

Strengthening Bangladesh's Labour Migration Institutions for Skilled and Competitive Migration

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Bangladesh relies heavily on labour migration as a source of national income, with remittances constituting a substantial portion of its GDP (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022). Technical Training Centres (TTCs) and District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMOs) serve as the backbone of the overseas employment system, providing training, certification, pre-departure orientation, counselling, and grievance management. However, these institutions face operational and financial gaps that undermine their effectiveness. Insufficient funding, outdated curricula, weak institutional coordination, and limited international recognition of certifications collectively diminish the preparedness, protection, and global competitiveness of Bangladeshi migrant workers (Siddiqui & Abrar, 2020; CPD, 2025). This brief synthesizes findings from a multi-stakeholder consultation and provides actionable policy recommendations for strengthening TTCs and DEMOs. Its objective is to enhance governance, institutional capacity, market alignment, and financial sustainability to ensure better migrant worker outcomes.

Background

Bangladesh sends over one million workers abroad annually, making labour migration a critical socio-economic pillar (ILO, 2022). TTCs and DEMOs are responsible for equipping potential migrants with market-relevant skills, providing guidance on overseas employment procedures, and addressing grievances during the migration cycle. Despite this central role, their functioning is constrained by structural, financial, and operational limitations.

The mismatch between domestic training and international job requirements results in under-skilled migrants and limited earning potential. Further, the absence of coordinated monitoring and evidence-based curricula hinders the ability to respond to global labour market trends, including the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

(4IR) for digital and technical skills (World Bank, 2023; Siddiqui, 2019). Strengthening these institutions is essential for maximizing the socio-economic benefits of migration and protecting the rights of migrant workers.

Challenges

1. Budgetary and Operational Constraints

Financial limitations remain one of the most pressing challenges for TTCs and DEMOs. Revenue allocations for these institutions have remained largely stagnant, limiting investments in modern training equipment, digital infrastructure, and institutional capacity (CPD, 2025).

Predictable, multi-year budgeting is often absent, which undermines long-term planning for skill development programs. As a result, DEMOs are unable to provide adequate counselling, pre-

departure orientation, or post-return reintegration services. The lack of operational resources directly affects the quality of training and the ability of institutions to meet the growing demand for skilled migrants, leaving workers unprepared for overseas employment (ILO, 2022).

2. Mismatch Between Training and International Labour Market Demand

TTCs often provide generic training that is insufficiently aligned with the specific skills demanded by host countries. Curricula are frequently outdated, lacking specialized technical, language, or sector-specific courses. For example, despite the high demand for construction, manufacturing, and caregiving professionals abroad, TTCs do not consistently offer targeted modules for these sectors, resulting in unskilled or semi-skilled migrants facing employment challenges (Siddiqui & Abrar, 2020). Additionally, certifications issued by TTCs are often not recognized internationally, further limiting the employment opportunities and earning potential of Bangladeshi workers (Rahman & Kabir, 2021).

3. Weak Institutional Coordination and Governance

Institutional fragmentation among TTCs, DEMOs, BMET, and the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) creates inefficiencies and duplication of efforts. These agencies operate in silos, limiting information sharing, coordination, and monitoring performance. Without robust evaluation and transparent reporting systems, it is difficult to track outcomes such as post-deployment employment rates or returnee reintegration (Siddiqui, 2019). Fragmented governance also reduces accountability, creating challenges in aligning training programs with national and international labour market needs (CPD, 2025).

4. Reintegration and Support for Returnee Migrants

Returnee migrants face significant reintegration challenges due to the limited capacity of DEMOs. Dedicated counselling, career guidance, and survival centres are insufficient or absent, leaving many returnees without access to social protection programs or employment opportunities in the domestic labour market (Siddiqui & Abrar, 2020). The lack of systematic tracking of returnees' experiences prevents evidence-based improvements in TTC curricula and services, perpetuating skill mismatches for future migrants.

5. Certification, Accountability, and Human Resource Capacity

TTC instructors and DEMO staff often lack professional development opportunities, career progression, and training in contemporary labour market requirements, affecting motivation and service quality (ILO, 2022). Additionally, the absence of nationally standardized and internationally recognized certifications reduces the credibility of TTC training. Unauthorized certificate issuance and weak oversight exacerbate institutional weaknesses, limiting the effectiveness of TTCs and DEMOs in preparing migrant workers for global employment markets (CPD, 2025; World Bank, 2023).

Policy Recommendations

Increase and Strategically Allocate Revenue Budgets

Multi-year, predictable funding should be allocated to TTCs and DEMOs to enable infrastructure upgrades, modern equipment procurement, and ICT integration. Performance-based budgeting linked to training outcomes and employment placement should be introduced to incentivize institutional effectiveness.

Modernization of Training and Curriculum

TTC curricula must be updated to align with international labour market standards and destination-country requirements. Language proficiency, 4IR digital skills, and sector-specific technical training should be prioritized. Regular

labour-market assessments are essential to ensure program relevance.

Strengthening Coordination and Institutional Governance

Operational collaboration among MoEWOE, BMET, NSDA, DEMOs, and TTCs should be enhanced. Clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms must be established. Pre-departure orientation, grievance management, and psychosocial counselling services should be improved. Internationally recognized certification standards should be adopted to ensure worker mobility and credibility.

Reintegration and Returnee Support

DEMO capacity should be expanded to provide counselling, survival centres, and career guidance for returnees. Structured reintegration programs should be developed to facilitate smooth transition into domestic employment or entrepreneurship.

Public-Private and International Partnerships

MoUs with destination-country authorities should be strengthened for skills recognition and job

Conclusion

Labour migration remains one of Bangladesh's most important development pathways, and the effectiveness of this system depends heavily on the institutional strength of Technical Training Centres (TTCs) and District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMOs). As this brief demonstrates, persistent financing gaps, outdated training systems, fragmented governance, and weak market alignment collectively limit the ability of these institutions to prepare and protect migrant workers. These challenges ultimately affect worker outcomes abroad and reduce the broader economic and social returns of migration.

Addressing these constraints requires a coordinated reform agenda that links predictable

placement. Engagement with trade unions, civil society, and the private sector is essential for designing and delivering market-aligned training.

Human Resource Capacity Development

Career progression, professional development, and incentives for TTC instructors and DEMO staff should be prioritized. Personnel must be trained in contemporary overseas employment processes to improve institutional performance.

Data, Documentation, and Market Research

A national database capturing returnee experiences should be maintained. Continuous tracking of training outcomes and employment results is required. Establishing a dedicated Migration Institute would support ongoing research on global labour markets, demand trends, and policy innovations.

Worker Protection and Access to Information

Financial literacy, digital literacy, and cultural orientation should be integrated into training programs. Online registration systems should be streamlined, hidden costs minimized, and access to counselling and support services expanded.

financing with curriculum modernization, stronger institutional accountability, and improved inter-agency coordination. Strengthening certification systems, expanding reintegration support, and aligning training with international labour market demand are not standalone reforms; they are mutually reinforcing components of a more responsive migration governance framework.

Investing in TTCs and DEMOs is therefore an investment in Bangladesh's human capital and long-term development strategy. A more capable and market-responsive institutional system will enhance migrant preparedness, improve employment outcomes, and strengthen the country's competitiveness in global labour markets. Translating consultation-driven recommendations into sustained policy action will

ensure that migration continues to function as a safe, skilled, and development-oriented pathway for Bangladeshi workers and the national economy.

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