Liu et al. (2017).

**Note:** The height of the bars (supply + shortage) represents the demand for health workers.

### 3.4 Challenges for Bangladeshi migrant workers

There are several challenges that Bangladesh is currently facing with overseas labour migration. The high dependency on the GCC countries poses a risk of volatility. Any adverse global economic shocks resulting in weaknesses in commodity fuel prices can exert detrimental effects for overseas employment opportunities and remittance earnings.<sup>27</sup> Geo-political issues concerning the region manifested in conflicts and political unrests could also have adverse implications for migrant workers' demand.

Furthermore, the employment and living conditions in the overseas market including workers' mobility from one job to another along with issues of work place rights and safety, particularly of women, are increasingly becoming issues of grave concerns. Abrupt changes in overseas labour policies by destination countries often also pose significant challenges for Bangladesh.<sup>28</sup> In parallel with the issues in foreign markets, there are also challenges and obstacles on the domestic front as well. Of the latter, the cost of migration is amongst the most prominent ones. Flawed recruitment practices and monitoring, as well as lack of information on labour market prospects, processes involved in seeking employment in foreign countries, and legal provisions affect overall migrant workers' well-being. The following section briefly discusses these challenges.

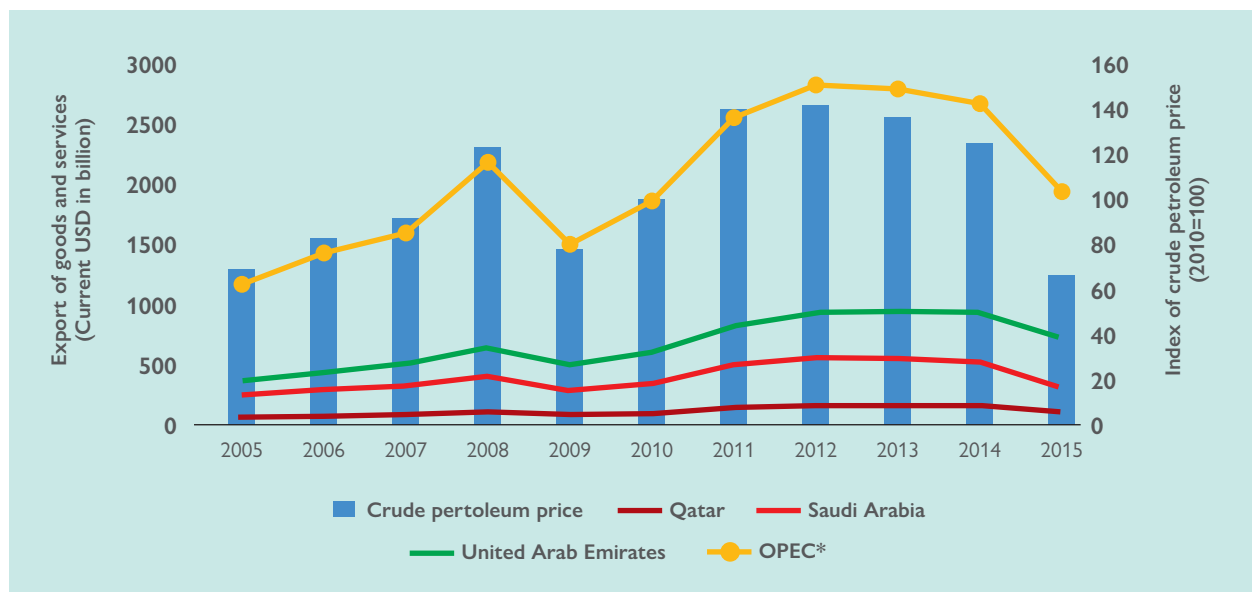
The oil-rich GCC countries have long been major destinations for Bangladeshi migrant workers. Being heavily reliant on exports of petroleum products, economic activities in the Gulf countries follow a pro-cyclical pattern with fluctuations in crude oil prices (Figure 28). As the world commodity prices have been under pressure with

<sup>27</sup> This actually happened during the global financial crisis of 2008 and more recently during 2015–2017, when weakness in oil prices caused global remittance flows to fall.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, the United Arab Emirates banned visa permit for Bangladeshi workers since 2012. However, as mentioned above, the country has relaxed the restrictions recently. In the past, Malaysia also imposed similar restrictions.

a prolonged weakness in the prices of crude oil since early 2012, the overall economic growth and employment opportunities in the GCC countries have been under strain until very recently following some recovery in petroleum product prices.<sup>29</sup> In addition, political tensions and conflicts in certain destination countries like Iraq, Lebanon and Libya had also affected Bangladesh's overseas migration opportunities. Apart from the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries, the other two major destinations for Bangladesh's migrant workers are Singapore and Malaysia. Until 2016, Bangladesh was not recognized as a source country in Malaysia resulting in infrequent and uncertain recruitments and inducing undocumented or irregular labour migration.

**Figure 28: Exports of oil exporting countries and prices of petroleum**



Note: \* OPEC countries except Gabon.

Source: Authors' analysis using UNCTAD data.

### Overseas migration and recruitment of Bangladeshi migrant workers

The cost of migration is known to be excessively high for Bangladeshis. Moreover, on the domestic front, recruitment processes and practices also affect Bangladeshi migrant workers. There are regular newspaper reports and there exist numerous anecdotal evidence on migrant workers' being subject to different types of malpractices.

### Key institutions in overseas labour migration

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) is the central authority for governing overseas migration process and expatriate workers' welfare. Established in 2001, the MoEWOE bears the responsibilities for formulating policies, enacting laws, rules and regulations, and monitoring development

<sup>29</sup> Economic weaknesses could result in lower demand for workers, downward pressure on wages and lower hours for overtime work. Following the weakening of global oil prices, the remittance inflows to many developing countries including Bangladesh from gulf countries have been subdued. In fact, as shown earlier, remittances actually fell during FY2016 and FY2017 in case for Bangladesh.

programmes. Under MoEWOE, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) and Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL) work as the two most important government wings facilitating overall recruitment processes. BMET has adopted objective-based-strategic planning and implement policies for the skill enhancement programmes. It also issues a license to foreign labour recruiters and regulates them. An Inter-Ministerial Vigilance Task Force has been established with the representation from relevant ministries to monitor migration processes at various stages. There are more than 1,100 foreign labour recruiters working in Bangladesh under the supervision of BMET. It functions through 42 District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMO), 70 technical training centres (TTCs) and 6 institutes of marine technologies (BIMT).<sup>30</sup> A key objective of these training centres and marine technologies is to produce skilled human resources for local and overseas employment. Beside BMET and BOESL, the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) works to extend welfare services for aspirant migrant workers, families of deceased migrant workers, sick migrant workers, services for migrants in abroad and services for their families in the country. Services of WEWB include pre-departure briefing, financial assistance and grants, death compensation, scholarship for the children of migrant workers, legal assistance, awareness campaigning and welfare desk at the airport. However, WEWB is not directly involved in the current recruitment process.

### **Overseas migration processes**

Migration from Bangladesh mostly takes place using formal channels, but there are incidents of irregular migration as well. Workers who follow authorized channels to obtain work permits, through labour recruiters, individual contacts (relative/friends/own effort), and government agencies (BMET and BOESL), along with appropriate visas for migrating overseas are considered as regular. However, workers who migrate through unauthorized intermediaries are considered irregular. The informal and irregular routes can expose migrants to greater risks and exploitation, and also be associated with human trafficking. Often, workers would take a non-working visa (like tourist or student visas) to go abroad to work, thus become part of the undocumented migrant workforce. In addition, the migrant status is interchangeable, for example, documented workers overstaying on their visas or violating their work permits can then fall into the category of irregular migrants. Migrant workers who opt for leaving the country without formal documents often bear extreme hardships and take risks with their lives to reach the destination countries through long and dangerous routes, for instance, through the Bay of Bengal by boats and crossing treacherous terrains of land borders. According to the Survey on Investment from Remittance (SIR) 2016 Report, about 86 per cent of the migrant workers followed the formal official channels while others used informal unofficial means for migrating abroad.

#### **(a) Migration through labour recruiters**

The recruitment agencies collect information on overseas employment opportunities, working conditions, and immigration processes. Most of the agencies have direct contacts with overseas employers or foreign labour recruiters. They collect demand letters from the foreign employers or agencies approved by relevant

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<sup>30</sup> This information is obtained from BMET website, accessed on 24 March 2018.

Bangladesh missions or BMET. Upon receiving demand letters, the agencies are required to give priority to workers who have registered at BMET. However, according to some of the stakeholders/key informants interviewed, aspirant migrant workers do not often get the opportunity to be involved with the labour recruiters directly, rather they have to rely on sub-agents or 'dalals'. These sub-agents or dalals work as middlemen to establish contact between recruiting agencies and the migrants. The need for these sub-agents emerges largely due to the presence of formal labour recruiters mainly in Dhaka, thus making it difficult for migrant workers from distant locations to get directly involved with them. After receiving job offers from a labour recruiter, workers need to follow specific procedures like collecting and reviewing all jobs and travel related documents, health check-up, opening a bank account, providing fingerprints and attending pre-departure orientation training and other skill training under recruiting agencies. Having completed these formalities, BMET issues the worker a clearance certificate along with a smart card. The smart card contains all vital information of the worker including passport details, license number and other details of the labour recruiting agency, and information on the overseas employers.

### **(b) Migration through social network**

According to the key informants, personal contacts are the single most source of information on foreign employment opportunities. In fact, workers rely more on their relatives and intermediaries than labour recruiters or government agencies. According to the IOM (2010), more than 35 per cent of the migrant workers collected information on overseas opportunities from friends or family members. A staggering 45 per cent relied on intermediaries for obtaining overseas employment information.<sup>31</sup> According to several key informants interviewed, it is not uncommon to find migrant workers who, while being based in destination countries, eventually get involved in procuring recruitment contract and start playing a role in recruiting workers through their contacts in Bangladesh. This process often involves aspirant migrants paying very high recruitment fees. The workers usually pay beforehand to the intermediaries to obtain the employment contracts.

### **(c) Migration through BOESL**

Although BOESL is operating for more than 3 decades, its share in total overseas recruitment is not very significant. In 2016-17, BOESL sent 10,243 workers (less than 1 per cent of total outbound migrant workers) to a number of destination countries (BOESL 2017). However, recently they are being prioritized from several destination countries' governments to recruit under bilateral initiatives. Under these agreements, the destination country agrees to take a specific number of workers in some pre-specified sectors. After the bilateral agreement (BLA), the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) proceeds through BMET and BOESL for online registration of potential workers. From the registered persons, shortlisted-workers are then selected for overseas employment. According to the stakeholders, employment through BOESL is the least cost option for migration and one of the safest mechanisms for migration.

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<sup>31</sup> Illegal intermediaries are those who do not have licenses from BMET but are involved in overseas recruitment. 4 March 2018.



## Recruitment in major CODs

### Recruitment in the Gulf countries

Generally, two types of visas are issued for Bangladeshi workers to enter the Gulf countries. One is 'Iqama' or individual employment visa which is issued to an individual worker upon the sponsorship of a company or citizen of the CODs. It allows a migrant worker to work in a pre-assigned job and switching employment is not possible under this visa. The other type of visa is a nominal sponsorship system or free visa that allows migrants to switch between jobs and work according to their preferences.

### Recruitment process for Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, workers are recruited either under group or individual visas. Under group visas, recruiters issue work permits to a group of workers without specifying any particular workers' names at the outset. Visa advice, documentation and demand letters are sent to the Bangladeshi labour recruiters. Agencies then seek permission from MoEWOE to select workers. After the selection, they apply to BMET for emigration clearance for the selected workers. The Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Bangladesh then issues visas for each of the selected workers against the group visa initially issued.

Under individual arrangements, a work permit is issued against an individual worker who has received an employment offer. Visa advice, along with the employment agreement, is then attested by the Embassy of Bangladesh in Saudi Arabia. Thereafter, it is stamped by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Bangladesh. After procuring all the documents in hand, the worker then applies to BMET for emigration clearance.

### Recruitment process for Singapore

Four types of work passes are issued for the foreign workers in Singapore depending on their skill categories/levels.<sup>32</sup> These are: (a) work permit; (b) 'S-pass'; (c) employment pass; and (d) personalized employment pass. Work permits are issued for low-skilled and semi-skilled foreign workers for the construction, manufacturing, marine, and services sectors. The work permit does not allow a worker to switch jobs. On the other hand, an S-pass is issued to mid-level skilled workers, while the employment pass is provided for high skilled professionals, managers, and executives with a job offer in Singapore. Unlike these, a personalized employment pass is also available for foreign professionals who earn at least USD 12,000 a month in Singapore.<sup>33</sup> Apart from the personalized employment passes, all other work permits are valid for two years subject to the validity of workers' passports, security bonds, and employment period.

To secure employment in Singapore, the aspirant migrant workers have to undertake a skill training of three to four months followed by a skill certification test under Building Construction Authority (BCA)-approved overseas training centres in Bangladesh. Approved recruiting agencies, their partners and others who are

<sup>32</sup> <https://singaporelegaladvice.com/law-articles/how-to-hire-foreign-workers-in-singapore/> (accessed on 24 March 2018)

<sup>33</sup> A Personalized Employment Pass (PEP) is given to an overseas foreign professional whose last drawn fixed monthly salary overseas was at least USD 18,000. When in employment in Singapore, professionals earning a fixed monthly salary of at least USD 12,000 can qualify for receiving PEPs.

involved in training, testing and sending workers from Bangladesh are treated as sending organizations and thus must have a contract agreement with the recruiting agencies of Singapore. On the other hand, employers in Singapore will have to apply to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Singapore for In-principle Approval (IPA) to recruit foreign workers. IPAs are granted against the qualified candidates and work as the temporary contract for the workers to secure entry into Singapore. IPAs obtained by agencies/employers in Singapore are then processed through respective sending organizations in Bangladesh for manpower clearance from BMET. After the arrival of migrants in Singapore, agencies/employers apply for work permit.<sup>34</sup>

### **Recruitment process for Malaysia<sup>35</sup>**

The recruitment practices in Malaysia have seen several changes over the years. At present, it follows a web-based system for hiring overseas workers. Through the designated website portal, an employer uploads demand notes along with other required documents for clearance from the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR). After receiving the demand notes, the MHR manages the case and investigates whether the need for overseas workers is justified for the company. The company has to show evidence in support of 'local-to-foreign workers' ratio, labour requirement based on production capacities, availability of accommodation and other facilities to be provided to migrant workers and among others. After investigating the demand note, if the MHR deems the application justified, it then sends the approved application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for clearance. After the clearance from the MoFA, the MHR certifies the demand note which is then sent to the 'source country' embassies and the labour recruiters. The labour recruiters then send potential workers' information to the Malaysian employer. The company in Malaysia selects workers and sends the contract letter to the agent. After signing the contract letter, the worker applies for a Malaysian visa having undertaken the standard medical check-up and other required procedures. After obtaining the visa and arriving in Malaysia, the worker needs to go through another round of medical check-up to obtain an insurance coverage. These procedures can take two-to-three months. Under the current system, a worker is not allowed to switch between employments in Malaysia. Workers who abandon their original employers or switch between employments become undocumented or irregular migrants.

### **The cost of migration for Bangladeshi workers**

According to the World Bank's Knowledge Network on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), Bangladesh has the highest migration costs in the world (World Bank, 2017a). It not only makes overseas employment option difficult, but also creates other problems for the migrants including debt-bondage, exploitation and abuse that these workers find hard to overcome. Migrant women are also at greater risk of falling victim to coercive recruitment practices, are more likely to be exposed to physical force and sexual exploitation and violence during the recruitment process and at workplaces.

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<sup>34</sup> Information obtained from Government Order: "Revised guidelines for Bangladeshi workers from Bangladesh to Singapore" date: 13 September 2015; and Baey and Yeoh (2015).

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia; Tenaganita; and Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia.





Although, the government has established different cost ceilings for different destinations, generalizing the types of cost that a migrant has to consider during the migration process is not an easy task. Barkat, Hossain and Hoque (2014) list various fees and requirements both in destination countries and in Bangladesh incurring costs to migrant workers. The main cost elements in destination countries include visa application fees, work permit and medical fees, and any other training costs. Cost elements in Bangladesh include airfares, advanced income tax, trade testing (for mainly skilled workers), health check-up, contribution to welfare fund, recruitment service and insurance charges, and visa fees.

A typical cost structure established considering the migration of women RMG sector workers to Jordan comes to a total of around BDT 35,000 per worker (about USD 420) (BOESL 2017). A bilateral agreement (BLA) with the Republic of Korea considered an average migration cost of BDT 56,000 (approximately USD 670). Among other information that exists, Table 4 shows various fees that BOESL charges to migrant workers when airfares are provided by employers. The cost elements include service charges, the applicable value added tax (VAT), and fees to meet up other expenses. The service charges and the associated VAT payments go up with workers' skill levels. There is one separate cost-structure established for women garment workers, many of whom go to Jordan. When airfares are not provided by employers, the total cost of migration falls between 25–40 per cent due to the reduced service charges for different categories of skill workers.

**Table 4 :** Cost of migration through BOESL when airfares are provided by employers

Category	Service charges (BDT)	VAT (15%) (BDT)	Wage earners' fees (BDT)	Smart card fees (BDT)	Data entry fees (BDT)	Total cost (BDT)	
<b>Semi-skilled</b>	26,400	3,960	3,500	250	200	34,310	409
<b>Skilled</b>	42,000	6,300	3,500	250	200	52,250	623
<b>Professional</b>	72,000	10,800	3,500	250	300	86,850	1,035
<b>Women garment workers</b>	12,000	1,800	3,500	250	200	17,750	212

Source: BOESL Annual Report 2016–2017.

The recruiting agencies are supposed to have fixed service charges assigned by BMET for a number of countries (Barkat, Hossain and Hoque, 2014).<sup>36</sup> However, irregularities and hidden costs forces the migrants to pay much more. Inter-industry bidding for buying work visas from destination countries, for example, can raise the cost and the extra expenses are secured by the agencies from the migrants.

Despite having more than a thousand licensed recruiting agencies, most migrants take the assistance of dalals or sub-agents who work through social networks (for example, friends, and family acquaintances, among others). The presence of intermediaries (such as 'dalals') increases the cost of migration by several folds. Migration opportunities are considered as lucrative options and dalals exploit the aspirant migrants, often demanding more money than officially needed. For instance, according to the IOM (2010), the average cost of

<sup>36</sup> The cost (around BDT 45,000) is estimated for Oman, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. The cost includes application fees, airfares, medical test fees, service charges, and insurance.

migration for males was BDT 220,843 while for females the corresponding cost was BDT 133,564. The lower cost of female migration can be partly attributed to the type of work they are assigned to and associated with lower wage returns. Almost all key informants interviewed as part of this study were of the view that the cost of migration continued to be several times higher than what is suggested by BOESL. The excessively high cost put most migrant workers in debt bondage as they often take loans to pay the cost.

The Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013 and the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 provide policy directives to promote safe migration with reasonable costs. While this is helpful with regards to the operation of formal institutions and mechanisms, migration processes involve informal mechanisms involving sub-agents/dalals. People in remote and/or rural areas make use of the informal processes as means of securing a work permit. Their limited education, the non-existent experience of working abroad or even doing a formal job in Bangladesh, and lack of information of processes and costs involved make them more dependent on dalals.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, in many cases the middlemen often lure workers with false promises of higher than actual wages and job opportunities. Effective enforcement of legal provisions will only be possible when the informal network of dalals can be brought under formal regulations. Lack of awareness and the information gaps that the workers face also make it difficult for the government to enforce the established provisions. Workers' lack of education, limited understanding of the processes involved, and inability to find the necessary information compel them to turn to unauthorized parties/dalals and in most cases become victims of the latter's extortive practices. In fact, inadequate dissemination of information has been identified as a major cause of high migration costs (Barkat, Hossain and Hoque, 2014).

### **Workplace Conditions of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers**

Complaints about being assigned to jobs that workers had not agreed to, working under inhumane conditions, and receiving low wages or none at all are common among Bangladeshi migrant workers. Workplace safety is also a significant issue, as temporary or permanent physical injuries due to accidents in dangerous working conditions are met with delayed, insufficient or no compensation, and termination of employment. A large number of workers incur huge debts due to migration costs but find that their earnings are not enough to repay the debts. Thus, for many migrants, returning home after the end of the contract is not an option despite becoming victims of employment contract violations.

Many women migrant returnees speak of physical, mental and sexual violence against them as well as other forms of mistreatment such as long work hours with little or no compensation and without a weekly day-off. There have been numerous cases of employers confiscating travel documents and personal belongings so that migrant domestic worker cannot leave.<sup>38</sup> In most cases, these workers are less-educated and have very limited command over languages of destination countries, making it nearly impossible for them to seek help. The opportunity for the abused and exploited migrant workers to get legal and formal assistance is limited, due to their inability to document enough evidences of maltreatment and/or abuse, and complicated legal procedures.

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<sup>37</sup> Workers' lack of awareness and information is a major problem. A survey on the returnee migrant workers led by the ILO and BILS reports that only 17 per cent of the sampled workers had a legally valid contract, and even fewer were aware of its necessity (Ahmed et al., 2015). Lack of formal contracts, and sometimes the tendency of destination country sponsors not to abide by the terms and conditions of employment make the migrant workers more vulnerable. Most often exploitation of workers abroad is a consequence of deceptive recruitment practices at home.

<sup>38</sup> The issue is particularly pertinent in the context of GCC countries. There are several newspaper reports regarding violence and harassment against women. The issue has been discussed in interviews.



The experiences and perspectives of skilled or professional migrant workers are vastly different. These workers are usually educated and aware of their rights, capable of making informed decisions as well as able to reclaim the migration cost without much difficulty. They work in areas such as education, finance and information technology and other business and services related sectors. Moreover, they are sufficiently compensated with standard work hours, payments and benefits.

In addition to issues and challenges related to working conditions, migrant workers are confronted with bleak prospects of career progression. Although there is no data on this, available anecdotal evidence suggests very little opportunities for on-the-job training. According to a joint study led by the ILO, only 17.5 per cent of workers received some training in destination countries (Figure 29) during their tenure (Ahmed et al., 2015). The same study shows that, only 6.6 per cent of women migrant workers received such training in comparison to 21 per cent of men migrant workers.

**Figure 29: Distribution of returnee migrants received training**



Source: Ahmed et al. (2015).

The prospects of jobs in the destination countries is likely to result in increased demand for Bangladesh’s migrant workers. However, the skill composition of Bangladeshi workers poses a serious constraint to make most of the emerging opportunities. The workers from other competing countries such as India, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, are widely regarded as more skilled due to their higher educational attainment, training and better communication skills. They are also considered to be well-informed and are more likely to follow safe and official migration channels.<sup>39</sup> Skill up-gradation of aspirant Bangladeshi migrant workers and their awareness building can greatly help tackle a variety of challenges faced by them. Monitoring of recruitment agencies, bringing illegal intermediaries under legal provisions, and making migration-related information available to aspirant migrants will be important in reducing the cost of migration. The information on migrant workers’ rights and obligations, labour laws in the CODs, and options for seeking help and assistance at the time of need should greatly empower the workers, protecting and promoting their welfare.

<sup>39</sup> This is based on authors’ discussions with key informants in Bangladesh, Malaysia and the Philippines.

# CHAPTER IV

## LMIS NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND A SURVEY OF SELECTED BEST PRACTICES



Lack of information is one of the key factors affecting job market outcomes resulting in a misallocation of resources, skill mismatches, labour market distortions, and disputes straining employees-employers' relationship. This chapter elaborates the need for a labour market information system along with a survey of several selected LMIS practices in different countries and territories to identify some key features of an optimal LMIS.

## 4.1 The need for an LMIS

### Improving Labour Market Efficiency

An efficient labour market is critical to improve productivity and competitiveness, promote decent work, address employment concerns including gainful and effective participation of women, and combat poverty and inequality. The efficiency of the labour market ensures that workers are allocated to their most effective use in the economy and provided with incentives to achieve maximum productivity (WEF, 2016). Information is an inherent determinant of market structures and efficiency. It contributes strongly to labour market participation decisions, establishing hiring rules, determining the nature of labour market contracts and their enforcement, and settling disputes. A better flow of information can help reduce labour market participation costs both for employers and employees.

The cost of labour market participation includes search costs like expenses related to gathering information on job vacancies, procedural costs of preparing and processing applications, and time costs associated with looking for job opportunities.<sup>40</sup> An LMIS can help reduce these costs. As the implicit cost of labour market participation could be higher for certain population groups including women and other vulnerable groups, a well-functioning LMIS will be helpful in promoting labour market efficiency and transparency.<sup>41</sup> Through an LMIS, employers are able to ensure greater visibility of available vacancies attracting suitable applicants from different backgrounds. It can also be a useful instrument in tackling various labour market irregularities and malpractices targeting vulnerable groups including women and low-skilled workers. Many labour market extortions, including unscrupulous interventions by intermediaries, underpayments, violation of labour rights and regulations and similar other concerns often arise because of lack of knowledge on the part of jobseekers/employees on the relevant issues.<sup>42</sup> In this regard, an ideal LMIS should make information flow accessible in countering some of these malpractices thereby empowering the workers.

### Tackling Excessive Costs of Migration

A large proportion of overseas migrations of Bangladeshi workers takes place with some involvement of various intermediaries outside the formal channels, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. These intermediaries are generally viewed as one of the most important sources of information for overseas employment opportunities.

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<sup>40</sup> Procedural costs of applications include – collecting and printing required documents including the application form. Time costs of application includes – time required to fill up application forms, gather documents, and submit the application form.

<sup>41</sup> This is based on the discussions with the key informants interviewed as part of this study. The implicit cost of labour market participation for females can be higher for several factors. For instance, unlike males, they may have fewer opportunities for interacting with others. Compared with men, women's mobility is also likely to be limited in looking out for jobs and gathering first-hand information.

<sup>42</sup> This is based on stakeholder interviews that were conducted as part of the study. Several participants attending the two workshops organized as part of this project also highlighted this issue.

Since aspirant migrants cannot verify the migration-related information, these intermediaries can be exploitative, demanding large sums of money. There are numerous reports of fraudulent activities by these intermediaries to exploit aspirant migrant workers, who not only have to bear excessive costs but are also often victims of human trafficking. A properly designed and executed LMIS can be one way of providing the migrant workers with the required information on job opportunities abroad, procedures to be followed, risks associated with irregular migration, and approximate costs of migration.

### **Increasing Overseas Employment**

The labour market information system can play an important role in improving access to employment opportunities abroad. For instance, it can provide information on the demand for labour, skill gaps in foreign countries and qualification and training needs to prepare the jobseekers. It may also encourage private sector firms establishing training centres to cater to the need of foreign markets. In fact, an LMIS can contribute to safer and regular migration, helping migrants look for productive and remunerative jobs.

### **Ensuring Equity and Facilitating Wider Participation**

In the presence of ambiguous and limited information, personal connections and networks are the most prominent means of securing employment. This asymmetrical flow of information can create a regional bias in migration opportunities. It is quite common to find that people of certain localities have greater propensities to migrate. This can generate regional and income inequalities. An LMIS can disseminate information on overseas employment opportunities to facilitate the participation of people from all regions. Lack of information could result in the systematic exclusion of poor and vulnerable groups not only from foreign labour market opportunities but also from similar openings in the domestic market. Increased labour market participation of women and the people from lagging regions can greatly be promoted through the dissemination of information.

### **Helping New-Entrants to the Labour Market**

Career guidance is particularly important for young people who are entering the labour market. The high rate of young people not-in-employment, education, or training (NEET) in Bangladesh highlights the critical need for labour market information and employment advice related to training needs and even the scopes of self-employment opportunities. An effective LMIS helps people assess their personal skills and preparations, and better understand trends in the labour market so that the jobseekers can remain focused on skill-acquisition and do not become deskilled while looking for employment. By providing the latest information on jobs, labour market trends, skill development opportunities, and other relevant issues, an effective LMIS can keep jobseekers updated about potential employment opportunities while making suggestions on job market preparedness.

## Formulating and Implementing Economic Policies

Most economic policies in developing countries, like Bangladesh, are likely to have important labour market implications with consequences for poverty and welfare outcomes. An effective LMIS can help various departments in the government access information to assess current labour market situation and consider the potential impact of any policies that are being formulated.<sup>43</sup> LMIS can be an effective means of operation for adaptation, implementation and monitoring of the relevant policies. Amongst others, through LMIS, policymakers can potentially identify target groups that need specific attention and can monitor job opportunities for them. That is, it can be used as a tool by different ministries and departments to consider policy options that will be most effective for labour market-related outcomes.

## Reducing Structural and Frictional Unemployment

Unemployment can be of three categories: (a) frictional, (b) structural, and (c) cyclical. Frictional unemployment results from labour market imperfections and information asymmetries. Structural unemployment arises from changes in technology and infrastructure and the resultant changes in the demand for labour. This type of unemployment can be of two categories: (i) occupational unemployment, which is largely due to mismatches between the skills demanded and skills supplied, and (ii) regional unemployment, which takes place when unemployed workers in one region does not have the information of vacancies available in other regions along with other factors that restrict workers' mobility. In contrast to frictional or structural unemployment, cyclical unemployment arises from demand deficits due to a fall in aggregate demand.

In the short run, an active LMIS can significantly reduce frictional unemployment through a greater flow of information. Moreover, it can also help tackle regional unemployment by informing the workers of available job opportunities in different regions and countries. An LMIS can play an even bigger role in the long run by reducing the structural unemployment of the occupational type. Signalling the changing labour demands and skill requirements, the LMIS can suggest appropriate skills needed for the labour market. It signals the training providers, technical and vocational educational institutes and other organizations to upgrade, modify and improvise their training modules in accordance with changing market dynamics. By providing market trends and forecasts - of both domestic as well as international destinations, LMIS can help prevent over-supply of some occupations which eventually results in workers' acceptance of jobs that are at lower levels than their qualifications/skills. In the case of cyclical unemployment, although, some of the useful features cannot be fully exploited, as the situation arises due to a fall in aggregate demand. Nevertheless, an LMIS can effectively capture labour market situations helping policymakers design appropriate interventions, often targeting certain regions and population groups. Figure 30 points out the major roles of an LMIS with regard to employment and skill development, formulating economic and labour market policies and better labour market outcomes.

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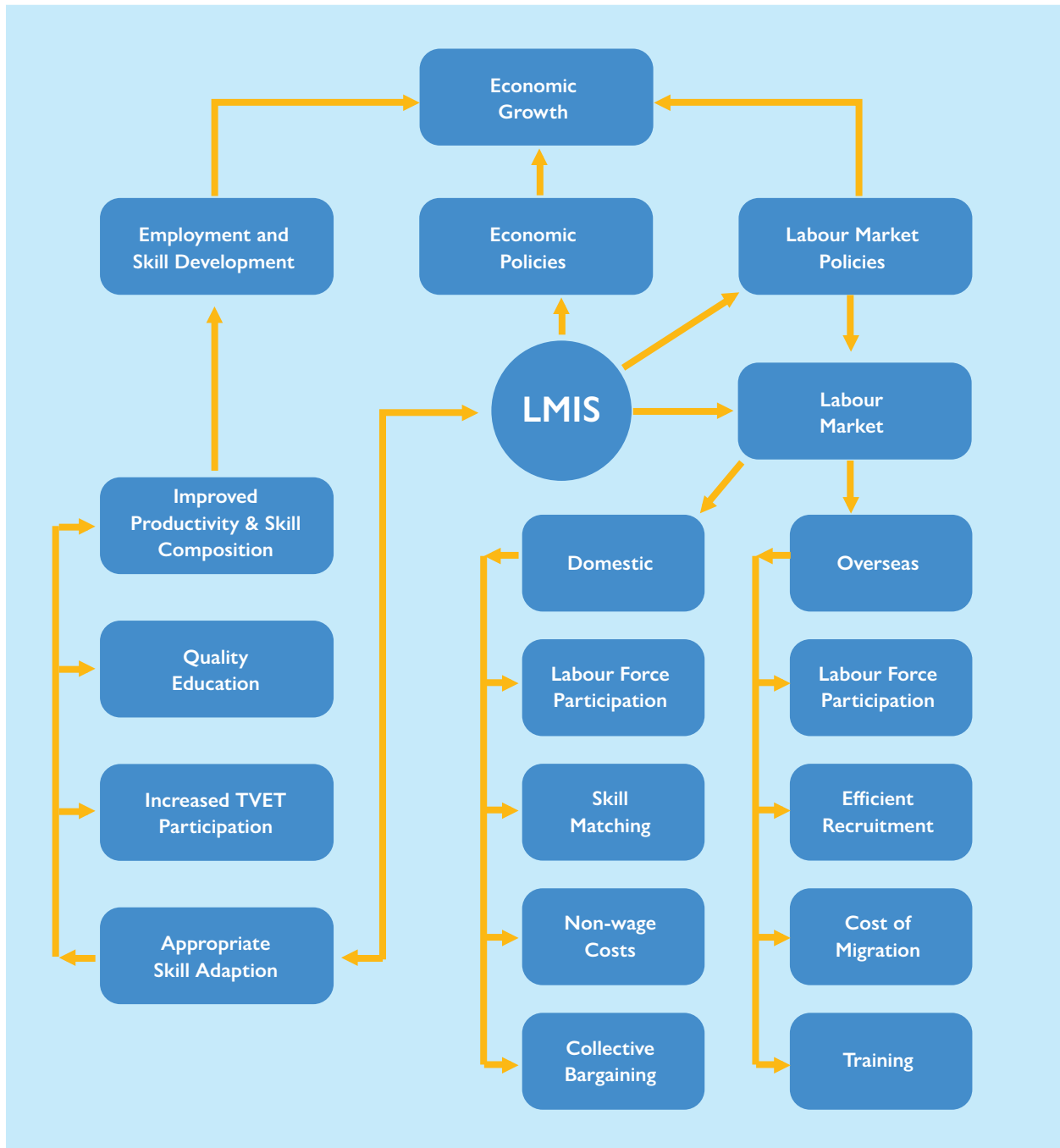
<sup>43</sup> The government departments that can use the information, among others, include the Ministry of Finance that provides policy directives and allocates resources on various activities to generate employment opportunities; the Ministry of Labour and Employment, which is directly responsible for employment generation, human resource development and for protecting and safeguarding the interest of workers; and the Planning Commission of Bangladesh that prepares various medium to long-term economic development plans.





The above discussion on the need for an LMIS can be summarized with the help of Figure 30. An LMIS is linked to the labour market and economic policies that are connected to overall economic growth prospects for a country. Through the generation of productive employment and skill development, a country's labour market can propel economic growth and LMIS can help in this process. On the other hand, for Bangladeshi workers labour market participation involves both domestic as well as overseas markets. An effective LMIS should be able to support workers in both the markets.

**Figure 30: Why is LMIS needed?**



## 4.2 Key users of LMIS

A particular way of assessing the need of an LMIS in the context of Bangladesh could be a mapping of key users and identifying their potential needs. The three broad groups as major users would be: (a) policymakers, (b) labour market participants, and (c) labour market facilitators (Figure 31).

**Figure 31: Key users of LMIS in Bangladesh**

Policymakers	Jobseekers and employers	Labour market facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ministry of Labour and Employment</li> <li>■ Ministry of Finance</li> <li>■ Bangladesh Bank</li> <li>■ Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment</li> <li>■ Ministry of Education</li> <li>■ Department of Youth Development (DYD)</li> <li>■ Planning Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Jobseekers</li> <li>■ International migrant workers</li> <li>■ Students aiming to joining the labour force soon</li> <li>■ Employers</li> <li>■ Business organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recruitment agencies</li> <li>■ Education and training Institutes on labour issues</li> <li>■ Career counsellors and advisors</li> <li>■ Academicians and researchers</li> <li>■ Parents and family members</li> <li>■ NGOs and others</li> </ul>

### (a) Policymakers and Planners

An effective LMIS should provide a vast array of information that can be used for setting up specific goals and targets. It can be a means of policy formulation and implementation. Keeping the context of Bangladesh in mind, the key government stakeholders include:

#### Ministry of Labour and Employment

In order to evaluate existing programmes for human resource development, an up-to-date LMIS is essential. An effective LMIS can also help identify industry and sector-specific skill gaps, and distribution of skills and labour market trends for different groups (for instance, groups based on income, gender, regions, and so forth). These data and indicators are of crucial importance for addressing region and group-specific issues more effectively. For employment generation, information on demographic situations, current labour market requirements and future prospects are important. Through LMIS, employment policies can be matched against labour demand characteristics to determine gaps and measures that need to be considered. An LMIS can be of special use in assessing and addressing the objective of inclusivity in employment including consideration for people with disabilities, minority groups, women and other vulnerable groups.

### **Ministry of Finance and the Bangladesh Bank**

Labour market information is vital for government officials involved in fiscal and monetary policies. It can be a good source of reference for the Ministry of Finance to allocate development budget for employment generation, youth development, education and training based on the region-specific needs and gaps. Information obtained through this system can be used for justifying effectiveness of various employment and skill-building projects. LMIS equips relevant stakeholders to justify the effectiveness of various programmes based on practical labour market outcomes. On the other hand, Bangladesh Bank can also adopt policies for specific target groups or regions. One particular example in this regard could be facilitating loan benefits for education and training at lower interest rates. To encourage people from marginalized groups or lagging regions, there could be special incentives through the financial institutions.

### **Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment**

Although existing LMIS practices around the world focuses on the local labour market, in the context of Bangladesh, an effective LMIS is important for the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE). It can help the ministry disseminate information on foreign labour market opportunities, application procedures, laws, rules and regulations at the CODs along with the overseas employment requirements. In addition, through LMIS, identifying the lagging regions and/or population groups in terms of limited access to overseas labour employment is possible. This will enable the MoEWOE to take affirmative interventions so that foreign labour market opportunities can be extended to the targeted groups. Moreover, other wings of the MoEWOE such as BMET and BOESL will be able to share information on their services through the LMIS to a wider user-base.

### **Ministry of Education**

An LMIS can greatly contribute to planning and developing education modules and projecting future requirements for education and training. It also offers comparative assessments of outcomes related to education and training programmes for different target groups. An LMIS can help capture any mismatch between skills generated by education/training institutes and the skills demanded by leading industries. Also, the impact of education and various types of trainings over wage and employability can potentially be monitored through an LMIS. It will also help identify the number and quality of educational institutes in various regions.

### **Department of Youth Development (DYD)**

Youth development has long been a major challenge in the country. As discussed in chapter 2, ensuring productive employment for the youth requires target-specific actions. With a view to building capacity among the youth population, the Department of Youth Development undertakes various training programmes across the country. An LMIS can help DYD officials design effective interventions using information on training needs of the youth population groups and job market demands for any specific skills. It can assist in setting out specific plans for mapping out future youth development agendas. On the other hand, an LMIS can also be a medium of publicizing DYD training programmes.

### **Planning Commission Officials**

Economic development planners rely on labour market information while deciding about major infrastructural and industrialisation plans since the execution and success of these plans depend on timely labour supplies of required quality. Most of the economic decisions require information on the demand for the business, supply of required labour and the capacity of education and training institutions to support the proposed development. An LMIS can serve the purpose with efficacy. Furthermore, for planners, inclusive growth and development is a priority for which job creation and effective labour market participation by all are important determinants. It is in this context that the relevance of an LMIS as a planning tool is indispensable.

### **Other Government Officials**

Among other government officials, Deputy Commissioners (DCs) or Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs) can assess the employment scenarios, technical and vocational educational attainment and other aspects of labour market dynamics in their respective administrative areas through LMIS. This will help local-level informed planning in deciding appropriate government interventions. For instance, the level of education and technical skill composition of the youth population in the district vis-à-vis the existing labour market demands can provide a good direction to the types of technical education that are needed. An effective LMIS thus can offer opportunities for disaggregated-level administrative planning related to the labour market issues.

### **(b) Labour Market Participants**

The labour market participants are the primary targets of an effective LMIS. As a participant, a jobseeker can benefit from the system by finding out information on available jobs and requirements for the vacancies both at home and abroad. Employers and business organizations can use it for assessing labour market composition and hiring new recruits. Additionally, students, education and training institutes, and others can use the portal for identifying future labour market dynamics in comparison with existing educational qualifications and labour market characteristics.

### **Uses of LMIS by Jobseekers**

Jobseekers can obtain information on the availability of opportunities and the nature of jobs and skills that the employers are looking for; the types of industries with vacancies and their location. They can self-assess the gap between their own educational attainment and skill acquisition and the required levels for their desired employment. An LMIS can bypass the need for using recruitment agencies and other intermediaries, reducing costs associated with their services. LMIS would help in learning about rights at work, workers' compliances, health and safety-related issues, wages, employers and employment prospects.

### **International Migrant Workers**

The problem arising from information asymmetry is more acute while dealing with international labour migration. An LMIS would allow potential employees to obtain up-to-date information on opportunities in the global labour market, trends of the global market demand, professional requirements, and working and living terms and conditions. As has been pronounced by the key stakeholders, an LMIS can enable workers to learn about available training facilities and therefore contribute to better decision making regarding training choices. On the other hand, it allows employers at destination countries to learn about the human resource trends and skill compositions at the countries of origins. LMIS works as a bridge between workers and employers and thus improves the recruitment process, increases transparency, and reduces costs both in terms of financial resources, time and risks associated with malpractices.

### **Employers and Business Organizations**

With the help of an effective LMIS, employers can reach out to potential employees with required skill sets. Therefore, recruiting could be easier. A potential employer may explore the availability of skill-composition of labourers to plan ahead for his/her business needs. For example, if employers find that there are trained workers for technology-intensive production processes, they may go for industrial upgradation. In the same fashion, new entrepreneurs and potential investors can be aware of the availability of workers with particular skills, existing market wages for different categories of workers, and training opportunities cost to make an informed decision. Therefore, detailed information on the labour market can greatly support entrepreneurs in articulating their business strategies and assessing their physical and human capital needs.

### **Students**

Using labour market information students can assess the trends and prospects in the future labour market, as well as payment and working conditions in the industry. It can help them adjust their job market expectations and decide on their future career paths, as well as choose a career that fits their interests and natural abilities. They can obtain information on programmes and training courses offered by different institutions related to their future career plans. They can also avail answers to their queries regarding costs, requirements and other specifications of their desired training programmes. Information on changing features of labour markets, declining and growing industries and alike help in projecting long-term job market plans.

### **Education and Training Institutions**

Education and training institutions can use LMIS to adjust the effectiveness of courses and training for the job market participants, including how best to train and support individuals. LMIS gives information on demographics to enable institutions to understand the needs of students, and therefore give directions to whether there is any need for changes in the structure of the curricula or teaching methods. It can direct them to choose their curricula based on current market demand and modify the method or curricula based on the future labour demand projections.

### **(c) Labour Market Facilitators**

Labour market facilitators are associated with providing employment services such as recruitment assistance, analysis of labour market trends and prospects, and career counselling to both employers and jobseekers. They could be of many types: Woods and O'Leary (2006) suggested six while LMI institute (2011) identified three. From the perspective of Bangladesh, one could pick several labour market facilitators, namely:

(a) employment and workforce specialists and/or recruitment agencies, (b) career counsellors and advisers, (c) academicians, researchers and teachers, (d) parents and family members, (e) NGOs and others.

Recruitment agencies and workforce specialists need information to support quick recruitment, make connections between employers and employees, identify training needs, and to make quick assessment of the labour market trends and opportunities. They need specific information on location of jobs, job descriptions, skill requirements, wages and compensations, and working condition to provide services to the jobseekers. Employment services staff require information of potential jobseekers, educational qualifications, training and work experiences to serve employers' quest. Compiling all these, they can perform quick matching between workers and employers with required skills and appropriate jobs.

Although the concept of career counsellors and advisers is relatively new in Bangladesh, this is a characteristic feature of job markets in developed countries. Career counsellors and advisers offer employment and human resources development services under the aegis of private and public organizations. They need occupational outlook information to have better understanding of the changing economic activities and skill requirements in the labour market. Utilizing the LMIS, they can assist individuals to learn how to use information for career planning. In addition, career counsellors need information on location and timing of job opening, location of training offered, job entrance requirements to provide guidelines and counselling to their clients to choose realistic career choices. Information related to the number of potential clients in the area, training facilities, location of business are very important while planning about the nature of services these agents should provide. If the number of potential jobseekers is very large, there will be demand for career counselling related services such as career development services, training services, transition and placement services, and industry-based training programmes. On the other hand, if there is a large number of employers in an area, there will be demand for services related to business potential counselling, relocation and transition related services, and business and legal consultancy.

On the other hand, academics and researchers can use the information to identify labour market trends, characteristics and demand and supply projections of various types of workers either as part of their research or to support the policymakers and others who need assistance with analytical inputs. They can use LMIS to help decision makers understand the needs of prospective new entrants into the labour market. Academics can use it to introduce career enhancement courses and tools in the classroom by linking academic learning with real life experiences. The information can also be used to encourage students to prepare for jobs that are in demand. This will also help the industries with the availability of employees with appropriate skills.



Unlike the previously mentioned facilitators, family members serve as a major source of influence for many students and early career planning. During the consultation, the stakeholders opined that in order to conform safe and regular migration, the family members of migrants can play a significant role.<sup>44</sup> An effective LMIS can help parents and family members understand the labour market well thereby enabling them to consider informed decisions with regard to investing in education and training of individual household members.

Other labour market facilitators like NGOs can benefit from LMIS, as it can give them directions about possible areas for interventions including medium to long-term planning. Since labour market participation is directly related to individual and/or household welfare dynamics, any NGO working on poverty, inequality, women empowerment, skill enhancement or access to finance can use the information available from the LMIS as a point of reference.

### 4.3 Key LMIS practices

The current section provides a review of existing practices around the world to understand the key features of labour market information systems employed by various countries/territories. In studying these instruments, three main components are being highlighted: (a) an overview of the system, (b) key features and (c) major data sources. The overview provides geographic coverage of LMIS, designated organizations responsible for data collection, processing and dissemination. Key features of the LMIS include user-friendliness, types of information generated and disseminated along with data availability and reliability. The review has primarily been conducted based on information provided by the respective LMIS websites of different countries. Other relevant secondary literature and analyses have also been considered.

#### **LMIS in Australia<sup>45</sup>**

In Australia, labour market information is disseminated through a web portal called the Labour Market Information Portal (LMIP), which is developed and maintained by the Department of Employment.<sup>46</sup> It provides information on employment and unemployment trends, occupational skill requirements, region and industry specific jobs and skills, training facilities for human resources development, labour market projections and prospects of employment targeting jobseekers, employers, government officials and industry associations. It also offers customized data at national and state levels. The portal separately provides disability employment services (DES) data as well.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) produces and provides data from different surveys. A labour force survey is conducted each month as a part of household survey programmes. This survey is conducted to generate comprehensive information on the labour market. Data on local labour market are published quarterly. LMIP data update schedules include employment service area (ESA) data, labour force region (LFR)

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<sup>44</sup> For instance, if family members are aware of recruitment practices and job market prospects, they are likely to discourage the aspirant migrant to consider risky schemes and irregular routes to migration.

<sup>45</sup> <http://lmp.gov.au/> - accessed on 1 December 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Department of Employment has been renamed as Department of Jobs and Small Business on 20 December 2017.

data and small area labour market (SALM) data. ESA data are provided targeting government officials associated with programmes and policy making, research institutions and intermediaries (such as career counsellors and academicians). The LMIP website hosts a range of reports, publications and other labour market related content produced by the Department of Employment. Monthly vacancy reports, employment projections, employers' recruitment insights, industry information, the State Labour Economics Office Reports, and similar other reports are available in the portal. Users have free access to LMIP website without needing to log-in. Users can download all resources from the website including reports, publications, and charts at no cost. The job search websites under LMIP is also accessible to all users.

### **LMIS in Canada**

In Canada, the Labour Market Information is collected, processed and disseminated by different stakeholders namely Statistics Canada,<sup>47</sup> Service Canada,<sup>48</sup> Industry Canada,<sup>49</sup> Job Bank Canada,<sup>50</sup> The Statistics Canada publishes a wide variety of labour market information which includes employment, hours of work, industry classifications and occupations, labour mobility, wages, on-the-job training and educational attainment from different labour force surveys and census. The Service Canada website provides information on recruitment, retention, human resource planning, training, payroll and benefits. On the other hand, Industry Canada includes labour market information on jobs and skills by industry and occupations. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)<sup>51</sup> publishes labour market information relevant for immigrants. In addition, Employment and Social Development Canada runs 'Job Bank', a tool that helps jobseekers search for opportunities based on work preferences, information among others. Provincial/territorial governments also produce and disseminate labour market information through websites to meet specific needs of their province and regions.

The providers of labour market information in Canada offers information on occupations and careers such as educational requirements, major responsibilities, wages, employment trends and projections for employees, students and jobseekers. It also provides information relevant for employers, agencies, planners and policymakers and immigrants. Along with web portals, the information is regularly disseminated through labour market bulletins and other publications. Users can avail data, reports, and bulletins free of cost without the logging-in requirements.

### **LMIS in Egypt<sup>52</sup>**

The Egypt's Labour Market Information System (ELMIS) is a comprehensive database and job placement facility. The objective of ELMIS is to contribute to facilitating and improving the quality of information and intelligence available for labour market stakeholders in Egypt. Information related to career planning, training and education, recruitment and other workforce investment decisions are provided through this portal by providing supply and demand side information on the labour market. ELMIS helps match workers with jobs. It hosts an e-library of

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<sup>47</sup> [www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/start](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/start) - accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>48</sup> [www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/service-canada.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/service-canada.html), accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>49</sup> [www.ic.gc.ca/Intro.html](http://www.ic.gc.ca/Intro.html) - accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>50</sup> [www.jobbank.gc.ca/home](http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home) - accessed on 5 December 2017.

<sup>51</sup> [www.canada.ca/en/services/immigration-citizenship.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/services/immigration-citizenship.html)

<sup>52</sup> [www.egyptlmis.eg](http://www.egyptlmis.eg) – accessed on 9 December 2017.





published materials and studies on Egyptian labour market. Users can open accounts to create their profiles and keep track of new job opportunities and qualifications required. Checking out training services is also possible through the system. Online chat with an ELMIS team member is also available along with an FAQ section in the website. ELMIS encourages private incorporations to be partners with them and has already partnered some leading Multinational Corporations (MNCs) such as Toyota, Sony, HP, and Amazon.

The LMIS is hosted by the Industrial Training Council of Egypt (ITC). The LMIS initiative in Egypt has been implemented with funding from the government of the United Arab Emirates and support from USAID. ITC partnered with consultants to avail software, information system and technical services. As a core partner of the system, most of the data of ELMIS are collected and processed by the Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics (CAMS), the official statistics agency in Egypt. Labour Force Survey and Household Income, Expenditure, and Consumption Survey are the two most relevant surveys to ELMIS which are conducted by the CAMS.

### **LMIS in India<sup>53</sup>**

The LMIS in India is being operated under the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) – an autonomous body under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. One of the mandates of the NSDA is to create and maintain a framework for a national database related to skill development including operationalization of a dynamic Labour Market Information System. The LMIS in India is an integrated set of institutional arrangements, procedures, mechanisms and data systems, designed to produce labour market information as per global standards and best practices. The Sector Skill Council (SSC) has been conducting operations like developing sector-specific labour market information, which works as the key data for the master LMIS at the national level.

The LMIS in India provides information on resources to help people develop their career and find out better-matched jobs. The LMIS disseminates information on jobseekers, employers, labour market assessments, training opportunities for different skills, and different industries. The core data source of LMIS in India is the Central Statistical Organization and Sector Skills Councils (SSC). SSCs are national partnership organizations that bring together all the stakeholders including industry, employers, employees, training providers, and the academia for the common purpose of workforce development for various industrial sectors. Other data come from the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, National Skills Development Corporation, Directorate General of Employment and Training, and the Management of Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council (MEPSC). Information is gathered from a number of sources including surveys, administrative data and private sector sources. NSDC plans to step up the LMIS into a multitier system where each SSC will cater its own LMIS and integrate it with the national LMIS.

The LMIS website publishes research and survey reports, international reports and studies, documents, and NSC statistics. The web portal also provides information on training centres and courses being offered by different institutes across the country. One can search these opportunities by states, skills or desired courses.

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<sup>53</sup> [www.lmis.gov.in/](http://www.lmis.gov.in/) - accessed on 10 November 2017.

The website offers information on the certificate-assessing body, certified courses, online courses, employers, and prospective candidates. It also includes features like case studies and FAQs. The online users of LMIS have free access to the web portal without the need for logging-in.

### **LMIS in Malaysia<sup>54</sup>**

The LMIS in Malaysia is operated under the Institute of Labour Market Information Analysis (ILMIA), which is under the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR). The ILMIA provides information on job market trends, prospects and priorities for Malaysia. Although it primarily focuses on the local labour market, through its reports and analysis it also extends its reach to foreign labour markets where Malaysian workers are in place. The ILMIA uses data from the Labour Market Information Data Warehouse (LMIDW), which is basically a central depot of all data relevant to the labour market. The LMIDW hosts data from various sources including Department of Labour, Ministry of Education, Department of Skills Development, Department of Labour Sarawak, Department of Labour Sabah, Industrial Court of Malaysia, Department of Trade Union Affairs, Department of Occupational Safety and Health, and from other similar government, autonomous and private bodies. The processed data are used for further analysis. The team of experts in the ILMIA analyses the data and reports the findings through ILMIA dashboard and ILMIA data mart. ILMIA also provides information on job market qualifications, training courses, and other career development services. However, the ILMIA does not directly provide job matching services.

In Malaysia, for better matching of the employers and employees, the Ministry of Human Resources has a dedicated portal named 'Jobs-Malaysia'.<sup>55</sup> It is a neat, user-friendly system of supply and demand side matching which lets users find their intended information through quick navigation. Jobseekers and employers can register in the system which facilitates communications between the two parties. The services provided by the portal are free of charge. Its objective is to ensure better utilization of the country's human resources and close the gap between jobseekers and vacancies by systematic matching. It also aims to be the central hub for labour market information which would be accessible locally and internationally, including Malaysian students studying abroad and potential foreign investors.

There are several interesting features available in the website. The portal has employers categorized by public and private sectors, and prominently advertises top employers. The jobseekers can provide and update their profiles for employers to find, and they can search for new vacancies as well as keep track of most sought-after jobs. The portal asks for feedback from users. Both the ILMIA and Jobs Malaysia offer customer care services through emails, call centres and live-chats. In addition, the Ministry of Human Resources also acts as a One-Stop-Service Centre for facilitating better job matches, dissemination of labour market information and wider participation in training and skill development programmes.

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<sup>54</sup> [www.ilmia.gov.my](http://www.ilmia.gov.my) – accessed on 5 December 2017; field visit to ILMIA and MHR.

<sup>55</sup> [www.jobsmalaysia.gov](http://www.jobsmalaysia.gov) – accessed on 5 December 2017.



## **LMIS in New York, United States<sup>56</sup>**

The New York City Labour Market Information Service (NYCLMIS) serves as a central resource for labour market information for the public workforce system in the New York City. The NYCLMIS was founded in 2008 as a joint venture between the New York City Workforce Investment Board and the City University of New York (CUNY). The objectives of NYC LMIS include developing action-oriented research and information tools to be used by policymakers for improving their practice and strategic decision making; serving as a portal for cutting-edge and timely labour market data; and raising awareness of workforce development issues in the city.

Over the years, the NYCLMIS has evolved from a joint venture into a freestanding entity within the Centre for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Centre. NYCLMIS is used by jobseekers, career advisors, executives, researchers, agencies and policymakers. It regularly reports on current jobs and future employment prospects. It also identifies in-demand occupations, employment in NYC's industries and sub sectors. The users can utilize the information for their day-to-day operations and strategic decision making and they can access the web portal and other services free of cost. NYCLMIS offers a broad range of tools that can be used by a wide array of users including jobseekers, career advisors, researchers, agencies, and policymakers. It regularly publishes research reports and briefs and provides training and strategic consultation. It conducts special studies on demand for different jobs and supply of educational and training opportunities. NYCLMIS collaborates with a range of partners, including representatives from the government, philanthropists, non-profit organizations and private firms to collect, collate, process and disseminate labour market information. New York City Workforce Development Board, New York City Department of Education, New York City Department of Small Business Services, New York City Human Resources Administration, New York City Economic Development Corporation, New York Alliance for Careers in Health care, New York State Department of Labour, and other non-profit and private firms are the major partners of NYCLMIS. Most of the data of NYCLMIS are collected from Current Employment Statistics (CES) and Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) as prepared by the Bureau of Labour Statistics and US Census Bureau.

## **LMIS in the Philippines<sup>57</sup>**

The Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) under the Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) is the producer of the LMIS in the Philippines. Labour Market Information, Research and Career Guidance Advocacy Division under DOLE is responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of labour market data and other information that helps to the functioning of the labour market more effectively. The DOLE has several programmes such as Public Employment Service Offices (PESO), Labour Market Information Services (LMIS) and Youth Employment Programmes (YEP). PESO has been established as a one-stop service centre. Its objective is to ensure a prompt, timely and efficient delivery of employment service to jobseekers, employers, planners, migrant workers and labour market information users. One of the LMIS dissemination channels in the Philippines is a web portal called Philjobnet, an automated job and applicant matching system which aims to fast-track jobseekers' search for jobs and employers' search for manpower.<sup>58</sup> Jobseekers can search job

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<sup>56</sup> [www.gc.cuny.edu/lmis](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/lmis) - accessed on 15 November 2017.

<sup>57</sup> <http://ble.dole.gov.ph/index.php/porgams-projects/labor-market-information-system-lmis> - accessed on 7 December 2017.

<sup>58</sup> <https://Philjobnet.gov.ph/> - accessed on 7 December 2017.

opportunities, submit online applications for jobs, run job matching processes, and get a list of vacancies and corresponding employers' contact information. The website also offers comprehensive information on career guidelines for students, labour market trends, industry career guide, and employment coaching materials for career advocates/guidance counsellors. It also offers an account-based access system for the employers.

The DOLE produces LMIS using data from the different bureau and organizational units. The major sources of data include the Philippines Statistics Authority, Department of Labour and Employment, Institute of Labour Studies, Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA), and Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). The Philippines Statistics Authority undertakes Labour Force Survey, Household Income and Expenditure Survey, Annual Survey of Philippine Business and Industry (ASPBI) and provides labour productivity statistics, decent work statistics, statistics on women and men in the Philippines and other statistics on demography and labour market. On the other hand, POEA provides information on overseas employment, wages, employment opportunities and other relevant areas. Box 2 describes the functions major institutions in overseas recruitment and migrant's welfare in the Philippines.

### **Box 2: Institutions involved in the recruitment process and migrants welfare in the Philippines**

There are more than 2.5 million overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) as estimated by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). Of these, about half of a million workers are seafarers. Remittances sent by OFWs stood at 28.1 billion in 2017. Overseas workers and their recruiting systems are generally considered as well-managed in the Philippines. Two attached organization of the Department of Labour and Employment are engaged with the recruitment process and deal with the welfare issues of the OFWs.

#### **The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)**

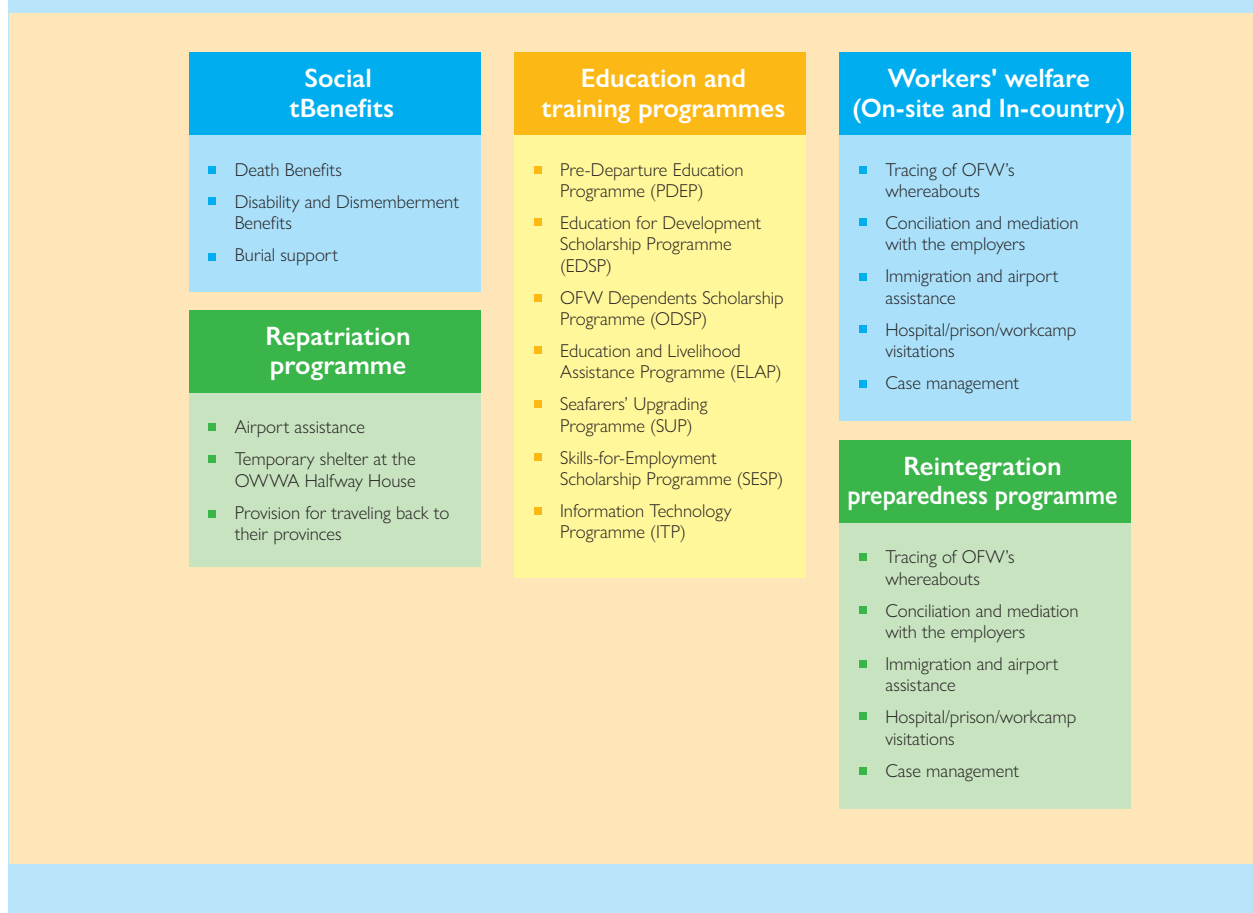
POEA works under the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE). The principle responsibilities of POEA includes promoting the protection of OFWs and advocating for their smooth reintegration in the domestic labour market once they return. It monitors, regulates and issues licenses for labour recruiting agencies and other third parties involved with the placement of OFWs. It investigates complaints against recruiting, monitors overseas job advertisements, supervises anti-illegal recruitment programmes and imposes disciplinary actions on erring employers, workers and seafarers. Helping secure decent jobs for the migrant workers in destination countries as well as conducting pre-deployment orientation seminars (PDOS) for workers hired through government-to-government arrangements are also amongst its major tasks. It registers and accredits foreign principals and employers and approves manpower requests from them. It also validates, and processes employment contracts, monitors overseas markets and conducts market research. The POEA plays a key role in protecting OFW in many ways. It offers various public education and information campaigns, conducts pre-employment orientation and anti-illegal recruitment seminars, provides legal assistance to victims of illegal recruitment practices, implements gender-sensitive programmes, provides repatriation assistance, and arranges other similar programmes.

## Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA)

The Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA) is an attached agency of the Department of Labour and Employment of the Philippines. It protects the interests of OFWs and their families by providing social security schemes, cultural services and assistance with respect to getting jobs, receiving remittances and legal aids. It is funded by an obligatory annual contribution from the overseas workers and their employers.

OWWA's prime focus is to develop and implement responsive programmes and services while ensuring fund viability towards the protection of the interest of its member OFWs. It also commits a stewardship fund for the member OFWs. To administer services to the members, OWWA has 17 regional welfare offices and 31 overseas offices in 25 countries. The OWWA fund is a single trust fund pooled from a USD 25 membership contribution of foreign employees, land-based and sea-based workers. In addition, it also accumulates funds from investments and interest incomes, and income from other sources. A summary of the benefits received by the OWWA members is given below:

**Box Figure 1: Benefits and welfare schemes for OWWA members**



**Source:** Authors' discussions with OWWA, Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) in the Philippines, The ILO officials in the Philippines, Migrant International, and information as available on [www.poea.gov.ph/](http://www.poea.gov.ph/) and [www.owwa.gov.ph/](http://www.owwa.gov.ph/)

## LMIS in Rwanda<sup>59</sup>

LMIS in Rwanda provides qualitative and quantitative data that aim to help stakeholders in the labour market to make informed decisions and choices. It contains information on business requirements, career planning, education and training offerings, employment, labour market policies and workforce investment strategies. Its objective is to minimize the skill gap in the labour market, evaluate the results of labour market policies and single out key indicators of the supply and demand sides of the market. Key LMIS users include jobseekers, job providers, education providers and investors. The major sources of LMIS data include Labour Force Survey, Impact Assessment Surveys (on internship, entrepreneurship, and any other relevant programmes), National Skills Survey, and Population and Housing Census, which are mostly conducted by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR).

There are categorized data on supply and demand of labour by demographics, education levels, employment and other indicators. It also reports the labour market policies and governing labour laws in the country. Job market information like vacancies, workplace regulations, wages and labour unions and news of various development programmes are also provided on the website. LMIS publishes newsletters as well as population census reports, national skills survey reports, internship and entrepreneurship impact assessment reports, among others. The website offers a glossary and FAQ section for easier understanding and navigation. The LMIS team can also be contacted via email. Musanze Employment Service Centre in Rwanda offers the online creation of a profile for both employers and jobseekers, and regularly publishes training programmes and job availability notices. The LMIS publishes reports and other studies on a regular basis and disseminates them through the web portal.

## LMIS in Singapore<sup>60</sup>

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) in Singapore hosts the Labour Market Statistical Information portal which features information on key indicators of the labour market through reports, tables, interactive charts, video graphics and infographics. The ministry website itself offers information on the work passes and permits, employment practices and workplace safety and health issues. The objective of MOM is to develop a productive workforce and progressive workplaces for Singaporeans to have better jobs and a secured retirement. The Manpower Research and Statistics Department (MRSD) collects, collates and provides the statistics for the LMIS in Singapore. MRSD conducted Labour Market Survey is the key data source for the website.

Direction and information on hiring foreign manpower, work passes, eligibility, applications and renewals are classed under the 'Work Passes and Permits' section. Workers' entitlements on leave days, holidays, rights and obligations, other support schemes, skills and training opportunities are included in the 'Employment Practices' section. Necessary information on workplace injury compensations, and other safety and welfare-related matters can be found under the Workplace Safety and Health module. Surveys, documents and publications are available in the Statistics and Publications section of the portal. The website offers various e-services, features popular forms, announcements and press releases and encourages users to share their views on national policies and issues.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://lmis.gov.rw/index.php?id=7> - accessed on 1 January 2018.

<sup>60</sup> <http://stats.mom.gov.sg/Pages/Home.aspx> - accessed on 10 January 2018.

### **LMIS in South Africa<sup>61</sup>**

The LMIS website of South Africa offers several services to its registered users. It contains information regarding training programmes, skill planning, career guidelines and so on. This LMIS does not, however, work as an active platform of job matching or worker placement. It features different modules for different purposes. There is also a learning unit management module for facilitating the qualifications and other related unit standards. The learner intervention facilitation offers project co-ordination, funded learner certification programmes and unfunded learner intervention programmes.

Apart from the LMIS, the country also hosts a portal called Labour Market Intelligence Partnership (LMIP) which is a collaboration between the South African government and a national research consortium.<sup>62</sup> The research consortium includes two university partners, the Development Policy Research Unit at the University of Cape Town, and the Centre for Researching Education and Labour at the University of Witwatersrand which works under the contract with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). With an aim of building a credible institutional mechanism for skills planning in South Africa, the LMIP analyses labour market data collected by the Statistics South Africa (SSA) and disseminates the information through the LMIP portal. The LMIP provides information on skill gaps and needs, labour supply and demand by education, training and other qualification. The main target group of this initiative is the government and business communities. It aims to help them plan better for human resources development needs for South Africa. Although it provides labour market projections, the portal does not provide any information on training centres or other relevant services.

### **LMIS in Sri Lanka<sup>63</sup>**

The LMIS in Sri Lanka is hosted by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) under the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training. The Information System Division of the TVEC is responsible for maintaining and developing the labour market information system in Sri Lanka. The LMIS provides information on employment by gender, industries and occupational groups, unemployment rates and key characteristics of the unemployed population such as their levels of education, gender and age groups. The LMIS also provides information on expected labour requirements for new projects of the Board of Investment (BOI). It briefs on labour market trends at home, information on training facilities offered by different educational institutions, and area and institution-wise training courses. Career guidelines and vacancies are focused in the form of career tests, job outlook, vacancies and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) guides. Notices and alerts are issued to jobseekers, employers and institutions. The Department of Census and Statistic Sri Lanka, the Board of Investment and the Statistics Division of the Department of Labour are the major sources for the collection of data and information for the LMIS. The LMIS prepares and publishes labour market information bulletin twice a year and organizes, prints and disseminates TVEC newsletter on labour market on a regular basis. It also publishes guidelines for disseminating information on vocational training and skill development courses under TVET sector.

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<sup>61</sup> <https://lmis.dedicated.co.za/lmis/> - accessed on 20 January 2018.

<sup>62</sup> [www.lmip.org.za/](http://www.lmip.org.za/) - accessed on 20 January 2018.

<sup>63</sup> <http://mail.tvec.gov.lk/lmi/index.htm> - accessed on 30 October 2017.

The LMIS in Sri Lanka is an industry-led and demand-driven system. However, the LMIS run by TVEC provides only domestic labour market information targeting local workers, employers and policymakers. Information on overseas employment and opportunities are collected, assessed and disseminated by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE). Migrant workers, government officials and policymakers associated with designing overseas programmes and policies, counsellors and foreign employers are the key stakeholders of this initiative. The SLBFE aims to create efficient and equitable pathways for people to benefit from their skills at overseas employment markets. SLBFE provides a wide array of information dissemination services. It provides pre-departure services for the migrant workers which include assisting the potential worker with deciding on foreign employment, finding an overseas employment, pre-departure training and orientation, and review of job contracts and their approval. It also provides information on loan facilities for the migrant workers.

### **LMIS in the United Kingdom<sup>64</sup>**

The official LMIS portal of the United Kingdom is known as the National Online Manpower Information System (NOMIS). It is a web-based database of labour market statistics being run by the University of Durham on behalf of the Office for National Statistics. NOMIS has been providing an extensive range of labour market information since 1981. The key users of NOMIS include the central government, local governments, commercial agencies, jobseekers, employers, planners, and others alike. Among others, NOMIS provides information on employment and unemployment rates, wages, labour force survey results, population estimates and projections, vacancies by different regions, employment by occupation types, use of out of work benefits, and job centre vacancies. It also provides statistical data which are achieved via an online querying system. It allows users to access and download data as customized tables or formatted reports. Through a free helpdesk-service, it assists users to find out required labour market statistics. NOMIS creates and provides tabulations from multi-dimensional data series which includes most recent data along with the same for previous time periods. The major sources of NOMIS data include Annual Population Survey (APS) which provides data and statistics on labour force; Annual Business Inquiry (ABI), which is an employment survey providing data on labour demand; Census of Employment which provides data on labour demand and labour supply; Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE); Labour Force Surveys; Unemployment Claimant Count, and others. Most of the surveys are conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Most of the services provided by NOMIS are free with a few exceptions.<sup>65</sup> Registration in the portal is not mandatory. Most of the data are accessible without registration. However, registered users can avail regular updates and newsletters through emails. They can also access to Business Registrar and Employment Surveys (BRES), customize advanced queries and manage personal dash-board. NOMIS generates and disseminates labour market information through several reports under different classifications. Some of them are: local area reports (parish/district/county and smaller areas), local authority profile (district/county areas), local enterprise partnerships profile, and regional and national profile.

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<sup>64</sup> [www.nomisweb.co.uk/](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/) - accessed on 10 January 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Fixed payment is required to get access to the full Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES).



#### 4.4 Essential features of an optimal LMIS

The above country-specific case studies show different features of LMIS considering the priorities set by the countries. Table 5 provides a summary of selected cases considering four major elements: (a) sources of data, (b) users' facilities provided, (c) geographic coverage, and (d) availability of key information.

Given sheer complexities and the myriad objectives that it can serve, no LMIS can be considered as perfect. Each one of the discussed cases possessed its strengths and weaknesses. However, considering the depth of information, coverage, and users' accessibility, labour market information systems of Australia; California, United States; and United Kingdom appear to be among the best practices available. While the LMIS of Canada is also very comprehensive, it does not provide all the information through one dedicated website. Amongst developing countries, the LMIS of Malaysia has recently been launched and contains many interesting features. The Philippines' 'Philjobnet' – a job matching portal developed as part of the LMIS initiative – provides a very user-friendly tool for jobseekers. India's LMIS is an example of a very comprehensive exercise bringing together information from such a wide variety of sources involving so many stakeholders, showing their effective collaboration.

**Table 5: Good Practices on LMIS from selected countries**

Countries	Main sources of Data	Users' Facilities	Geographic coverage	Key information available
<b>Australia</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access;  No Log-in is required;	All parts of Australia	Unemployment rate; Employers' information; Job market trends and projections; Employment opportunities; Training and other skill development information;
<b>California, United States</b>	California Employment Development Department; Labour Market Information Department; U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics;	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access; Most of the data are available free of charge; Nominal charges applicable for customized data;	US State of California	Labour force and Industry Employment; Occupation based wages, training, education and skill requirements; Employer compliance; Historical data; Projections, growth/trends;
<b>Canada</b>	Human Resource and Skills Development Canada; Services Canada; Statistics Canada; Jobs-Canada;	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access; Login required for customized information	Provincial level; Local community level	Occupational profiles; Job descriptions; Job and skills requirements; Employment prospects; Wages and salaries; Training Information; Local labour market News; Industrial profiles;

Countries	Main sources of Data	Users' Facilities	Geographic coverage	Key information available
<b>India</b>	Sector Skill Council; Directorate General of Employment and Training; National Skill Development Corporation; National Statistics Council	Account based access; Publications; Training Application Facilities	Nationwide district-based coverage	Training Centres and courses; Training providers' details; Labour market reports; Certified candidates; Online educational resources; Prospective candidates;
<b>Malaysia</b>	Department of Statistics; Department of Labour; Ministry of Education; Department of Skills Development;	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access; Login required for job-matching services	Nationwide district level coverage	Job vacancies; Potential employer information; Job fair alerts; Training programme information; Labour market projections;
<b>Ney York, United States</b>	New York City Workforce Investment Board; Bureau of Labour Statistics; US Census Bureau; New York State Department of Labour;	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access; Login required for job-matching services; Reports, Newsletter and publication alert	New York, United States	Industry reports; Labour market trends and projections; Current jobs and future employment prospects; Training opportunities;
<b>Philippines</b>	Bureau of Labour Relations; Bureau of Working Conditions; Bureau of Workers and Special Concerns; International Labour Affairs Bureau; National Reintegration Centre of OFWs;	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access; Account based access for jobseekers and employers; Occupational campaign alerts; Career guidance facilities; Career guidance for visually impaired persons;	Nationwide coverage; Region-wise labour market information	Career information; Job vacancy information; Potential employer information Job seminar alerts; Training programme information; Career guidance and video tutorial;
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment; Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka; Department of Labour; Board of Investment	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access; Job prospects; Course and training details	Nationwide coverage	Labour market trends; Occupational distribution and characteristics; Training providers' information; National skill development report
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Annual Population Survey; Annual Business Enquiry; Office for National Statistics; Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings	Non-restrictive and non-discriminatory access; Newsletters and publication alerts; User profile facilities	District and ward-wise information; Nation-wide coverage	Employment and unemployment levels, trends and projections; Earnings by residence; Job centres and vacancies;

Source: Authors' summary.

Based on the survey of the LMIS practices across the global economies, this study considers seven features that can be identified as most essential for a desirable or optimal labour market information system for a country like Bangladesh. They are presented in Figure 32.

**Figure 32: Key features of an optimal LMIS**



**(a) Government Ownership and Effective Governance**

An optimal LMIS should have strong ownership by the government authorities. It is usually developed and administrated by a concerned labour employment and/or statistical department working under a relevant ministry, in collaboration with other relevant ministries, institutions, agencies and the private sector. This mechanism helps LMIS collect and cover all the relevant information for jobseekers, employers, career counsellors and policymakers. A strong and committed ownership by the government accompanied by a decentralized and shared approach to labour market information is ideal for developing the system and disseminating labour market information for the users. This approach to governance is important particularly

for ensuring effective collaboration between ministries and agencies working for information gathering, processing and dissemination. A high-level government ownership also helps greater use of the LMIS by different ministries and agencies in their regular planning and implementation of activities with implications for labour market outcomes. Among others, the examples of New York and the United Kingdom show collaboration with specialized institutions such as universities in undertaking and managing the LMIS activities while the main data are still being sourced by government agencies. This can be a very attractive option in combining cutting edge analytical capacity with the regular government owned information generating initiatives making the LMIS a useful tool in providing policy insights while at the same time making it accessible to target beneficiaries.

### **(b) All-in-one-place Information Facilitation Centre for all Stakeholders**

LMIS should be a one-place information facilitation centre for all users that should serve the purpose of jobseekers, students, policymakers, employers, government officials and others concerned. It should work as the key source of information on employment, labour market forecast, required skills for different occupations and sectors, availability of skill development programmes and their features, future job openings and vacancies and all other labour market related issues. There should be features for job search and job placement facilities. Like in many other countries mentioned in table 5, the system should allow jobseekers' skill matching with the requirements of the employers. The all-in-one-place facility will eliminate the need for looking for information in many different places and thus will be helpful for workers, employers and policymakers. Having relevant information centralized in one single place helps enhance data transparency.

### **(c) Wider and Adequate Coverage of Data**

Data and information are the core objects of an LMIS. The features of data define the strength of the system. An optimal LMIS should have a very wide coverage of data across industries and broad sectors, geographical regions, employment types, skill categories, education and qualification levels and other labour market attributes. Information on Job market opportunities when available by regions or other administrative units can promote labour mobility. Geographically disaggregated data on unemployment, workers' availability by skill types, seasonal and migratory labour, among others can help with regional (for instance district and sub-district-levels) planning. The use of only quantitative data is insufficient for a comprehensive LMIS effort. Qualitative information, including career advice, explanation of the processes involved, case studies, and awareness-raising infographics is very important for reaching out to all workers irrespective of their educational background.

Along with the coverage, quality and reliability of data are important. Any doubt about the information provided can weaken the effectiveness of LMIS. Consistency in the information provided is another issue. If there are sudden definitional and/or methodological changes in data collection, overtime comparability of the information might get affected. Similarly, if the information is gathered from different regions using varying approaches/methods, cross-section comparisons will also be difficult. Many of these challenges will be difficult to avoid in which case appropriate analytical approaches will have to be utilized to interpret the information.

Publishing information on a regular basis is one precondition for ensuring relevance and effectiveness of the LMIS. If LMIS is not updated regularly and data gaps become prominent, users will be discouraged to make use of it.

#### **(d) Labour Market Analysis**

To meet users' need, an optimal LMIS should provide a wide array of information analysis. In fact, it is one of the critical areas of work through which policymakers and government and non-governmental agencies working on employment and labour issues are likely to be benefitted most. While LMIS can present the major broad trends, there should also be facilities so that individuals can access the data to undertake the relevant analysis. The more is the demand for the data, the better for the effectiveness of the system. As discussed earlier, in many countries LMIS let users download the data customizing their needs.

For making the information presentation useful for workers, an LMIS needs to be sensitive to their needs. When the analysis is provided to show the trends in the demand for certain types of skills and qualifications, it could help potential job-seekers to prepare accordingly. This can also encourage current employees to acquire new skills for career progression.

Many labour market participants including migrant workers possess low levels of education and are involved in low-skilled and semi-skilled jobs. Reaching out to these groups with quantitative analysis of data is unlikely to work. Infographics, case studies, and simple illustration of major trends and developments will be more effective in this regard. That is, analyses need to be tailored to targeting the user groups.

#### **(e) Easy Accessibility and Effective Dissemination**

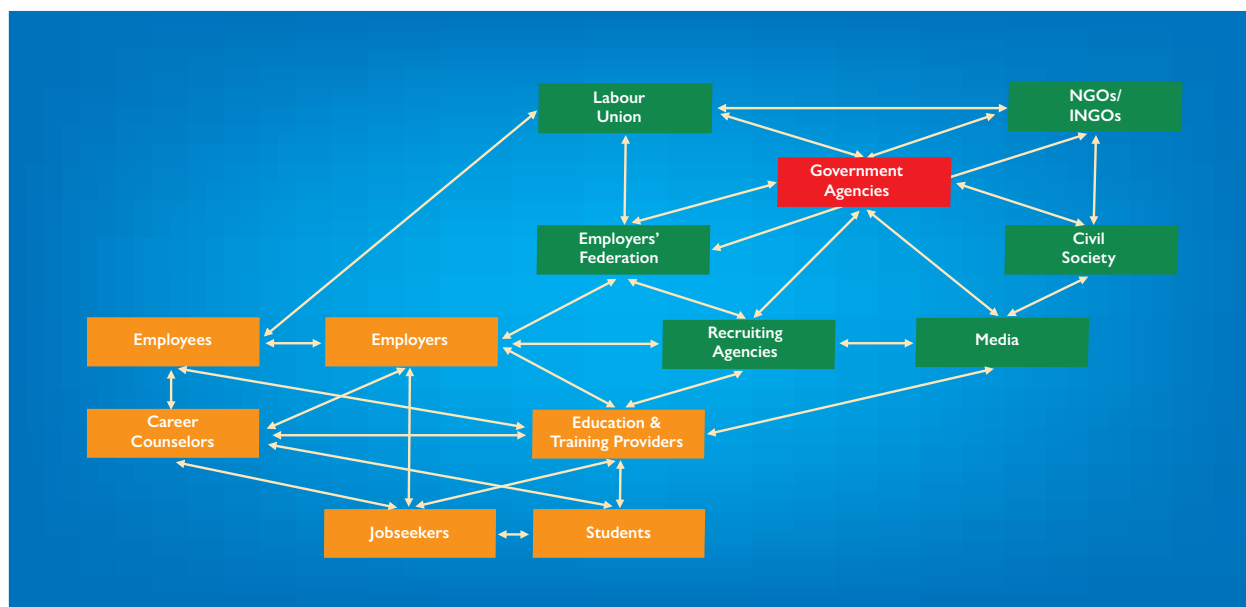
An optimal LMIS must be complemented by a comprehensive and effective dissemination strategy so that a wide range of users have easy access to the system. Internet based web portal is a major means to disseminate labour market information. However, internet access can be limited for many users. There must be alternative means for providing LMI to these population groups. Information factsheets in hard copies and newsletters through local administrative offices, schools, universities, training institutions, employment centres and newspapers can be a way to ensure access for those who do not have internet access. Besides, awareness building programmes can be designed and executed to raise familiarity of LMIS among potential users. Libraries, district employment offices, community-based organizations can be the means of effective dissemination.

The success of an LMIS depends on the effective dissemination of labour market information and its uses by labour market participants. LMIS products such as a computer-based system or printed information in hard-copies should focus on making the information accessible by all users. The dissemination strategy should provide assistance and guidelines for the best utilization of information.

### (f) Effective Collaboration with Different Stakeholders

An LMIS should be seen as a process in which effective collaboration among the stakeholders is a key determinant of success. While the LMIS hosting organization will have to play a central role, cooperation from other stakeholders in collecting, processing and disseminating cannot be overemphasized. All the country cases that were discussed above clearly demonstrate LMIS being a partnership project. Each stakeholder is a part of what is regarded as the LMIS ecosystem (Figure 33). Part of the collaboration is centred around information gathering and processing, while the task of making the information accessible and available to all target users would require deep cooperation among all stakeholders. This is especially true in the context of a low-income developing country like Bangladesh where internet connectivity is quite limited, and most people are not using online services on a day-to-day basis.

**Figure 33: Stakeholder ecosystem for an LMIS**



An effective collaboration between the stakeholders will strengthen the ecosystem and produce a collective gain for the LMIS effort. It will reduce duplication of efforts and can lead to more attention being provided to the areas that need the most improvement.

### (g) Sustainability

From data collection to successful dissemination – the whole LMIS effort must be sustainable in nature. In general, sustainability, in this case, will imply continuous delivery of the LMIS product and services fulfilling the objectives of the project. There are various dimensions of sustainability here: maintaining high-level ownership of the exercise, securing financing and including the need for making any specific component within the overall project self-sustaining, preserving the quality of information, and continued dissemination of activities ensuring wider outreach and greater demand for LMIS. With a view to attaining sustainability, an integral part of the LMIS

effort would be to undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of the system. Upgradation of the system, improvements in the data collection and processing, learning lessons from the ongoing activities (including obtaining feedback from the users) - all are essential for the sustainability of the LMIS effort.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the need for an LMIS and provided a brief survey of existing practices in a number of developed and developing countries. The overarching objective of an LMIS is to improve labour market efficiency but for a country like Bangladesh it can help, among others, tackle excessive costs of migration, formulate and implement economic policies especially those related to employment generation, and prepare workers in labour market participation and advancing their careers and job prospects. Policymakers and planners from numerous government ministries and agencies, labour market participants from jobseekers in the domestic market to migrant workers to prospective workers, and labour market facilitators such as recruitment specialists and agencies, NGOs, and career counsellors – all constitute key users of LMIS. The use of LMIS is quite widespread with both developed and developing countries using it as an important vehicle for promoting labour market efficiencies. LMIS practices across countries vary quite considerably in terms of the spread and depth of the information provided, facilities that are available for users, and intensity of uses by various stakeholders. From the existing practices, several features can be identified as most essential for a country like Bangladesh. These include LMIS's securing of high-level government ownership and effective governance, being a source of all-in-one-place information, provision of wider coverage of data, the undertaking of labour market analysis, ensuring of effective dissemination, being backed by collaboration among all stakeholders, and safeguarding of the sustainability of the overall process.

# CHAPTER V

## **AN INTEGRATED LMIS FOR BANGLADESH: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**





In one of the earliest studies, Gray et al. (1996) highlighted the need for LMIS in Bangladesh by identifying key stakeholders while drawing on experiences of other countries. Several other studies also pointed out the importance of labour market information flows and their needs. However, none of the studies pointed out any framework for an optimal system designated for collection, collation and dissemination of LMI. This chapter provides detailed discussions on these issues, providing, among others, an operational framework for an integrated LMIS (ILMIS) combining domestic and overseas labour markets. It also suggests an implementation strategy, outlining the role of different stakeholders.

## 5.1 Consideration of an integrated LMIS in the context of Bangladesh

### A review of the existing LMIS of Bangladesh

Very recently an LMIS has been established in Bangladesh.<sup>66</sup> Its implementation started in 2015 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics with support from the World Bank. The immediate objectives of the project included the introduction of new definitions and statistical framework of work, employment and labour underutilisation adapted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) to the statistical system of Bangladesh, and to carry on quarterly labour force surveys (BBS, 2015). The project also aimed to introduce relevant state-of-the-art software applications like Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) software, and apply appropriate methods for gathering, processing, and analysing Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) data.

The collection of quarterly labour force data has been designated as the key resource for a full-fledged LMIS database. The project aims to help policymakers, and other major stakeholders including researchers, workers, employers, and students. The LMIS intends to put the quarterly LFS to good use by developing key indicators recommended by the international community in the labour market analysis. The proposed indicators provide information on fields of activity, employment rate, the status of employment and educational attainment where information can also be sorted by broad geographic area, sex and age group. Being used for describing the condition of the labour market as well as formulating policies are also among its major objectives. The project emphasises undertaking and publishing analytical studies based on microdata to assess labour market dynamics. Finally, the project targets to develop the LMIS web portal as a platform to bring labour market information from diverse sources.

The establishment of the LMIS by BBS is a commendable initiative. However, there are important gaps that need addressing. In its current edition, the BBS LMIS portal provides only very basic information on Bangladesh labour market classified by broad industries (that is, agriculture, industry and service sectors), geographic locations (limited to seven divisions only), and distribution of labour force by gender. It allows downloading some sample data, drawn from labour market indicators. However, it does not provide any insights into labour market dynamics; for instance, future labour market projections, demand for labour by skill types, and changes in wages by various categories of jobs and industries. Although the information as presented comes from other BBS labour force surveys, the LMIS apparently does not provide the updated and latest information. For example, although LFS 2016–17 was published in January 2018, the LMIS website continued to report information from an earlier round of LFS (that is, LFS 2015–16). It also does not offer any data customization option in the sense that data availability is limited to the provided few labour market indicators only.

<sup>66</sup> The Bangladesh LMIS can be found here: <http://www.lmisbbs.gov.bd/> (accessed on 30 April 2018)

Unlike the best practices in LMIS as discussed in the previous chapter, the existing system in Bangladesh does not work as an interactive module to match jobseekers with employers. Recruitment notifications, workers' or employers' profiles are not available either. Comparing with other developing countries, in Malaysia, the Ministry of Human Resources has the website 'Jobs Malaysia' in place to help jobseekers, while in the Philippines there is 'Philjobnet' for the same purpose.

The Bangladesh LMIS does not contain any information on training programmes or capacity-building courses offered by major training and educational institutes. There is a toolbar in the website where this information is to be provided but currently, it offers none. The LMI systems of India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka along with those of developed countries such as Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom consider information on skill development and training information as an integral part of their LMIS. The Bangladesh portal also does not offer any career guidance corner or other informative tools which can be utilized by future labour market entrants or career counsellors.

The navigation and maintenance of the Bangladesh LMIS web portal does not seem user-friendly in comparison with other leading practices. Examples can be drawn from the Philippines' 'Philjobnet' or Australia's LMIP websites – both of which have interactive designs to contain up-to-date labour market information. In contrast, the current Bangladesh LMIS is static with no major regular labour market-related publications or newsletters being available. The only reports it contains are BBS's labour force surveys. The news and events section of the portal provides information on a few specific issues and is not properly stocked. There is no helpline contact information available.

Even without considering all specific gaps, the most striking limitation of the existing system is that it apparently fails to have any target user-base. Workers either as a group or individuals will hardly find there any relevant information that will help them with job market prospects. In its current version, it is also difficult to understand why employers will consider it useful. If the target user-group is policymakers and researchers, they are more likely to use the BBS labour force publications which have detailed information. Even if the objective is to portray the key findings of labour force surveys, the website falls short of being innovative and insightful. Indeed, it becomes apparent that pre-specifying target groups, providing quality content and the reasons for finding the website useful were not given due attention in implementing the project.

When the key features for an optimal system that were discussed earlier are considered, the limitations of the Bangladesh LMIS become obvious. The LMIS exists as a BBS project and it is not clear if there are any high-level ownership and governance structure helping with effective stakeholder collaboration.<sup>67</sup> It is difficult to understand the role of other stakeholders and any dissemination strategy. In any way, in its current format, dissemination might not result in any meaningful outcomes that LMIS generally aims to achieve. Considering the best practices, labour market information systems are supposed to be providing all labour market information in one place benefiting workers, employers, policymakers, prospective employees, and other labour market facilitators. But as mentioned above, the LMIS is unlikely to be of any significant use for any of these groups. Drawing the lessons from other countries, it can be argued that an LMIS should be a more innovative and proactive exercise than a simple web portal presenting some basic data from existing labour force surveys.

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<sup>67</sup> During the KIs most of the respondents appeared not having enough information on the existing LMIS.

## **Need for integrating international labour market information in the Bangladesh LMIS**

Along with the abovementioned gaps, one of the major limitations of the current LMIS is the absence of any information on the international labour market for migrant workers. Although a general practice in most countries is to focus only on the domestic labour market, the context of Bangladesh is likely to be different in which labour migration is increasingly becoming one of the most dominant sources of employment as highlighted in Chapter 2 of this report. Currently, the domestic economy generates about 200,000 new formal sector jobs as against two million new workers' joining the labour force every year. In 2017, one million additional employment opportunities were generated from the overseas destinations helping reduce the pressure on the domestic economy. Along with overseas employment, remittance inflows are extremely important for maintaining sound macroeconomic balances and recipient households' poverty and welfare situations. Another pertinent feature of the overseas labour market is women's employment opportunities.<sup>68</sup>

Given all this, it is indispensable for a country like Bangladesh to establish an integrated LMIS combining information from both the domestic labour market as well as international destinations. If effectively designed and executed, an Integrated LMIS will be able to address several shortcomings associated with the current LMIS. In addition, it will also be possible to utilize the information system as an important means for planning labour market and human resource development in Bangladesh. Many workers are open about their options between domestic and overseas markets and thus they are likely to be benefitted from an integrated system that provides information on both the markets from a single source. An integrated LMIS can act as a comprehensive tool for policymakers aiming to influence labour market outcomes. As overseas markets have become a more important source for creating additional jobs, labour market development options must consider this aspect explicitly. An ILMIS can thus have a central role in development planning, continuously highlighting the need for information and review of the gaps in policies and actions to promote and protect workers' welfare both at home and abroad. Mainstreaming the core labour market information dissemination system, actions addressing unemployment, underemployment or youth NEET can be mobilized with more disaggregated and target-oriented approach. As such, an ILMIS will help attain an inclusive approach in delivering active labour market policies by ensuring accurate information, reliable projections and appropriate directions to labour market dynamics.

As mentioned earlier (in Chapter 3), skill deficiency is becoming a major challenge for labour force development and productive job creation. Indeed, skill development is a matter of medium to long-term planning and the existence of an effective ILMIS will enable policymakers in assessing the priorities for vocational and technical training and ensuring adaptive skill development programmes looking at the needs of the domestic and overseas markets. Given the limited resources, getting a comprehensive picture on the nature of skill development programmes and potential gains from them are important. It will assist the ongoing skill development programmes being carried out by the line-ministries with wider participation from the targeted population. An integrated LMIS can also lead to reduced overhead and management costs, can complement data-generating exercises in a more cost-effective manner (for example, labour force and household surveys can include extended segments on migrant workers), and help dissemination of the information on both overseas and

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<sup>68</sup> Since 2000, the overseas employment of women migrant workers has increased by several folds. In 2016, women migrant workers, totalling 118,000, constituted about 16 per cent of the total migrant workers. With the women labour force participation rate as low as 35.6 per cent (domestic), the opportunities arising from overseas employment are important for Bangladesh.



domestic market employment opportunities and related issues. To enhance and establish transparency in overseas recruitment practices, the role of an effective LMIS could be central. By providing comprehensive information through an LMIS, the influences of informal intermediaries (or 'dalals') in recruitment processes can be curtailed, bringing down the cost of overseas migration.

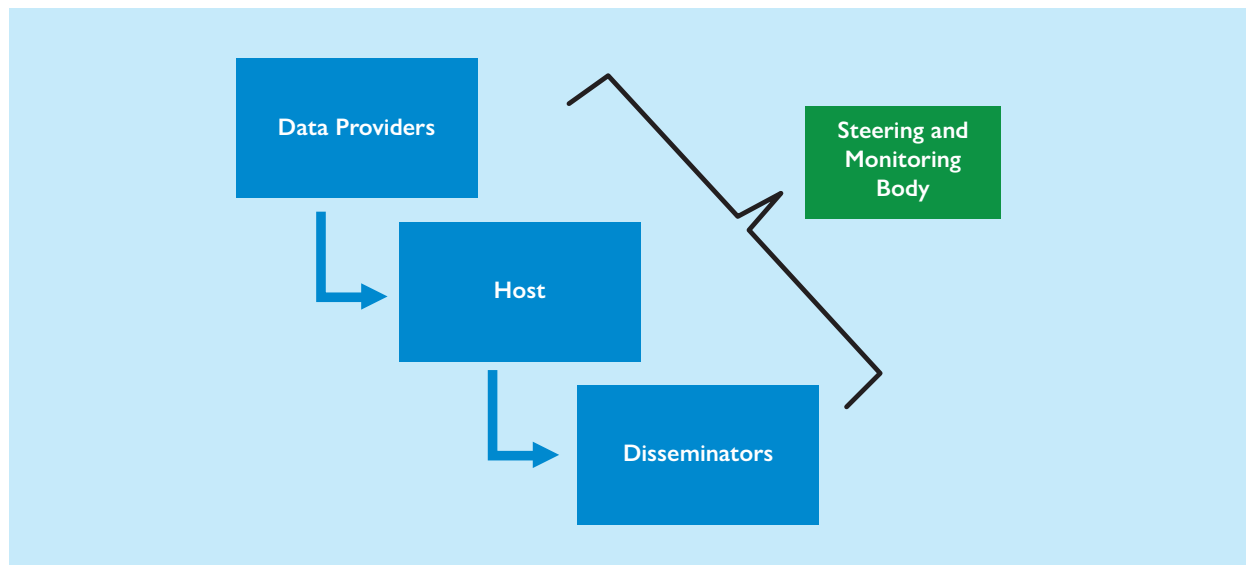
## 5.2 Operational guidelines for an integrated LMIS

Being an information system, LMIS involves the collection, organization, storage and dissemination of labour market information. In a way, the system will represent a complex and complementary network in which people and organizations interact to collect, process, analyse, and disseminate data. In line with the desirable features of an appropriate LMIS, as depicted above, the present section delineates an operational framework for an LMIS in Bangladesh.

Given the processes involved in the LMIS, the interactions of four broad key stakeholder groups will be the subject matter of operational guidelines. They are:

- (a) LMIS hosting organization: It is responsible for sourcing information from data providers, analysing data, identifying further information (including qualitative information) needs, and processing available data for dissemination.
- (b) Data and information providers: The sources of information can be quite diverse especially when information on overseas labour markets is to be considered. This group of stakeholders will consist of primary data collectors, research organizations, or other think tanks providing labour market insights from primary and secondary data. Further, the data can be disaggregated into national, district and sub-district levels.
- (c) Disseminators: This group comprises media, employment officers and others who will disseminate the information along with the hosting organization.
- (d) A steering and monitoring body: A complex information collection exercise will require strong oversight to ensure effective coordination and delivery of different components. This body will work as the central authority overseeing the whole LMIS effort and mechanisms involved. The interrelationship between each group of stakeholders has been depicted in Figure 34.

**Figure 34: Key stakeholders of the LMIS**



### **LMIS Hosting Organization: Framework and Operational Modalities**

The LMIS host will have three core functions: (a) data collection and collation, (b) data processing and analysis, and (c) dissemination of information. These functions will be linked backwards and forward with other stakeholders. Ensuring a systematic and sustainable data collection mechanism will likely involve two steps.

#### **Step 1: Identification of key data providers and data collection**

Mapping of the data providers would be the first task of the hosting organization. Depending upon the nature of data, the data providers can be thought to be of several types: primary data generators, secondary information providers, and labour market service providers. The host organization itself can be a source of certain data and information as well.

Primary data providers collect data on labour market or industrial organizations through primary surveys of households and/or other items for their own purposes. For example, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) undertakes force surveys, household income and expenditure surveys, surveys on investment of remittances, a survey on manufacturing industries, and many other similar surveys. Among others, the National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT) also conducts Bangladesh Demographic and Health-care Survey (BDHS). On the other hand, the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), is a government organization responsible for collection, compilation and dissemination of educational information and statistics.

Apart from the government agencies, private stakeholders and INGOs also collect data through primary surveys. For example, BRAC collects, collates and analyses its own data. A number of other NGOs, research organizations and private stakeholders collect primary data in collaboration with development partners and international donors for understanding sector specific transition and transformation in Bangladesh.

The LMIS host will also collect data from development partners and other INGOs. As discussed in chapter 3, macroeconomic dynamics of CODs would be of particular use for projecting labour market demands overseas. Therefore, secondary data sources like ADB's World Economic Outlook (WEO), World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI), ILO's ILOSTAT, OECD countries' oecd stat and many other similar databases will be of particular use. The host will have to monitor these sources closely from time to time for any updated relevant information.

The host should also collect information on labour market services, which should include: (a) training and employment, (b) litigations and complaints, (c) finances for overseas employment, (d) support services available at pre-migration stage, (e) support services to tackle adverse circumstances in destination countries, and so on. For example, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMO), BAIRA, and BOESL are important sources of information related to training and employment. On the other hand, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Manusher Jonno Foundation, Awaj foundation and many other private stakeholders provide direct litigation support to migrant workers and their families. In the case of financial services, Probashi Kollyan Bank, along with several other banks, private NGOs like BRAC could be the sources of information. The host organization must have close ties with the service providers and collect the up-to-date information.

Moreover, the host should keep close contacts with relevant ministries and departments like the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Department of Youth Development. The LMIS should accommodate all relevant government circulars, notices, laws and other publications related to employment, overseas employment and welfare of the migrant workers.

It may be possible for the host organization to collect and generate some information itself either by designing and implementing specialized surveys or by undertaking analytical work to generate missing and not-directly-reported data. Ideally, the host will be able to develop complementary projects to address the data gaps without duplicating data-generating efforts by other organizations.

## Step 2: Collating all the collected Data

### **Need for a Labour Market Information Data Warehouse (LMIDW)**

After the collection of all the data, the immediate step would be to collate them all in a central place that may be called Labour Market Information Data Warehouse (LMIDW). The core objective of the LMIDW would be to store verified labour market information for further data analysis. The experience of Malaysia shows the importance of a successful LMIDW in initializing LMIS.<sup>69</sup> To operationalize and effectively implement LMIDW in the context of Bangladesh, several pertinent issues will have to be ensured. By nature, the LMIDW will require a highly secured cyberspace. Proper infrastructural, as well as financial support, will be necessary in this regard.

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<sup>69</sup> The case study in Box 3 provides the roles and key functions of LMIDW in Malaysia.

In terms of infrastructure, uninterrupted electricity connection, high-speed internet network along with high-performance computer facilities would be the key requirements. A skilled group of technicians, web developers, programmers and computer specialists would be essential for effective operation of the LMIDW.

The host will regularly have to monitor and collect data from key stakeholders. After obtaining the data and storing it in the LMIDW, the analysis should begin. The host should be active in terms of searching for new labour market findings, reports and information on overseas labour markets. It will also seek new labour market opportunities, changes in key monetary or fiscal stances affecting labour market dynamics, and other relevant factors in the destination countries. A regular update on the data and information of the destination markets should be an integral part of the LMIDW effort.

The host should hold regular meetings with its stakeholders (quarterly or biannually) so that the information gaps can be identified, and necessary initiatives to address them can be undertaken. It may have to undertake destination country field-visits and interact with workers in CODs to assess labour market dynamics and the means of obtaining relevant information. It should also explore formal means, for example, bilateral engagements between governments in getting data and up-to-date labour market information from the destination countries.

To ensure information accuracy, appropriate and standardized methods should be adapted for data collection, processing and dissemination. There should be coherence in data measurement techniques and sampling methods across periods and regions. For international conformity, it might be useful to follow standard international classifications, for example, the United Nation's International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) may be used for classifying occupational data. For classification of data on education and training, UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) may be followed. The LMIS should maintain a timeline for regular updating of data and information. The frequency of information update may vary in accordance with the nature and availability of data. For example, any information on new job openings should be updated instantly. Meanwhile, occupational estimates like employment and unemployment rate and other key labour market indicators can be updated as the information becomes available.



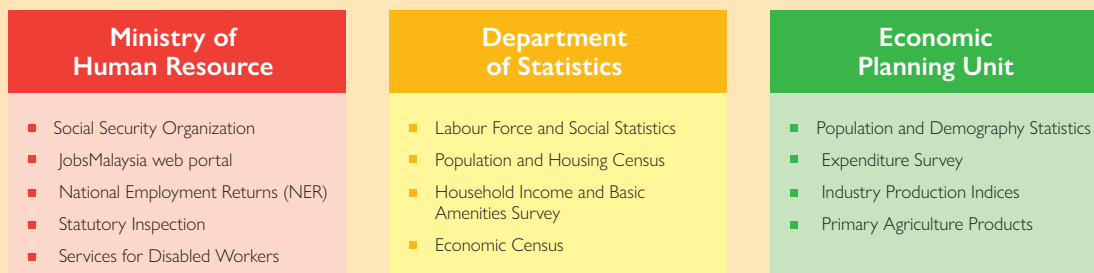


### Box 3: The Labour Market Information Data Warehouse (LMIDW) in Malaysia

LMIDW in Malaysia is a system that stores data on Malaysian labour market, workforce and workplace statistics and generates various relevant indicators for the market. The Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis (ILMIA) is the host of LMIDW. ILMIA undertook the initiative to construct the database in 2012. Principally the idea is to gather all the labour market data in one comprehensive platform and help develop indicators based on past information and future projections. It aims to: (a) minimize the existing information gaps in the labour market; (b) assess the supply and demand side data and coordinate the interplay of entities taking part in the market; (c) build up a common gateway for all labour market information; and (d) provide direction towards policy formulation.

The LMIDW has been through four phases since its idea had been put into the creation of the actual platform. Phase I marked the start of LMIDW development, phase II focused on featuring and merging of LMIDW modules in ILMIA portal, and phase III completed the integration. Phase IV was launched in May 2017 with the objective of strengthening the mechanism for data sharing. Some of the key challenges faced in its work programme included sourcing of high skilled data analysts, preparing data sharing standards and operating procedures, and formulating promotion and outreach strategies.

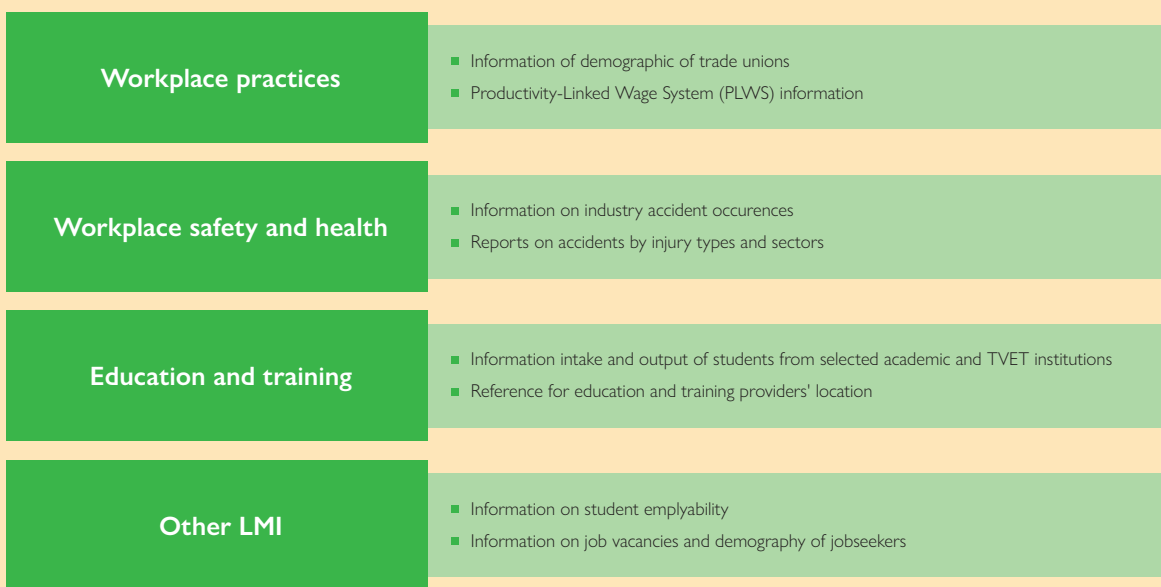
### Box Figure 2: Primary data sources for the LMIDW of Malaysia



It was envisioned to be a joint effort by several government agencies including Department of Statistics (DOS), Economic Planning Unit (EPU), the Ministry of Human Resource and the Manpower Department and came into existence accordingly in 2013. All these organizations devised their own framework and approach to source data. The Central Bank of Malaysia, Ministry of Education, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), The National ICT Association of Malaysia are some of the other key stakeholders of the LMIDW effort. JobStreet and Kelly Services, who basically provide office staffing and workforce solutions, are among the key private sector members with a considerable stake on LMIDW. The LMIDW also partners with key international organizations like the World Bank and the ILO.

A Data Flow Management System (DFMS) is used to keep the LMIDW from cluttering. It supports data sharing, monitoring, exploring, integrating and creating an open data platform. This DFMS, called Data Mart, structures the platform and helps ILMIA in managing and categorizing the information inflow. It works as a tool for uploading datasets, monitoring their submission by various agencies and integrating with other modules. At the same time, a dashboard is provided that generates different kinds of reports and files the datasets by category and agency, and complete with their usage statistics. Data Mart, in other words, categorizes information neatly.

**Box Figure 3: Data Mart for LMIDW outputs**



Data are prepared to keep a schedule of work and then uploaded in LMIDW. Quick facts, overviews, popular indicators, simple and broad explanations for them and interactive charts are prominently featured on the portal dashboard. The LMIDW is continuously striving for improvement in such areas as dissemination, exploration, analysis and database security.

**Source:** Field visit to ILMIA, Malaysia; Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia; <http://www.ilmia.gov.my/index.php/en/> - accessed on 5 December 2017; <https://dfms.ilmia.gov.my/#/> - accessed on 5 December 2017

## **A mapping of available labour market information against additional labour market data requirements in Bangladesh**

Table 6 presents a mapping of some of the currently available labour market data along with existing gaps. In many cases, certain domestic labour market data are available, but the lack of regular updation are some of the perceived problems for appropriate and adequate dissemination. The LFS of BBS is the major source of labour market information in the country. Since 2015, the BBS has been conducting the labour force surveys on a quarterly basis. However, the report of the quarterly labour force survey is being published annually. The report contains only broad labour market information like employment, unemployment and underemployment rates by age, sex, location and educational qualification. However, sector specific employment dynamics, for instance, wage and employment projections are not available. It also does not provide any information on overseas migration. Rather, BBS undertakes other surveys to capture issues relevant to overseas migration, examples of which can be drawn from the Survey on the Use of Remittance, 2013 (SUR) or Survey on Investment from Remittance, 2016 (SIR). These surveys are not undertaken regularly and do not cover all issues relevant to overseas migration.

The most frequent information on the overseas labour market is obtainable from the BMET website. However, the information provided by the BMET is limited to several parameters, namely, the number of workers by destination country, sex, education requirements and skill compositions. It does not provide any information on 'job markets' at the CODs. Although the website provides a list of training centres affiliated to BMET, it does not provide any information on types of training offered/courses available or other such information. It also does not provide any market analysis or trend projections on future overseas market demands for various types of workers. Although the website of BMET provides the opportunity to file complaints against labour recruiters on several grounds, there are no available statistics on the number of complaints or types of complaints by countries of destinations. Similar to the BMET, the BOESL also provides information on overseas employment including some guidelines for the workers on how to proceed through the overseas application procedure. It hosts some video tutorials on online application system for some specific countries like the Republic of Korea. However, there is no statistics published on future labour market demands, wages by professions, or job market prospect analysis for aspirant migrant workers. Like the other sources, it also does not give any indication of the requirements for overseas employment or working conditions in the specified destination countries.

Apart from the government organizations, some private organizations also collect data on labour markets. One of the prime examples is BRAC which operates in several districts in Bangladesh and collects data independently. BRAC also has its own migration evaluation programmes; however, the data are not public and not readily available for the researchers to use for generating further labour market information. Other than BRAC, many international NGOs, development partners and local NGOs also work on labour market issues. The Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) conducted a survey on the returned migrant workers in 2013 in collaboration with the ILO. The report identified a lot of pertinent issues regarding overseas employment. The isolated dissemination of such information could never reach to the end of aspirant migrant workers who need it the most.

Among others, the technical training centres provide some information on training requirements for overseas employment. Some of them also provide video tutorials for aspirant migrant workers. However, the scenario is not the same for all technical and vocational training centres. According to the key informants, apart from the leading technical training centres (mostly based in Dhaka), others do not provide adequate information support to aspirant migrant workers.

**Table 6: Data/Information providers and Stakeholder mapping**

Data/ Information category	Existing data/ information	Availability/ frequency of data	Data Source	Comments/additional data requirements
<b>Core domestic labour market data</b>	Population/ demographics	Biennial	Health and Morbidity Status Survey, BBS	Data at more frequent intervals
	Population estimates	Biennial	Health and Morbidity Status Survey, BBS	Most of the information are not regular. The BBS conducts labour force survey quarterly, however, the report is published annually. Health and Morbidity Status Surveys are conducted in 2/3 years interval.
	Employment; Employment by sectors; Employment by sex, Education and age	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	
	Labour force participation	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	
	Unemployment estimates and rates	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	
	Skill composition	Annual	Labour Force Survey, BBS	
<b>Labour demand</b>	Job vacancies, characteristics and features	Regular; but not available in one place	Individual employer; various firms'/ dedicated employment websites	Data are irregular. Complete data are not available. There is no dedicated website that provides occupational or industrial employment projections. Different job portals are currently in operation providing information on job vacancies and job openings in the domestic labour market. However, no central job matching system is available. Additional required data may include, but not limited to: 1. Labour costs 2. Overseas employment projections 3. Occupational employment projections: Long term 10 years 4. Occupational projections 5 years or less 5. ndustry employment projections 6. Business births and deaths 7. Number of business establishments and sizes
	Occupational employment estimates	Irregular	BBS/ BIDS/ Research organizations	
	Industry employment estimates;  Occupational distributions across industries;  Wages and earnings by industry and occupation	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	

Data/ Information category	Existing data/ information	Availability/ frequency of data	Data Source	Comments/additional data requirements
<b>Occupational supply</b>	Employment by occupational classification	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	Only Aggregate information is available in the report. No insights on educational outcomes or challenges are present. Data frequencies are irregular. Additional data may include but not limited to:  1. Estimates of enrolees and completers of education and training programmes 2. Educational outcomes 3. New entrants to labour force
	Unemployment by education levels	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	
	Internal migration	Irregular	BBS	
	Primary activities of persons out of labour force	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	
	Estimates of labour supply	Annual	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, BBS	
<b>Occupational characteristics</b>	Tasks by occupations	Regular, but not available in one place	Employers' websites/ newspaper	Only Aggregate information is available in the report. No insights on educational outcomes or challenges are present. Data frequencies are irregular. Additional data may include but not limited to:  1. Estimates of enrolees and completers of education and training programmes 2. Educational outcomes 3. New entrants to labour force
	Tools and technology requirements by occupations	Regular, but not available in one place	Employers' websites/ newspaper	
	Required skills and abilities	Regular, but not available in one place	Employers' websites/ newspaper	
	Job responsibilities	Regular, but not available in one place	Employers' websites/ newspaper	
	Workplace compliance	Mostly not available	Employers' websites/ newspaper	
	Education and training requirement	Regular, but not available in one place	Employers' websites/ newspaper	
	Occupational rights	Available but not well disseminated	Websites of different ministries	
	Career progression	Not available	Not available	
	Narrative descriptions of occupations	Regular, but not available in one place	Employers' websites/ newspaper	
	Licensing and certification requirements	Regular, but not available in one place	Government/ Training centres' websites	

Data/ Information category	Existing data/ information	Availability/ frequency of data	Data Source	Comments/additional data requirements
<b>Education and training information</b>	Location of education and training institutions	Not frequently available	Institution's website; BMET website	Most of the information is available on the website of respective education and training institutions. However, this information is not regularly updated and is not well disseminated among the workers and jobseekers.
	Education and training programmes details	Not frequently available	Some institutes provide this information	
	Financial assistance sources including government-funded opportunities for training programmes	Not frequently available	Education and training institutes	
<b>Overseas labour demand</b>	Job characteristics and features	Irregular and partially available	BAIRA, BOESL	Information on a job opening and job vacancies are partially provided by the BAIRA and BOESL. But, this information is not provided at a regular interval. Employment projection by industry and occupations are not provided at present. Additional data may include: 1. Occupational employment estimates and distributions by country 2. Occupational overseas employment projections: Long Term 10 years 3. Occupational overseas employment projections: 5 years or less 4. Trends of labour market at the CODs
	Job Vacancies	Irregular and partially available	BAIRA, BOESL	
	Overseas employment estimates	Monthly	BMET	
	Trends of labour market at the CODs	Regular but not available in one source	International Reports	
<b>Overseas occupational supply</b>	Profile of aspirant migrant workers	Not publicly available	BMET	Information on occupational supply is hardly published. BMET has a database of aspirant migrant workers/ overseas jobseekers. But, access to this information is not public. Therefore, the matching mechanism is not working properly. Additional data may include: 1. Estimates of enrolees and completers of education and training programmes 2. New entrants to the foreign labour force 3. The condition of persons out of employment at the CODs 4. Estimates of labour supply at the CODs 5. Educational outcomes at the CODs 6. Wages and earnings at the CODs
	Geographic dimension of migration	Monthly	BMET	

Data/ Information category	Existing data/ information	Availability/ frequency of data	Data Source	Comments/additional data requirements
<b>Overseas occupational characteristics</b>	Tasks by occupations	Irregular and partially provided	BAIRA, BOESL	Most of the information in this segment is not currently available. The other information that is disseminated, is also irregular and partially available. Additional information may include: 1. Tools and technology required for specified jobs 2. Skills including essential skills for specified jobs overseas. 3. Required abilities 4. Job responsibilities 5. Education and training requirements 6. Narrative descriptions of occupations 7. Registration and application requirements 8. Occupational safety requirements 9. Rights at work 10. Potential Risks of the work 11. Possible benefits and average returns
	Tools and technology requirements by occupations	Irregular and partially provided	BAIRA, BOESL	
	Skills requirements	Irregular and partially provided	Individual migrant workers	
<b>Education and training information for the out-bound and aspirant migrant workers</b>	Location of education and training institutions	Partially available	Overseas training agency, BMET, institution's website	Information on education and training institutes and programmes offered by these institutions are partially available in BMET and the web portal of the relevant training institutions. Employment estimates, training required for particular jobs and prospects of any trained jobseekers, career guidelines and so on are not available currently.
	Education and training programmes details	Irregular	Overseas training agencies, BMET, respective institution's website	
	Financial assistance sources including government funded training opportunities	Not frequently available	BMET, training institutes	
<b>Overseas labour market service data/ other overseas and migration related data</b>	Information on migration loan	Partially available	Probashi Kollyan Bank; WEWB	According to the key informants interviewed, most of the migrant workers are not aware of the services provided at different stages of the migration process. The required additional information may include: 1. Information on training loan 2. Overseas employment services 3. Complaint mechanism 4. Reintegration strategy of the government for the migrant workers 5. Information on disabled overseas migrant workers; reintegration strategy and benefits for such workers 6. Skill recognition for employment for returnee migrants 7. Information on re-migration
	Past experiences of the migrant workers, complaint mechanisms, information on migrant worker reintegration programme	Partially available	Reports on returnee migrant workers; BMET; MEWOE; Wage Earners' Welfare Board; Various NGOs' websites	

Source: Authors' compilation based on various reports, websites and other sources.

Following the above, for an integrated LMIS, a number of key data requirements can be identified along with their coverage and frequency (Table 7). The required data can be broadly classified under five categories: (a) core labour market data which includes information regarding population, demographics, labour force participation rates, and unemployment rates; (b) labour demand data – includes information on job openings, job market trends and projections, and other similar indicators; (c) occupational supply – includes information on occupations by employment levels, migrations by geographic locations, educational outcomes, and others; (d) education and training related data - includes information on courses, training, costs of such courses or training; and, finally (e) the labour market service and migration related data - includes information on international migrations, migration related information for specific groups (as such disabled), including costs of migration.

Most of the data will be drawn from domestic sources and the coverage of such data can be disaggregated into national (N), district (D), and upazila (U) levels. In addition, the ILMIS will cover international labour market information relevant to the aspirant migrant workers' needs. The coverage of such data can be attributed as global (G). The frequency of collecting/updating data may vary depending upon the type of information. For instance, some information will be required to be updated on a regular basis (which can be daily/weekly/fortnightly – depending upon the attributes of the data), while others can be updated at longer intervals (for example – quarterly, biannually, annually). Table 7 also shows the potential data providers for the required data/information.

**Table 7: Mapping of data needs and sources for the ILMIS**

Data/Information	Coverage: global (G), national (N), district (D), upazila (U),	Frequency of data collection and update	Provider/collector of data
Population/demographics	N, D, U	Annual	BBS, NIPORT
Employment	N, D, U	Quarterly	BBS
Overseas employment	G	Monthly	BMET
Labour force participation rate	N, D, U	Quarterly	BBS
Unemployment estimates and rates	N, D, U	Quarterly	BBS
Employment by sectors	N, D	Quarterly	BBS
Employment by sector at overseas	G	Monthly	BMET
Employment by sex, education and age	N, D, U	Quarterly	BBS
Employment by sex, education and age by CODs	G	Monthly	BMET
Skill composition	N, D	Quarterly	BBS
Skill composition by CODs	G	Monthly	BMET
<b>(b) Labour demand</b>			
Job openings	G, N, D, U	Regular	Individual employers; Various firms'/ dedicated employment websites; Labour Attaché at Bangladesh Missions, BMET, BAIRA, BOESL



Data/Information	Coverage: global (G), national (N), district (D), upazila (U),	Frequency of data collection and update	Provider/collector of data
Job vacancies	G, N, D, U	Regular	Individual employer; Various firms/ dedicated employment websites, Labour Attaché at Bangladesh Missions, BMET, BAIRA, BOESL,
Wages and labour costs	N, D	Quarterly	BBS
Average wages at overseas employment job category	G	Monthly	Labour Attaché at Bangladesh by Missions, BMET, BAIRA, BOESL
Occupational employment estimates	N, D	Quarterly	BBS
Occupational employment estimates at the CODs	G	Quarterly	BMET
Occupational employment projections: long term (5 to 10 years)	G, N, D	Five yearly	BBS/BIDS/Research organizations
Occupational projections (less than 5 years)	G, N, D	Yearly	BBS/BIDS/Research organizations
Industry employment estimates	N, D	Quarterly	BBS
Industry employment projections	G, N, D	Yearly	BBS/BIDS/Research organizations
Occupational distributions across industries	G, N, D	Quarterly	BBS, BMET
Business survival rates	N, D	Yearly	BBS
Number of business establishments and sizes	N, D	Yearly	BBS
Wages and earnings by occupations	G, N, D	Quarterly	BBS, BMET
Overseas employment projections	G	Yearly	BMET, BIDS, Research Organizations
Occupational distributions across countries	G	Monthly	BMET
Trends of labour market at the CODs	G	Quarterly	BMET, Labour Attaché at the CODs, International Reports
Projection of labour market at the CODs	G	Yearly	BMET, Labour Attaché at the CODs, International Reports, BIDS
<b>(c) Occupational supply</b>			
Unemployment by qualification	G, N, D	Quarterly	BBS, BMET
Estimates of enrollees and completers of education and training programmes	N, D, U	Monthly	MoE, BANBEIS, BTEB, BMET, various training institutes
New entrants to labour force (domestic and foreign)	N, D, U	Monthly	BBS, BMET
Internal migration	N, D	Quarterly	BBS
International migration	G, N, D, U	Monthly	BBS, BMET, BAIRA, BOESL
Educational outcomes	G, N, D, U	Quarterly	BBS, MoE, BANBEIS, BTEB, BMET

Data/Information	Coverage: global (G), national (N), district (D), upazila (U),	Frequency of data collection and update	Provider/collector of data
Estimates of labour supply	G, N, D, U	Quarterly	BBS, BIDS/ Research Organizations
Skill requirements and work contents by tasks	G, N, D, U	Regular	BBS, private stakeholders, employers at the CODs, BAIRA, BOESL
Education and training requirements by occupations	G, N, D, U	Regular	BMET, BTEB, private stakeholders, employers at the CODs, BAIRA, BOESL
Narrative descriptions of occupations	G, N, D, U	Regular	Private stakeholders, employers at the CODs, BAIRA, BOESL
Licensing and certification requirements	N, D, U	Regular	MEWOE, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Finance, NBR
Occupational safety guidelines and rights at work	G, N	Regular	Employers at the CODs, BAIRA, BOESL, Ministry of Industry, MoLE, and other line ministries
Occupational risks and hazards	G, N	Regular	Employers at the CODs, BAIRA, BOESL, experience of the recent workers
Possible benefits and average returns	G	Regular	Employers at the CODs, BAIRA, BOESL, survey on the current workers at the CODs
Experiences of the outbound migrants sex and CODs	G	Regular	Workers at the CODs, BAIRA, by BOESL
<b>(d) Education and training information</b>			
Education and training institutions and programmes offered by them; programme details	N, D, U	Regular	Education and training institutes, BANBEIS, MoE, overseas training agency, BMET
Financial assistance sources including government funded opportunities for training programmes	N, D, U	Regular	Education and training institute, MoE, overseas training agency, BMET
Employment by types of training at CODs	G	Monthly/Quarterly	BMET, Labour Wings, Labour Force Surveys at the CODs
<b>(e) Labour market service data and other migration related data</b>			
Loan for overseas migrations	N, D, U	Regular	BMET, Probashi Kollyan Bank, BRAC, other Banks and NGOs
Loan for training courses (both for aspirant migrant workers and others)	N, D, U	Regular	BMET, Probashi Kollyan Bank, BRAC, TTCs, other Banks and NGOs

Data/Information	Coverage: global (G), national (N), district (D), upazila (U),	Frequency of data collection and update	Provider/collector of data
Overseas employment services	N, D, U	Regular	BMET, DEMO, BRAC, other Banks and NGOs
Overseas migrant workers' complaint mechanism	N, D, U	Regular	BBS, BMET, DEMO, ASK, BOMSA, BLAST, OKUP
Reintegration strategy of the government for the migrant workers	N, D, U	Regular	MEWOE, WEWB
Data on disabled migrant workers	G, N, D, U	Regular	BMET, WEWB, Labour recruiters, Returnee disabled Migrant Workers
Data on benefits for disabled migrant workers	N, D, U	Regular	WEWB, Probashi Kollyan Bank, ASK and other organizations
Skill recognition for employment for returnee	N, D, U	Regular	MEWOE, WEWB, Probashi Kollyan Bank
Information on re-migration	G, N, D, U	Regular	MEWOE, BMET

**Source:** Reconstructed in the context of Bangladesh following Woods and O'Leary (2006).

### Data analysis and dissemination

The host organization will have to undertake a comprehensive data analysis to provide key information and insights. This is where the host organization will act as the central processing unit for the ILMIS. This work stream will involve performing consistency checks among information generated from different sources; undertaking analysis of trends and labour market developments; determining how qualitative information (for example, processes involved in looking for employment in the overseas market, support measures available for migrant workers, and information on labour rights) will be used for maximum impact; undertaking scanning exercises to identify gaps in the information and approaching the concerned agencies to gather the necessary information.

This component of the work will also need to be creative to make the information useful for the labour market participants. For instance, given the background of the workers, in specific situations, case studies could be a more appropriate means of providing information, particularly for low-skilled and semi-skilled workers both in domestic as well as foreign markets. Adapting the practices of other countries may not be sufficient in making the Bangladesh LMIS user-friendly and impactful in this regard since all the good practice of labour market information systems (LMISs) are focused primarily on domestic labour market only.

The host organization will also play an important role in the communication of the labour market information. While effective dissemination will require support from and involvement of other stakeholders, the host will have to keep a good rapport with key partners and stakeholders. As suggested by the stakeholders and key informants, the major dissemination platform should be a dedicated website. Along with the own web portal, the LMIS host should also share the information through (a) other relevant websites, (b) disseminators at district

and upazila levels, (c) media, and (d) education and technical training centres. To ensure efficiency in data dissemination, the host must consider the following functions:

- (i) Dedicated dissemination services through a website as well as other platforms (for instance, social media and other line ministry's websites).
- (ii) Supportive and suitable IT services that will not only disseminate information but will also collect and collate user's feedback, suggestions and queries and will continue to evolve to provide improved communications.
- (iii) Communications support and advisory services which may include printing and publication activities, preparing regular bulletins, pamphlets, and hand-outs.

The host organization will also develop and implement a comprehensive and user-friendly dissemination strategy in the context of Bangladesh. The key data disseminators and the strategy is listed below:

### **Dissemination through own website**

A dedicated LMIS website will work as the key platform for disseminating LMI. For ensuring success and sustainability, the website has to be – (a) easily accessible, (b) responsive in design so that it can be loaded on different hand-held devices, (c) user-friendly so that any customer with minimal knowledge of web-browsing can obtain all the information he or she needs, and (d) interactive in nature – if any customized data or information is requested, the system can provide it, as well as summaries on the issues in plain words and infographics. The web portal should ideally incorporate subscription option so that subscribed members can store their own preferences and get updates to their emails from time to time. This, however, should not restrict access to others who would prefer using it without customized preferences.

### **Dissemination through relevant other web portals**

Along with the own website, vital LMI indicators can also be disseminated through other relevant websites. The websites of the BMET, MoEWOE, MOLE, DYD may incorporate a separate page in their websites to show some key updates of the domestic as well as foreign labour markets (including some content taken from the official LMIS) along with a link to the LMIS website. Any important or new information such as overseas employment opportunities, training schemes and other information may be demonstrated through flash slides on those websites.

### **Disseminators at the district and upazila Levels**

According to a national survey of the ICT use by households, most of the internet and other IT service-users are located in urban areas, specifically in major divisional towns, and individuals with low-educational attainment tend to use less internet. On the other hand, the Survey of Investments and Remittances in 2016 shows that most migrant workers have low years of schooling. Therefore, the LMIS needs to go beyond websites for wider outreach. In doing so, some of the key disseminating platforms can be the offices of the Deputy Commissioners



(DCs), Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs) and the local post offices. The offices of DCs, UNOs and/or post offices can hold an open digital noticeboard showing updated information on training, vacancies, and overseas employment opportunities. The digital noticeboards can advertise the opportunities with audios so that people with no education or someone with a visual disability can understand the key messages. There can also be designated personnel at district- and upazila-levels as LMI window officers. The role of the LMI officer would be to assist people with their queries and helping them in applying for training or other opportunities. In this regard, another key dissemination channel could be the Union Digital Centres (UDCs).

### **Dissemination through the media**

Media can play an important role in disseminating the LMI. It includes print (newspapers), television (TV), radio, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube) platforms that share the upcoming events. The ILMIS host will have to regularly update the media (both print and electronic) on any major job market openings and other labour market developments on a regular basis, specifying the sources of information. The host can also organize monthly press briefings to the media and send them monthly labour market bulletins for wider dissemination. Educative videos and other slides can be uploaded on YouTube, Facebook as they are already quite popular social media platforms in Bangladesh. As part of the dissemination activities, the host organization should make the services available to respond to queries posted online.

#### **Box 4: Getting through to the migrants: dissemination of available information**

One of the major obstacles Bangladesh faces in promoting safe migration and protecting migrant workers from excessive cost of migration is lack of information. In the absence of proper information, migrants are susceptible to fraudulent practices by various intermediaries. But Mr Ashiqur Rahman, the Executive Director of Migrant 88, points out that the problem might lie more with the effective dissemination of the available information. Migrant 88 is an NGO that works in more than 20 countries, providing legal and financial assistance to migrant workers. In an interview, Mr Rahman opined that whatever information is available, workers are not taking advantage of that, and the channels of getting the information across to the workers are what need to be focussed upon and revised. Besides regular, more conventional methods of spreading information like using posters, and volunteers in the field, there could be customized methods based on community dynamics. The male, Muslim workers, for example, generally attend the Jumma prayer every Friday; so the Imam could help in spreading some necessary information during his preaching speech ('Khutba'). On the 'haat' (weekly village market) days, awareness campaigns to draw people's attention can be an option. Popular figures and celebrities who are loved by the people in villages can spread the messages more effectively. The inclusion of safe migration procedures from Bangladesh, the common problems and possible solutions in the high school curriculum is another suggestion made by Mr Rahman.

**Source:** Interview with Ashiqur Rahman by the study team.

One of the major roles of the media would be to make people more cautious regarding safe and regular migrations. Short informative Television Commercials (TVCs) or radio advertises can be taken as key instruments.<sup>70</sup> Popular media figures like singers, actors/actress can effectively motivate people and at the same time disseminate a wider array of information regarding safe migration process, training opportunities and other issues.

### **Dissemination through education and training centres**

Under the Vision 2021, the Government of Bangladesh adapted a plan for digital classrooms for every public school (GED, 2012; ICTD, 2018). The technical training centres also host computer classrooms for training purposes. The host can use these platforms for disseminating LMIS. The instructors at education and training centres can refer their pupils and trainees to the LMIS, so these instructors should be properly trained about LMIS in this regard.

Apart from the aforementioned key disseminators, the LMI should be disseminated through stakeholders like NGOs, development partners, and research organizations. The NGOs who work directly with the migrant workers and migrant welfare can take an active lead in disseminating labour market information. Academicians and research organizations can assess the labour market information and disseminate the findings to media and policymakers.

### **The steering and monitoring body**

An appropriate and effective LMIS for Bangladesh that incorporates domestic and overseas labour market information will be a challenging task. It will require a strong commitment at the national level, efficient functioning of the host organization, and strong support of various actors and agents through which the information needs to be disseminated. The issue of reaching out to a significant proportion of the people with limited educational attainment is a formidable challenge for which support from the local level administrative units will be needed. As mentioned, coordination amongst different stakeholders and institutions is also not an easy task to accomplish. These constraints to a large extent can be tackled by an effective steering and monitoring authority overseeing the overall and integrated LMIS exercise.

The role of the Steering and Monitoring Body (SMB) would be to smoothen the processes, grease the collaboration between various stakeholders, generate a strong mandate of the work and make each stakeholder and organization responsible for delineated deliverables. As the overseeing authority, the steering and monitoring cell will try to resolve any issues/disputes by issuing directives, evaluating the performance of the implementation units, and taking necessary measures for improvements. In fact, the SMB will play the role of a catalyst in the whole process. It will not be directly engaged in the LMIS effort; however, being the catalyst in the system, it will ensure the quality, efficacy and sustainability of the LMIS effort.

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<sup>70</sup> During the KII, the labour attaché in Malaysia informed the team that – for illiterate migrant workers, short TVCs work much better than other conventional awareness building initiatives.

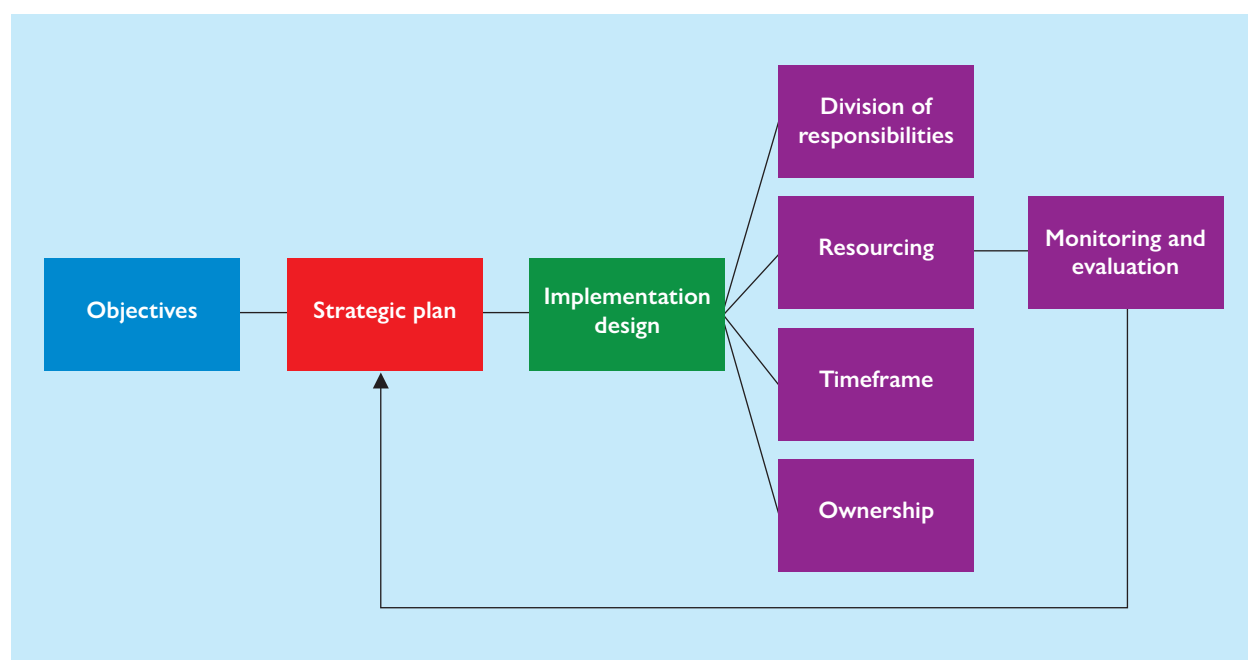


### 5.3 Implementation strategy for an effective ILMIS

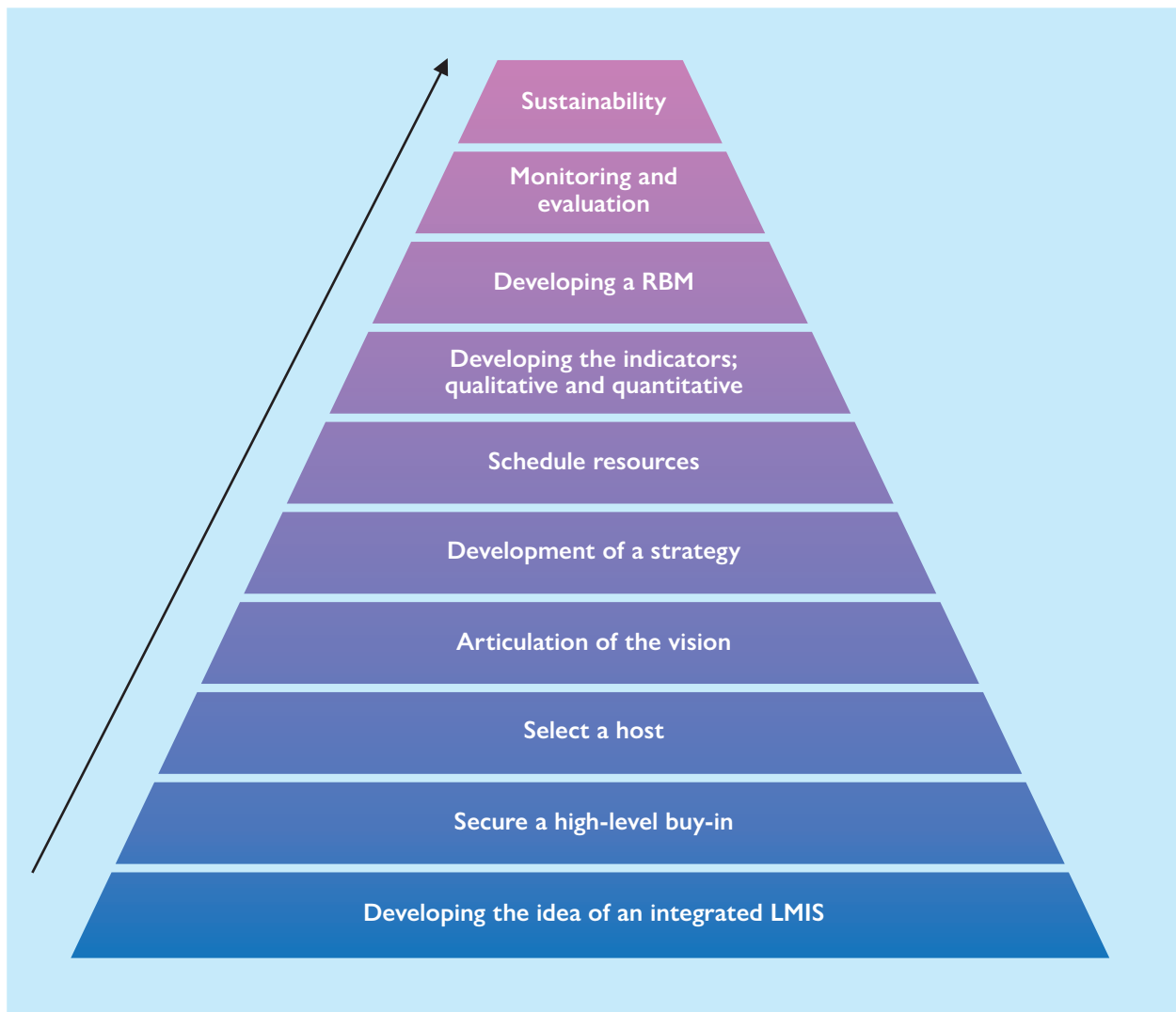
The operational guidelines presented above provide some indication of how an ILMIS can function, considering the interactions of four broad stakeholder groups. The functioning of the system in an effective manner will be preconditioned by an implementation strategy. Implementation should be a process that translates strategies and plans into concrete actions with the aim of accomplishing strategic objectives and goals. The implementation process begins with developing a strategic plan followed by its execution. In the implementation design, areas such as division of responsibilities, resourcing, timeframe, and ownership of the overall project with regard to individual outputs are elaborated. The execution of the implementation design is subjected to monitoring and evaluation exercises, generating inputs into the strategic plan for a programme that should continue to operate for more than a one-cycle (Figure 35). Based on monitoring and evaluation results, the implementation design and/or various aspects of the actual execution exercise may need to be adjusted to achieve better results or improved performance.

The review and analysis undertaken as part of this study, including discussions with key informants and lessons derived from other countries, suggest that an effective LMIS requires an elaborate and involved implementation process. Figure 36 provides a schematic presentation of such a plan with a set of 10 core elements. The importance of these elements and how they can be implemented are outlined below.

Figure 35: The implementation process



**Figure 36: Towards an effective and integrated LMIS for Bangladesh**



### **The idea of an integrated LMIS and securing a high-level buy-in**

In Bangladesh – since there is an existing LMIS – the first step is to consider developing the concept of an ‘integrated system’. At the outset, it is to be acknowledged that all existing LMIS of different countries seems to focus only on the domestic labour market. This can make the task of securing wider acceptability of an integrated labour market (namely, combining domestic and foreign labour markets) information system difficult. However, as indicated in this study, there are several reasons for Bangladesh to consider such a unified and cohesive approach. It needs to be made clear that unavailability of an integrated system in other countries hardly justifies Bangladesh’s not taking such a step. Indeed, this is an innovative idea where Bangladesh can be considered as a model for other low-income and developing countries.



While this study has already provided useful analysis and perspectives, there might be the need to further develop short and focused papers, and to organize discussion/consultations sessions to sensitize the relevant stakeholders about the need for an Integrated Labour Market Information System (ILMIS). At this initial stage, the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment can jointly discuss this idea backed by the support from think-tanks and development partners.

The next stage will be to secure a higher-level buy-in, which should facilitate a smoother implementation. Employment generation and materializing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are key policy objectives in Bangladesh. Development of an ILMIS can be linked to these policy ambitions. There is a high-level SDG affairs cell within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). This shows a strong political commitment to achieving SDGs. Very recently, Bangladesh's achieving qualifications for graduating out of the group of least developed countries (LDCs) has been widely considered a great success, solidifying policy priority for SDGs.<sup>71</sup> In addition, there is an emphasis on generating jobs with increasing emphasis on opportunities in foreign markets. In this backdrop, if appropriately developed and placed, the concept of an integrated LMIS and its immediate operationalisation could be of interest to the PMO's SDG affairs.

The idea of an integrated LMIS for Bangladesh is a powerful concept. Hence, it deserves serious policy consideration and should be vigorously pursued.

### **Considering an appropriate LMIS host organization**

Selecting an appropriate host organization is critically important for an integrated LMIS that will be effective in delivering the expected results. When the LMIS needs to be ambitious, going beyond the task of reporting a few statistical indicators only, the host organization should perhaps be from among autonomous government bodies or think-tanks. An effective LMIS will need to be creative in terms of generating information that is timely and thus facilitating desired labour market outcomes along with promoting workers' welfare. It needs to possess appropriate and adequate human resources and skill-sets with the ability to retain them to ensure sustainability. The host organization must also be proactive and enterprising. It should be able to identify gaps in the information and strive for fulfilling some of the gaps by undertaking research projects in collaboration with and/or support from development partners.

The independent standing of the host is often very important to support direct government agencies, as it is not always possible to deal with many sensitive issues, for example, labour standards in the overseas market, governance of labour recruitment processes, labour rights, and other similar matters. Also, issues related to workers' employment and welfare in overseas labour markets could be matters of delicate and sensitive bilateral and diplomatic relations with CODs. Any analysis and observations made on policies and practices in CODs by a department or ministry of Government of Bangladesh might be regarded as an official position of the latter. An autonomous agency or think-tank, in contrast, will not face this constraint.

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<sup>71</sup> The transition from the LDC group involves a process in which a country will have to meet graduation thresholds under at least two of the three pre-defined criteria (of per capita income, human asset and economic vulnerability) in two consecutive triennial reviews undertaken by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), a group of independent experts reporting to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Also, there is a provision of the "income-only" graduation rule under which if the three-year average per-capita GNI of an LDC has risen to a level at least double the graduation threshold, the country could be eligible for graduation regardless of its situation under the other two criteria. In the latest round of CDP review undertaken in March 2018, Bangladesh achieved graduation qualification by satisfying all the three thresholds for per capita income, human asset and economic vulnerability. If in the 2021 CDP review Bangladesh can again meet the graduation thresholds, which is very likely, it will be fully eligible to leave the LDC group by 2024.

An ideal host will be able to make use of ILMIS-related activities in developing an elaborate analytical and policy research programme on the labour market. As such, the management of an ILMIS by an appropriate host would also be a great opportunity to generate a strong analytical capacity base in the country.

### **Vision, strategy and resources**

The implementation of a national programme usually starts with a vision. A vision is a statement about the future and describes what needs to be achieved or what a country aspires to be in the future. The host organization working with the monitoring cell can develop this vision. The articulation of the vision is important partly because of the fact that when several stakeholder groups are involved in delivering a programme, the vision statement should be broad and widely motivational for all. To be effective, the message should be clear, optimistic, as well as realistic. An unrealistic vision statement is unlikely to be motivational or inspirational and could from the outset be regarded as rhetoric rather than a serious goal to be pursued.

The next step is to develop a detailed operational strategy to achieve the articulated vision. This process is supposed to be led by the host organization in which the participation of all other stakeholder groups should be ensured. Along with the national ownership, the strategy development helps all implementing agencies own a part of the strategic elements, delineating clear roles and responsibilities and milestones to be achieved. The strategy development is often regarded by many as a ‘game plan’ that delineates clear goals, objectives, and actions but – like a game plan – it is subject to change in response to shifting dynamics and emerging trends.

A well-developed strategic plan makes the implementation task relatively straightforward as it helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of the partners involved and measure to be taken to address these in achieving the vision.

Like any programme, the availability of resources is one of the major determinants of success. If there is a high-level of leadership and ownership, the integrated labour market information system should receive budgetary allocations to institutionalise it. As a significant proportion of the data requirements will be coming from already established sources such as BBS and BMET, financial resources for the host organization would be utilized for developing institutional capacity to undertake analytical work, to collect information, identify gap, and dissemination activities, including developing and maintaining a suitably designed web-based information system. Dedicated resources must also be considered for dissemination and awareness-building activities at the local level as the use of the internet is limited.

The host organization should also proactively look for support and sponsorships from different government agencies and development partners in undertaking surveys to fill the gaps, innovative analysis, dissemination of activities including training of stakeholders in using the labour market information system.



## Developing LMIS indicators and a results-based management system

To become meaningful and most effective, LMIS needs to provide the most relevant information. The primary task is to identify indicators on which information needs to be gathered, analysed and presented through a needs assessment. Ideally, it will be useful to make a comprehensive list of all indicators and then look for information on them. In the case of unavailability of information, activities will have to be planned to fill the gaps over time.

The information required for an LMIS is often thought of as being quantitative in nature only. However, if the objective is to empower the workers and making it useful for the mass job-seekers, there will be a need for qualitative presentation of certain materials (for example, see Table 8). This should include infographics, leaflets and pamphlets, posters, and case studies. In many cases, short videos and audio stories will also be helpful. This is where the host organization should play a pivotal role in being creative and thereby making the information system valuable and effective. Development of these materials will have to be undertaken based on a well-devised dissemination plan, which is also an integral part of the LMIS.

An integrated LMIS is going to be a unique exercise given the context and needs of Bangladesh. Therefore, in many respects, the issues to be included in it would be different or would be presented in a manner that is not seen in the LMIS of other countries. For instance, case studies on successful migrants vis-à-vis those who took risks and had to face unfavourable circumstances could be helpful for aspirant migrant workers who often fall victims of traffickers or intermediaries. Many low-skilled migrant workers also face difficulties in understanding the processes involved and they are most likely to benefit from case study approach and short video documentaries. This is also true regarding the awareness of their rights and support services available at various stages of migration, including resettling back in the home country.

**Table 8: A selection of overseas labour migration related indicators, both quantitative and qualitative**

Macro-level indicators	Employment-related information	Rights and welfare-related information	Post-migration issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overseas employment: total, by gender, by various occupations</li> <li>Skill composition of overseas migrant workers</li> <li>Skill composition by gender, by country of destinations</li> <li>Recent trends in employment growth (by skill composition and by country of destinations)</li> <li>Remittances received: total, from different destination countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job openings in different countries</li> <li>Job openings for different gender groups</li> <li>Recruitment handled by different agencies</li> <li>Job opening trends by different skill groups (by different countries)</li> <li>Employment needed (projections if and when available) in different foreign countries</li> <li>Skill requirements by different jobs</li> <li>Migrants' travel-related preparation and procedures</li> <li>Migration costs</li> <li>Migration loan availability, sources and procedures involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracts and required papers and other documents</li> <li>Rights and obligations as workers in different sectors</li> <li>Disability-related rights and support</li> <li>Where and how to ask for help and assistance</li> <li>Risks at work and occupational safety issues</li> <li>Complaint mechanism</li> <li>How to safely send money home</li> <li>How to deal with possible unfavourable situations at work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to resettle back in the home country and any support available</li> <li>Investing money into various activities</li> <li>Future job opportunities both at home and abroad</li> <li>Skill recognition for employment opportunities within the home economy</li> <li>Information on remigration</li> </ul>

The implementation of the ILMIS, including the development of indicators, should be considered under a results-based management (RBM) system. It is a management approach that is focussed on achieving results. The RBM technique brings together various actors and their contributions towards the overall goal envisioned. The host organization should initiate this RBM preparation process in collaboration with other relevant organizations.

The RBM approach differs from the traditional practice of focussing on inputs and activities. Rather, it first considers benefits or results that are to be generated as a direct effect of any interventions made. One of the core principles of this technique is to improve decision-making by ensuring that management continually monitor the progress of the outputs and activities.

Following this approach, the two key stakeholders, the host organization and the monitoring body, should decide the impact they want to create rather than just developing a labour market information system. Activities can then be considered to secure the impact. Within the RBM approach it is possible to consider short-term (or intermediate) outcomes as pathways to long-run impact. Clearly specified and measurable outputs are then linked to short-term outcomes. The development of a result-based management system and making its effective use would be an important determinant of the success of an ILMIS for Bangladesh.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation and Sustainability**

Monitoring and evaluation is a critical component of the implementation strategy. Monitoring is the systematic and routine collection of information from a project, while evaluation is about assessing a completed/ongoing project or programme. Monitoring of the ILMIS will help evaluate experiences to improve practices and establish accountability of the resources used and the results obtained. Evaluations will determine the continued relevance of the project, its effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. This is the process that uses data and information to help strategic decision-making, and thus improves the project or programme implementations in the future.

The same RBM framework can be used for undertaking the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the ILMIS. Utilizing this framework, first the outcomes of the ILMIS project will need to be defined. Table 9 provides a tentative M&E framework for the ILMIS for Bangladesh. While the long-term objectives may be to achieve efficient labour market outcomes and improved empowerment of workers, the short to medium term results could constitute more realistic and tangible results having achieved improved sources of labour market information and improved access to LMI by workers. Outputs under an M&E framework are actions and activities that lead to achieving the results. Under a tentative framework Table 9 suggests four outputs including a web-based ILMIS and trained staff that the host organization and other stakeholders will need for maintaining and managing the ILMIS. The M&E framework specifies concrete quantifiable indicators for measuring progress towards achieving the outcomes. Some of the indicators could be the number of times the website is being accessed, the number of workers finding the ILMIS useful (based on any survey undertaken).



**Table 9: A tentative results-based monitoring and evaluation framework**

Long-term outcomes	Intermediate/ short-term outcomes	Outputs	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Sources of information for verification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Efficient labour market ensuring productive employment, and enhanced income and improved welfare of workers</li> <li>- Improved empowerment of workers including women and other vulnerable groups and eradication of extreme poverty through employment and skill development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved sources of labour market information on employment prospects at home and abroad, recruitment processes, skill development opportunities, workers' rights, obligations, and other welfare-related issues</li> <li>- Improved and easy access to labour market information for all workers including women and other vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mechanisms established for sourcing labour market information</li> <li>- A web-based comprehensive integrated LMIS</li> <li>- Trained staff for maintaining and managing ILMIS</li> <li>- Mechanisms established to disseminate ILMIS widely using non-internet-based options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If an integrated LMIS is established?</li> <li>- If there is an online presence of ILMIS?</li> <li>- Number of times (in a month) new information is added to ILMIS</li> <li>- Number of non-website-based dissemination tools</li> <li>- Number of times ILMIS website is being accessed</li> <li>- Number of workers (and women workers) finding the ILMIS useful?</li> <li>- Number of job advertisements posted through ILMIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No (currently no ILMIS) is available</li> <li>- No (currently there is none)</li> <li>- 0 (currently there is no ILMIS)</li> <li>- 0 (currently there is no dissemination tools available)</li> <li>- 0 (there is no ILMIS website available)</li> <li>- 0 (currently there is no ILMIS)</li> <li>- 0 (currently there are no job advertisements)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An ILMIS to be established within 2 years (including online presence)</li> <li>- Once established the ILMIS will be updated once a week</li> <li>- A certain number of dissemination tools will be developed</li> <li>- A certain number of workers accessing ILMIS</li> <li>- A certain proportion of new jobs to be posted in ILMIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Household Income and Expenditure surveys, labour force surveys by BBS; information by BMET, BOESL, BAIRA.</li> <li>- Labour Attachés at CODs, private stakeholders, employers at CODs</li> <li>- Independent evaluation</li> </ul>

As ILMIS is a process, progress will be achieved sequentially. One important factor in an M&E framework is to monitor the ongoing progress being made. That is why it is often important to establish baseline situations. Given that there is no ILMIS at present, setting-up the initial baseline is quite straightforward. However, baseline variables need to be those on which information must be available in the future. In some cases, it will be possible to gather the information from the existing surveys while in other cases, undertaking primary surveys (at the beginning of the project followed by after certain time period or at regular intervals) is the usual way forward. In achieving the progress toward the results, the comparison should not always be against the baseline. Rather, specific targets can be set up; for instance, an ILMIS may aim to achieve a certain number of website visitors over a period of one-year. This kind of target setting helps to assess progress being made over the baseline as well as against the expected progress within a pre-defined time period.

Clearly, setting-up an RBM framework can be quite a complex task. But, this is where the host organization will have to play its crucial role in ensuring the success of the ILMIS project. The RBM-based M&E framework enables project managers to learn their lessons from the implementation process. While many of the indicators can be monitored by the host organization/project staff, good practices in M&E also involve utilizing independent evaluations by other experts outside the direct implementers.

Sustainability is also an important concern in any project implementation. In many cases, the initial success of an intervention may not be sustained because of a variety of reasons. Sustaining financial support over a medium to the long-term timeframe is always a critical challenge. In the case of ILMIS, securing a high-level ownership within the government is thus being considered a priority. Regular availability of high-quality data is also an important factor for sustainability. While part of the challenge here could be due to the unavailability of financial resources, challenges associated with survey methodologies, and data collection and processing can be quite enormous. Finally, in a project like this, sustainability will also be linked to ensuring proactive and productive collaboration among many different stakeholders collecting data and disseminating the processed information. The M&E framework should provide some clues about sustainability issues as the monitoring of progress would capture any challenge in this respect. A formal evaluation is also helpful in undertaking a systematic sustainability analysis and should generate useful recommendations.

### **Operationalizing an effective ILMIS: time-bound priorities**

Based on the above discussions, moving toward an ILMIS will require considering certain time-bound priorities that can be grouped as short-term (up to 2 years), medium-term (3 to 5 years) and long-term (more than 5 years) priorities.

#### **Short-term priorities:**

The key priorities in the immediate term will be to develop the concept of ILMIS, secure a higher-level buy-in, and selecting a host organization. Development of the RBM system should also be an important short-term priority. A fully functioning ILMIS website, perhaps with some development being underway, should be in place by the end of this period.

An important consideration will be to develop the capacity of the host. The policy directive should be clear to identify the objective, key roles of the host as well as the process through which it will collect data/information from different public/private stakeholders. The lining of adequate resources, mobilisation of human resources, and proper infrastructural support should also be achieved within this timeframe. This phase should also involve training of the stakeholders working on dissemination of the labour market information. The training can be conducted by contracted private sector specialists in close collaboration with the government and international agencies such as the ILO, the IOM or the World Bank.

### **Medium-term priorities**

In the medium term, one important objective of the implementation strategy would be to strengthen the system further by considering the results of evaluation exercises. Expanding the dissemination activities to ensure the maximum use by the labour market participants should constitute another priority. The ILMIS dissemination activities should reach out to local administrative levels (for example, to the union/village levels). Along with the website and its use on mobile devices, this phase should implement widespread use of leaflets, pamphlets, video messages and other means to promote ILMIS. Awareness raising development programmes in the communities can also be an integral part of these initiatives.

In this phase, the host organization will play a more proactive role in assessing data gaps and generating information by undertaking complementary surveys and/or analyses. Other stakeholders' (such as students, teachers, jobseekers, trainers, overseas recruiters, and media) capacity-building will also be an important objective.

Continued monitoring and evaluation exercises should inform the management of the progress being made in achieving the results and various stakeholders' contribution to it. Evaluation lessons should be learnt to incorporate any innovations and new approaches and to include new outputs.

### **Long-term issues**

In the long term, the ILMIS host will be more effective in generating resources for undertaking large-scale and in-depth exercises to further compliment the data generation efforts of other organizations. At this stage, ILMIS should be an effective tool for generating information and analysis for national development plans of different time horizons.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the discussions in earlier chapters, this chapter has elaborated the way forward for building an effective and integrated labour market information system for Bangladesh. Even when the existing LMIS is solely focused on the domestic labour market, in its current format it is hardly of any use to workers, employers and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the conspicuous absence of any information on overseas labour market makes it quite alienated from the realities of Bangladesh. One practical approach will, therefore, comprise addressing the current gaps in the existing system while incorporating the international labour market

dimensions into it by moving towards an integrated LMIS. This will be a unique exercise given the existing country experiences, but it will be a practical option for Bangladesh in utilizing the ILMIS as an important means for planning labour market and human resource development while addressing the needs of the workers.

This chapter has also provided a detailed operational guideline for an integrated LMIS in which the roles of different stakeholders have been discussed. Amongst others, selecting a suitable host organization and establishing high-level steering and monitoring body are important preconditions for a successful implementation of the ILMIS. The elaborate data requirements and potential sources of these data were also discussed. The implementation process for a possible ILMIS project has been explained with different steps: from developing the project idea to securing a high-level buy-in to selecting a host to ensuring sustainability. A result-based management system is suggested while implementing the project and particularly in undertaking monitoring and evaluation exercises.







# CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



A labour market information system is a mechanism to manage all information associated with the labour market. It helps stakeholders make informed decisions. The functioning of the labour market in any economy serves as an important determinant of income distribution and inequality, as labour is the primary source of livelihoods for a vast majority of the population in any country. It also allocates labour as a production resource amongst different sectors. Distortions in the labour market can, therefore, affect workers' well-being as well as the performance of productive sectors. LMIS has thus now become an established practice as a service facilitator for labour market participants including, among others, workers, employers, government agencies, and policy analysts.

Bangladesh has recently introduced an LMIS, providing basic information drawn primarily from labour force surveys. Unlike in many other countries, this LMIS is yet to function as a means to directly facilitate workers' participation in the labour market as discussed in this report.<sup>72</sup> Along with this, one important missing element is employment opportunities abroad. This study argues that focusing only on the domestic market makes Bangladesh's LMIS inadequate and does not help realize the full potential benefits of such an information system. This is because the context of Bangladesh is quite different, and the country will likely to continue to rely on overseas markets to provide jobs for its growing workforce.

It has been pointed out that despite a rising share of working-age population since the early 1990s, Bangladesh has so far been unable to cash in the so-called demographic dividend. This is mainly because of a massive underemployment problem along with a low level of labour force participation rate, particularly of women. When productive employment opportunities cannot be ensured for all working-age population, the demographic dividend is not materialized. The currently favourable demographic composition will potentially last for another two decades or so, but the mounting challenge of job creation within the domestic economy seems to suggest the 'dividend' could remain elusive.

It can be inferred from the discussions presented in this study that even if the policy objective of creating two million jobs a year, which has so far been far out of reach, is materialized, it will not be possible to achieve the full potential of the demographic dividend. Along with new entrants to the labour market, if one considers the huge underemployment problem (especially in the farm sector) and the low labour force participation rate, the actual need for job creation would be overwhelming.

The study has highlighted the reality of jobless manufacturing growth that Bangladesh currently confronts. Indeed, if anything, official statistics indicate declining manufacturing employment despite a very high output growth. This has been accompanied by women's falling share in manufacturing jobs. In addition, the high youth unemployment rate and a large proportion of the young population not in employment, education or training is a major cause for concern.

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<sup>72</sup> This issue has been discussed in Chapter 5. For example, information on job opportunities and training programmes that would support worker's skill acquisition do not yet feature in the current system. There is also the issue of its not being user-friendly, particularly for those with limited internet access. The information currently available there also does not make it useful or attractive to workers and employers.



The labour market trends and apparently bleak job-creation prospects indicate the necessity of overseas employment for Bangladeshi workers in the coming years. It is not that securing foreign employment in huge numbers is an easy option. But, given Bangladesh's current situation, international labour migration is being considered a policy priority. Despite the country's sending of migrant workers to various destinations since the mid-1970s, it was as late as last year (2017) when Bangladesh could send 1 million workers in a year for the first time.

An assessment of future employment opportunities shows immense potential for Bangladeshi workers. The rapidly transforming GCC countries will require more workers in the construction sectors. The ever-increasing demand for semi-skilled and skilled labourers in the service sectors is also expected to increase by several folds within a decade or so. There is also increasing demand for manufacturing and construction workers in the Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and the Republic of Korea. Due to an ageing population and falling population growth rates in the Western as well as in the East Asian and Pacific countries, there should be demand for more migrant workers.

However, there are concerns about materializing the potentials. One major constraint is the low skill base of Bangladeshi migrant workers. With the current skill-composition, it is very difficult to secure many productive and remunerative jobs that are important for workers' well-being as well as beneficial for the country in terms of higher remittance inflows. The current recruitment process, in which many migrant workers are regularly exploited, is another challenging area. Most of the workers going abroad for work for the first time are unaware of their rights at work and any support facilities that might be available; they also lack information on workplace and living conditions, skill requirements and career progressions in the destination countries. In most cases, they rely on friends, relatives, and local agents for information.

The absence of proper information flow induces an overwhelming majority of the potential migrants to use middlemen and informal intermediaries, thus exposing them to greater risks of becoming victims of malpractices. For Bangladeshi migrants, the cost of migration is considered to be the highest in the world and the involvement of the intermediaries and their exploitative practices raise the cost of migration.

## Policy recommendations

There is a need for developing the existing LMIS further to make it an important instrument for promoting an efficiently functioning labour market. Such a labour market is dependent on making useful information available to workers and employers, putting in place well-informed job creation strategies, helping develop skills for productive employment, and improving workers' empowerment through information on various aspects ranging from workers' rights and obligations to skill development opportunities to job opportunities. This study has particularly considered addressing information gaps associated with employment opportunities abroad and helping aspirant migrant workers prepare for their effective participation in it. This study has elucidated the importance of foreign labour markets for a growing Bangladeshi labour force faced with underemployment and a low labour force participation rate accompanied by a weak job creation capacity in the domestic economy (Chapter 2); carried out a need assessment for an effective and integrated labour market information system (Chapter 4); and developed an operational guideline while putting forward an implementation strategy (Chapter 5).

Amongst others, the study has:

- Proposed several key features for an optimal and integrated LMIS in Bangladesh;
- Suggested the ownership of the LMIS be with government authorities along with a high-level monitoring body to ensure effective coordination involving a variety of stakeholders;
- Identified and suggested the effective functions of key stakeholders involved in the system;
- Suggested an appropriate autonomous body as the hosting organization of the LMIS;
- Provided an analysis of how the LMIS could work as 'one-stop service facilitation centre' for all stakeholders working on migration-related issues;
- Suggested the nature of the data and information that should be collected for LMIS;
- Provided an implementation strategy for the proposed LMIS;
- Outlined some short, medium and long-term priorities implementing the LMIS

**(a) Incorporate overseas labour market information in an integrated labour market information system (ILMIS) while addressing the gaps in the existing LMIS.**

For Bangladesh, overseas labour markets are already a source of millions of jobs. The likelihoods for further openings are genuinely promising. On the other hand, the emerging trends in the domestic labour market indicate the challenges of generating sufficient employment opportunities for Bangladesh to take advantage of its demographic dividend. Therefore, there is a need to establish an integrated system to cover both domestic and overseas employment information for Bangladeshi workers. Given Bangladesh's massive reliance on foreign markets for its nationals' employment opportunities, an LMIS that is focussed only on the domestic labour market would be partial and may not be reflective of the realities. The recently established BBS LMIS should be developed further by addressing the need for adding practical information for jobseekers and employers that can help the labour market function well. It is important to review the usefulness of the existing LMIS in its current format to labour market participants. Lessons can be drawn from LMIS practices elsewhere with regards to the nature of the information provided and making the system widely accessible to the targeted stakeholders. It should be borne in mind that the reliance on overseas labour markets in other countries may not be as extensive as in Bangladesh. As such, Bangladesh can be innovative in setting up an integrated LMIS (ILMIS).

**(b) Make Use of the integrated labour market information system as an active labour market policy tool.**

Various government ministries and departments, and other agencies play their respective roles in improving the implementation and functioning of labour market policies. The ILMIS should be used as a tool for policy development and resource allocation. An effective ILMIS should have up-to-date information to facilitate the formulation of policies targeting job creation, skill development both for the domestic and international markets, protecting and promoting workers' rights, and other issues. It should also help assess the depth and coverage of policy actions and resources needed to make them operational. Wherever possible, ILMIS should be used as an instrument for assessing the progress being made in achieving the intended outcomes of any policy actions



undertaken. For example, once certain labour market policies are implemented, ILMIS can be used (and/or opportunities should be created to use ILMIS) to monitor and evaluate these policies and the performances of the institutions implementing them. This will ensure an effective demand for the information system in a proactive manner rather than considering the ILMIS merely a statistical exercise. An increased demand for the ILMIS for policy development and implementation purposes will be critical in improving the system continually. This will be particularly useful at an early stage of ILMIS development when workers and other primary stakeholders will need time to get familiarized with it.<sup>73</sup>

**(c) The ILMIS should be adapted to reflect Bangladesh's needs and realities.**

In chapter four of this study, some optimal/desirable features of an integrated information system have been discussed. However, it is worth pointing out that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' template that can be used. Rather, an ILMIS should be designed creatively to serve the purpose in the most effective way.

For developed countries, LMIS provides a lot of emphasis on job matching as jobseekers' search online database for jobs and submit their applications. All job-related information is also posted online to be accessed by the users. These features will have some use in the context of Bangladesh as well. However, given the level of educational attainment of the mass population, there is a need to adapt to different types of information and their presentation styles in order to make them user-friendly. Also, a web-based information system may not be the most effective means for reaching out to a significant proportion of aspirant migrant workers who either have limited access to internet connectivity or do not make use of online access facilities.

**(d) Establish an effective ownership and governance structure of an Integrated Labour Market Information System.**

Given the involvement of various stakeholders, the implementation of ILMIS can be challenging. The first issue is about expanding the existing LMIS to include aspects of overseas labour markets. Given the mandates of different agencies, a broader vision is needed with clear directions and implementation mechanisms. As discussed in Chapter 5, the tasks associated with data collection from different sources, dissemination activities, and mobilizing resources are quite exhaustive tasks. Therefore, a high-level buy-in and ownership is a precondition for the initiation of an ILMIS project. This can be facilitated by promoting the idea of an integrated LMIS and sensitizing various stakeholders for support.

Ownership by higher authorities and the resultant governance would facilitate an expedited and effective stakeholder coordination process. It will also ensure credible resource commitments and enforce accountability. Such ownership will also assist in setting up the visions and anchoring the values in accordance with the core ILMIS objectives.

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<sup>73</sup> TAt an early stage of ILMIS, workers may be slow in using the information system partly because of the time needed to be familiar with it. This could be seen as an indicator of not having enough demand for the ILMIS. However, various government ministries and departments should be able to make use of ILMIS soon after its availability.

**(e) Select an appropriate host for the ILMIS to ensure its effective implementation and dissemination.**

An effective ILMIS will depend on the host organization's capacity and versatile skill set. Analysis of data, identifying data gaps and taking proactive measures to address them, presentation of qualitative information, preparing dissemination material, and training of stakeholders are key responsibilities of the host. In addition, it will proactively seek collaboration with other stakeholders in research and dissemination activities.

An autonomous agency or think-tank with prerequisite capacities could be an ideal host which can provide objective analysis and assessment of the information. The host will also be required to maintain productive working relationships with all relevant government and non-governmental agencies in obtaining information and using their assistance in dissemination activities.

**(f) Information generation capacities related to labour market development need to be strengthened for successful implementation of ILMIS.**

One critical element of LMIS is data collection and analysis. A strong capacity for generating data and information will be a critical success factor for an integrated labour market information system. In this respect, the need for data consistency and the reliability of information should be ensured. Most information on labour market issues are gathered by BBS and BMET and thus their capacity in generating high quality data needs to be enhanced. Data to deal with emerging issues should be extremely valuable under certain circumstances. As such, data collecting agencies should maintain flexibilities in implementing rapid appraisals to provide first-hand information on urgent topical issues.

Gathering and processing qualitative information is often a challenging task. However, given the composition of Bangladesh's workforce, particularly in assessing the needs of vulnerable migrant worker groups (such as women and low-skilled workers), qualitative information will be extremely helpful. Labour market information systems have a general tendency of providing quantitative data. However, the realities of Bangladesh will call for providing qualitative information as well, such as on the processes involved in looking for jobs, applying for visas and changes in visa rules, support measures available for migrant workers, sending money to home, being aware of workplace safety including many other things.

**(g) Capacity-building of the key stakeholders should be ensured to make the integrated labour market information system impactful.**

A variety of stakeholders are involved in ILMIS. Capacity-building of each stakeholder is important for achieving the desired impact of LMIS and needs to be targeted separately. For example, needs of data disseminators and skills trainers are different. Capacity-building could include interpreting the information, the ability to use the system, effective dissemination activities, and identifying data gaps.

A well-structured capacity-building strategy should be adopted as part of the ILMIS implementation. The stakeholders in this regard may include DEMO officials, journalists, workers, trainers and trainees of TVET centres, NGOs working in the relevant fields, and other relevant authorities.





**(h) Ensure an effective collaboration among the stakeholders.**

A stronger collaboration between the stakeholders identified in the LMIS ecosystem is needed for ILMIS to be fully functional and effective. Since a web-based-only system is unlikely to be of use for a large segment of the working-age population, the stakeholders should also comprise of groups and representatives who can help in reaching out to the wider population. The governance structure and the management of the ILMIS project should provide opportunities for strong collaboration among the key stakeholders.

**(i) Creative dissemination strategies to ensure wider use of the ILMIS.**

ILMIS dissemination and ensuring its wider use is not an easy task. Even when a web-based system can work, internet access can be limited for various groups of people in different regions of the country. With wider use of hand-held devices, the web-based system must be suitably designed for portable devices. However, greater attention must be given to ensure people without internet connectivity can access the information.

Dissemination activities should be undertaken at various levels: from district levels to sub-districts to unions to villages. This should be undertaken through UDCs, DC offices, DEMOs, and Post-offices. Local NGOs and community-based organizations should also be part of an effective dissemination strategy.

**(j) Use a results-based management system for the implementation of an ILMIS.**

An effective ILMIS is one that generates impact. It should not be developed merely to provide information but to make it useful to its intended users. With this view to the end, the ILMIS project must consider a robust results framework that should first determine the desired impact and then define activities (outputs) to achieve the results.

The results framework should also facilitate incorporating contributions from all stakeholders in terms of activities, implementation of which will help achieve the overall or specific results. This management system will allow monitoring of regular progress.

The ILMIS must have a monitoring and evaluation framework. The monitoring exercise can be undertaken based on a set of predetermined indicators. Regular scrutiny of these indicators can provide instant assessments of the programme implementation and to consider any measures to boost performance. Monitoring will help gather lessons and experiences to improve practices and to establish accountability of the resources used and results obtained.

Evaluations will determine the continued relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the ILMIS project. If the project is not generating the desired results, an evaluation exercise assesses what could have been done better or differently. Evaluations help keep track of key outcomes and impacts. Following best practices in delivering programmes, a monitoring and evaluation framework should be an integral part of a results-based management (RBM) system. It is a management approach that is focused on achieving results. The RBM technique brings together all relevant components of the programme: outputs, indicators and sources of information to verify the progress towards results. Within this framework, activities can be considered to secure impact. Within the RBM approach, it is possible to consider short-term (or intermediate) outcomes as pathways

to long-run impact. Clearly specified and measurable outputs are then linked to short-term outcomes. The RMB exercise can also bring together various actors and stakeholders and their contributions towards the overall goal envisioned. Moving towards an ILMIS can be sequenced over a reasonable timeframe. Within a short-term (up to 2 years), the main priorities could be, among others, to develop the concept of ILMIS, secure a higher-level buy-in, and selecting a host organization. A fully functioning, yet under-construction ILMIS website should be in place by the end of this period. In the medium term (3 to 5 years), strengthening the system further and expanding the dissemination mechanism for ensuring a maximum use by the labour market participants should be the priority. Over a long-term horizon (after 5 years into operation), the ILMIS is expected to be dynamic and well-functioning system. At this stage, the priority should be to upgrade the system on a regular basis, employing the state-of-the-art design and adapting increasingly more user-friendly and attractive dissemination tools to ensure effective use by wider population groups all over the country. The importance of an integrated labour market information system cannot be overemphasized for Bangladesh. Employment generation, skill development, and protection and promotion of workers' welfare are some of the areas where ILMIS can play a critical role. The ILMIS as a tool to facilitate informed decision-making at various levels (for example, at policy, enterprise and individual worker levels) will only be effective when there is credible and adequate information available and when it is being actually used by the relevant stakeholders. On both these counts, Bangladesh must make substantial improvements. While the existing body of data and information from various sources does suggest certain gaps, nevertheless it demonstrates the potential for developing further capacities. Making the information needs-oriented for workers and others, however, deserves a careful policy attention. Bangladesh's movement towards an effective and integrated labour market information system would constitute a massive opportunity in transforming the way information can be generated and utilized in achieving better labour market outcomes, supporting workers' empowerment and economic development.







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