Economic migration has been an increasingly important part of Bangladesh’s development story.

Number of outbound migrants (1000s of migrants, left axis), remittances share of GDP (percent, right axis).

Source: BMET, and KNOMAD Remittance Database
Temporary migrant workers are concentrated in a handful of destinations, primarily in the GCC.

Distribution of migrant stock by destination, 2017 (percent of all Bangladeshi migrants)

- Saudi Arabia: 16%
- United Arab Emirates: 12%
- Kuwait: 4%
- Malaysia: 4%
- Others: 2%
- Other MENA: 6%
- KSA: 56%
- Singapore: 4%
- Others: 5%
- Kuwait: 4%
- Oman: 8%
- Qatar: 8%
- Malaysia: 10%

Source: BMET, and KNOMAD Bilateral Migration Database
The high concentration of migrants in a handful of destinations makes the flows vulnerable to global and host country shocks (economic and policy).

Source: BMET
Migrant workers from Bangladesh face some of the highest migration costs in the world.

Migration cost to Kuwait (months of wages)

Source: KNOMAD Costs of Migration Surveys, and Safe Migration project data
Migrants also face several risks

Top six complaints from returning migrants (percent of responses)

- Wage-related problem
- Police harassment and law...
- Scarcity of employment
- Physical and mental torture
- Problems related to residence
- Language
- Too much work

Source: ILO 2015
Challenges amidst the opportunities

- High concentration of markets
  - Destinations mostly in the GCC
  - Narrow set of mostly lower-skilled occupations
  - Few options for female migrants

- High exposure to global and host-country shocks
  - e.g. commodity prices, macro crises, *Nitaqat*-type reforms

- High costs of recruitment

- High vulnerability
Migration governance framework geared/gearing up

Coordination mechanisms
• Inter-ministerial Committee on Migration and Development
• Nation Action Plan for Skills Development and Migration Management

Bilateral arrangements
• Bilateral Labor Agreements (e.g. Kuwait, Malaysia, and South Korea)
• MOUs with a number of countries, not legally binding (e.g. GCC, Malaysia, East Asia)

Legal and policy reforms
• Wage Earners Welfare Board Act 2017
• Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013 & Rules
• Emigration Rules 2002
• Recruiting Agents’ Conduct and License Rules 2002
• Wage Earners Welfare Fund Rules 2002
World Bank support across several domains

• Dealing with shocks in host country
  • 2012 Repatriation and Livelihood Restoration for Migrant Workers – repatriation and transition assistance for 37,000 Bangladeshi workers from Libya during war

• Upgrading skills
  • Support to BMET”s technical and vocational training centers through Education GP’s STEP program

• Reducing vulnerability of migrant workers
  • 2013 Safe Migration for Bangladeshi Workers
  • Demonstration pilot that established Community Based Organizations (CBOs) for improved access and reliable information at the community level for migrants and their families to make safe migration choices.
Safe migration: innovations

- Training opportunities extended to local level
- Looking after migrants’ families
- Utilizing knowledge from returnee migrants
- Social welfare/protection
Ongoing knowledge creation and management

• Understanding the impacts of return migration
  • Destination representative survey of returning migrants
  • Key question(s): do the labor market outcomes of returning migrants differ from their peers? Under what circumstances would they need help?

• Understanding institutional systems and vulnerability
  • Regional study on vulnerability of migrants at destination
  • Comparison of institutional systems – welfare boards, labor attaches, BLAs – across countries
  • South-south knowledge sharing
Questions? Comments?

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