PROTTASHA প্রত্যাশা
Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance

This Project is led by
Government of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Funded by
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IOM
UN MIGRATION
Implemented by
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Ensuring Active Inclusion of Diaspora in Bangladesh's National Development

Abul Barkat
Asmar Osman
Md Fazle Rabby
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HDRC
Human Development Research Centre
humane development through research and action

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Abbreviations

a2i, PMO	Access to Information, Prime Minister's Office
ACFROC	All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese
ACIS	Association of Colombian Researchers in Switzerland
BAB	Bangladesh Accreditation Board
BAB	Bangladesh Association of Bank
BA	Business Associations
BASIS	Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services
BB	Bangladesh Bank
BBCC	British Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce
BBCCI	British Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry
BCCIJ	Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan
BDS	Bangladesh Dental Society
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
BEA	Bangladesh Economic Association
BEC	Bangladesh Election Commission
BEPZA	Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority
BEZA	Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority
BGN	Brain Gain Network
BHTPA	Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority
BIDA	Bangladesh Investment Development Authority
BIRA	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BMANA	Bangladesh Medical Association of North America
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited
BP	Bangladesh Parliament
BPC	Bangladesh *Parjatan* Corporation
BSEC	Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission
BTB	Bangladesh Tourism Board
BUET	Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology
CE	Civil Engineering
CFO	Commission on Filipinos Overseas
CGT	Capital Gain Tax
CII	Confederation of Indian Industries
CIP	Commercially Important Person
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
D2D	Diaspora to Development
DAs	Diaspora Associations
DCCI	Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry
DEFRA	Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
DEMO	District Employment and Manpower Office
DESAT	Diaspora Engagement Self-Assessment Tool
DIA	Diaspora Investment Alliance
DIRI	Diaspora Investment Readiness Index
DISYS	Digital Intelligence Systems
DKN	Diaspora Knowledge Network
DPs	Development Partners

DST	Department of Science and Technology
DV	Diversity Visa
DW	Deutsche Welle
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECR	Emigration Check Required
EEE	Electrical and Electric Engineering
EMIX	Emigrant Policies Index
ENAHPA	Ethiopian North American Health Professionals Association
EPBB	Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh
EPFL	École Polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FISD	Forum for Indian Science Diplomacy
FY	Financial Year
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDND	Global Database of Nigerians in the Diaspora
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GSU	George Mason University
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HTA	Home Town Association
ICB	Investment Corporation of Bangladesh
ICM	India Centre for Migration
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDF-OI	India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians
ILO	International Labour Organization
IME	Institute for Mexicans Abroad
IMSCM&D	Interministerial Steering Committee Steering Committee on Migration and Development
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPO	Initial Public Offering
ISCB	Indo-Swiss Collaboration in Biotechnology
IMSCOE	Interministerial Steering Committee on Overseas Employment
ISPAB	Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh
KIP	Know India Programme
LBN	Lebanon Business Network
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LGI's	Local Government Institutions
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MiGOF	Migration Governance Framework
MMS	Multimedia Messaging Service
MoC	Ministry of Commerce
MoCA	Ministry of Cultural Affairs
MoCAT	Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoLGRDC	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives

MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MSUK	*Manob Sakti Unnayan Kendro*
MYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NAE	National Academy of Engineering
NBR	National Board of Revenue
NFCD	Non-Resident Foreign Currency Deposit
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NHS	National Health Service
NID	National Identity Card
NIDW	National Identity Wing, Bangladesh Election Commission
NIRW	National Identity Registration Wing, Bangladesh Election Commission
NITA	Non-Resident Investor's Taka Account
NRB	Non-Resident Bangladeshi
NRI	Non-Resident Indian
NSDC	National Skills Development Authority
OCI	Overseas Citizen of India
OCI	Overseas Citizenship of India
OIFC	Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OOCA	Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs
OWRC	Overseas Workers Resource Centre
PDIA	Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation
PIO	Persons of Indian Origin
PKB	Probashi Kallyan Bank
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
R&D	Research and Development
ROs	Research Organisations
RPBD	Regional Pravas Bharatiya Divas Conferences
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SMS	Short Messaging Service
SPDC	Scholarship Program for Diaspora Children
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine
STI	Science, Technology, and Innovation
TOAB	Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh
UDPB	US Dollar Premium Bond
UGC	University Grants Commission
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
USD	US Dollar
USDIB	US Dollar Investment Bond
WEDB	Wage Earner Development Bond
WEWB	Wage Earners' Welfare Board

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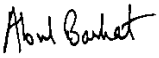
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Executive Summary

Background and objective

There is no universal definition of diaspora, but none can deny their existence and importance. "*Bangladeshi diaspora*"- in this study - refers to the "*Bangladeshi persons who have taken citizenship of another country or in the process of getting it or living there permanently, or were born or raised in another country as a Bangladeshi-descendant*".Bangladesh recognises the significance of diaspora inclusion in national development. In this respect, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) identified the need to study this relatively unexplored topic. In response, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – under a project, titled "Bangladesh: Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance" (Prottasha), funded by the European Union and led by the Government of Bangladesh – commissioned the Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) to conduct a study on this issue. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) directly guided and supervised the study.

The study identifies policies, institutional challenges and possible measures to ensure the active inclusion of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the national development of Bangladesh. It applies a national lens to evaluate the international instruments, mechanisms, and practices. Also, it identifies some of the active diaspora organisations.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative) with different diagnostic tools. This study collected primary data through semi-structured interviews, discussions and consultations with the target groups. Secondary information was acquired through an extensive literature review. Collected primary and secondary data triangulates for analysis. The study uses comprehensive primary data – primarily qualitative – collected from 48 diaspora members, eight diaspora organisations, and two diaspora-invested business entities to understand the demand side. Conversely, to understand the supply-side, the study conducted 25 key informant interviews with concerned persons from the relevant government organisations, business associations, development partners, Ambassadors, civil society, media, and academia. The study maps the current locations of the diaspora communities and estimates their numbers. It maps the resources and interests of the Bangladeshi diaspora. It assesses the diaspora's existing and potential economic contribution.

The team used email, telephone, internet-based communication platforms, and a few in-person discussions maintaining COVID-19 safety measures available In Dhaka for the interviews. Table 1.3.2 summarises the details.

For analysis, the study devises and uses a *5-R approach: Recognition, Respect, Return and Reintegration, Rights, and Resource Endowments* (human and financial resources) for analysis. The study followed three systematic steps: (i) Analyse the current state, (ii) Identify the ideal future state, and (iii) Recommend bridging that gap. In analysing, this study considers three broad aspects in the applicable cases: (i) Economic, (ii) Social, and (iii) Political. Also, the study finds the global and regional tools, policy guidelines, existing data platforms and assesses their adaptability in the local context. It identifies the pertinent challenges, namely in the three fronts: (i) General, (ii) Policy, and (iii) Institutional. Finally, the study considers the differences among the diaspora communities across the regions of the world.

The recommendations made under this study are applicable for a broader period. It considers the COVID-19 pandemic as an exogenous factor. Therefore, need-based studies will be required to accommodate the pandemic-induced changed scenario. Nonetheless, the recommendations forwarded in this study would remain valid in principle.

Diaspora mapping

There are no official data on the size of the Bangladeshi diaspora. According to the research, the estimated number of Bangladeshi diaspora population is around 2.4 million. The United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) are the two key host countries where many Bangladeshi expatriates stay permanently. A large group of Bangladeshi diaspora reside in Italy too. A portion of the Bangladeshi diaspora members lives in Japan, Australia, Greece, Canada, Spain, Germany, South Africa, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and other countries.

A good portion of the diaspora may invest in Bangladesh in many forms. Based on the discussion with the diaspora business association representative and informed diaspora members, the study estimates that 70,000 to 80,000 diaspora members are potential investors in the productive sector (e.g., business, industry). The current research estimates that the number of potential investors in the financial sector (e.g., bond, share) ranges between USD 125,000 to 140,000. It also estimates that the total potential diaspora investment ranges between USD 9.9 and 11 billion. In the fiscal year (FY) 2019-20, Bangladesh's total inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was only USD 2.37 billion. Apart from financial resources, diaspora members can contribute through their human resources—specialised skills, knowledge and technologies. The study estimates that 21,000 to 30,000 members of the diaspora could contribute to Bangladesh through their technical knowledge, skills, and interests. However, there is no inventory of this information.

The discussion with the diaspora members reveals that, in general, the Bangladeshi diaspora in their host countries lives in a better economic state compared to their social position—in terms of cultural assimilation with the mainstream communities and migratory status. Nonetheless, the assimilation of younger generations into mainstream society of the host countries has accelerated in recent years. Members of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK, USA, and Canada, as concentrated in some geographical pockets in those countries, are becoming collectively strong in the host country's politics—from the local to central governments.

Policy and institutional recognition

According to the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 of Bangladesh, "*Diaspora are the expatriates who are staying abroad for a longer period and have taken nationality of the host country or willing to take the nationality but at the same time willing to keep relation with Bangladesh and want to contribute to this country's socio-economic development*". However, the diaspora descendants get no policy recognition, and no framework covers the much-needed categorisation of the diaspora. There is a lack of a specific strategy or framework, plan or programme to facilitate diaspora inclusion. There are few awards and facilities that recognise their financial and economic contributions. However, no policy framework addresses their non-economic contributions. Diaspora associations' efforts even remain unacknowledged. The concerned authorities inform that there has been some progress in ensuring diaspora members' rights in citizenship, voting rights, and national identity cards. Nonetheless, there are significant legal and implementation gaps between the diaspora members' demand and supply-side response from the concerned authorities.

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) recognises diaspora members in Bangladesh's Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and Bangladesh Missions maintain functional ties with the diaspora in host countries. However, the mechanism remains unstructured, having no central database. Bangladesh Bank facilitates provisions for the financial inclusion of the diaspora. Nonetheless, other relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations lack the necessary policy support to address the needs of diaspora members and ensure their integration into national development. Due to a lack of comprehensive policy guidelines and institutional frameworks, the inclusion of diaspora members in national development receives scant attention from relevant authorities in terms of programmes and activities. In general, institutional mechanisms do not allow diaspora inclusion in development activities' planning and implementation phases. No institutional mechanism deals with the issue of the return and reintegration of the diaspora. There are some diplomatic endeavours to uphold the rights of the diaspora members in the host countries, but these remain sporadic. Resource constraints are not a significant issue; instead, the absence of holistic strategic planning with distinct responsibilities for each entity weakens the institutionalisation process.

Still, the mechanism is customised by missions and does not follow any specific guidelines or framework. The Missions also try to maintain a diaspora database, but no central database facilitates the efforts

Role of the diaspora members in promoting Bangladesh's image

There can be many efforts that can support establishing or re-establishing the country's image internationally. Diaspora members, in many ways, may contribute in this regard. Diaspora groups can simultaneously act as investors, consumers, tourists, public diplomats, and spokespersons. In doing so, they promote the country image. The five broad areas they can contribute to promoting this image are—*Country Branding, Diaspora Diplomacy, Nostalgia Trade, Diaspora Tourism,* and *Diaspora Network.*

Many view *country branding* as a mere marketing strategy. In contrast, marketing is only a tiny part of it. It is a process where intangible attributes and efforts are more crucial than only tangible ones. Bangladeshi diaspora members attempt to play their respective roles in branding their origin country by showcasing the culture and heritage. *Diaspora diplomacy* refers to soft power-driven diplomatic endeavours performed by the diaspora on behalf of the origin country. With their increasing social and political foothold in the host countries, Bangladeshi diaspora members could play their respective part if better supported by the origin country. *Nostalgia Trade* refers to the trading of nostalgia-inducing and preferred products from the origin country. Nostalgic products help strengthen cultural diplomacy in host countries. *Diaspora Tourism* also acts *as* a means of country branding. Reversely, country branding boosts diaspora tourism. Also, the host country residents get influenced by such tourism. *Diaspora Tourism, however,* is an untapped area for the Bangladeshi diaspora. "*Diaspora Network"*- formally and informally formed inter- intra and external networking among diaspora associations and other associations or networks. Strict political and regional divide hampers creating a united and robust forum among the numerous Bangladeshi diaspora associations.

Bangladeshi diaspora groups contribute to the country's image-building efforts in various ways and varying degrees. The difficulty arises from the absence of a guiding, facilitative, and responsive state mechanism in these endeavours, backed by a formal system of regular and output-driven communications with diaspora networks.

Economic contribution

Diaspora members, like the short-term migrant workers, send a significant amount of remittance regularly to Bangladesh. The remittance-sending's analysis from two of the largest host countries for the Bangladeshi diaspora —the USA and UK—clearly shows that they send a notable amount of remittance. Around 13 per cent of the total Bangladeshi expatriates (for this study, it denotes short-term migrants and diaspora) living in these two countries sent 20.7 per cent of total remittance sent to Bangladesh in the FY 2019-20. It is mention-worthy that this pattern of sending remittances has remained similar over the years. Also, during the grave crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the diaspora members continued their financial contribution. Some diaspora members informed that the GoB decision about the two per cent cash incentive on remittances announced in mid-2019 encouraged remittance flows through official channels.

The concerned authorities of Bangladesh confirm that the Savings Bonds for Non-resident Bangladeshis (NRB) offered by the Government could not become popular; the relevant sales data even shows a decline in sales. The discussion with the diaspora members reveals that the bonds are not well-known among them and suggests further planned promotional activities. Conversations with the diaspora members and the concerned authorities of Bangladesh confirm that other financial instruments also could not effectively engage the diaspora. Their participation in the country's capital market is negligible. Diaspora-financed NRB banks cannot adequately serve the need of the diaspora members. The GoB-initiated Probashi Kallyan Bank (PKB) also does not have diaspora-focused financial products.

There is no accurate disaggregated data of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from the diaspora. The relevant diaspora associations and Bangladeshi business communities have informed that only a tiny portion of the Bangladeshi diaspora directly invests in Bangladesh's productive sectors and sub-sectors. It is notable that, in comparison to the GDP size, the FDI inflow amount is low. In FY 2019-20, the net FDI inflow was 0.72 per cent of the country's GDP, while it was 1.8 per cent in India. The concerned representatives of the diaspora associations reported that Bangladesh could not attract foreign investors, including diaspora members, due to a lack of bureaucratic accountability and transparency demonstrated by corruption and red-tape culture.

Social contribution

Social contributions from the diaspora members have three main aspects: *civic, intellectual* and *philanthropic*. Members of the diaspora also get social remittances from the host countries. Transferring social remittances is challenging due to political and socio-cultural differences between host and origin countries and domestic political polarisation. Bangladeshi diaspora interlocutors and concerned government agencies need an institutional platform at the local level to facilitate and oversee the transfer of social remittances to their ancestral families. Despite various efforts, the most recent planning document of the country—the 8th Five-Year Plan—identifies that the skills level and productivity of the country's workforce have not been increased sufficiently. As a result, it faces an obstacle in its development voyage due to a lack of skilled professionals. The intellectual contribution of the diaspora happens through knowledge and skill transfer to the origin country. Brain drain is the negative aspect of the professionals' permanent migration abroad, replaced by brain gain and brain circulation. Brain drain is not entirely preventable. Instead, focusing on brain gain by engaging Bangladeshi diaspora professional's paramount will be helpful. Diaspora associations suggested developing an online-based professional network. Philanthropic attributes of the diaspora are expressed by extending hands with aid in different forms: social, economic, political. The diaspora members propose to form a fund with the philanthropic contribution of the Bangladeshi expatriates, including the diaspora, for the welfare of the bereaved expatriates and their families.

Conclusion and recommendations

A *whole-of-government approach* ensuring horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of Government and a broad multi-stakeholder engagement through a *whole-of-society approach* is crucial to ensure active inclusion of Bangladeshi diaspora in national development. It necessitates a formal institutional mechanism to ensure the diaspora's active participation in its policymaking process to re-establish ownership in its development. A well-coordinated longer-term strategic vision including formal recognition of the diaspora will lay the groundwork for diaspora inclusion in the country's development to be successful. Harnessing this potential requires following the "5-R approach" in the national policies and strategies. The first 4-Rs (*Recognition, Respect, Rights, and Return and Re-integration*) are the responsibility of the Government and other relevant stakeholders in Bangladesh to ensure the 5th "R" (*Resources—financial and human)* from the diaspora members to the country's development.

The study suggests creating (or renaming the Interministerial Steering Committee on Overseas Employment) an "Interministerial Steering Committee Steering Committee on Migration and Development (IMSCM&D)" chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister, with a mandate to cover diaspora issues. The proposed IMSCM&D could take responsibility as the highest level of authority for policy guidance, coordination, and follow-up, covering all aspects of migration and development. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) — would act as key agencies of the IMSCM&D. "Coordination" among the stakeholders will be a critical factor in its success. The implementation machinery needs to accommodate inclusive public monitoring and overseeing mechanism.

A "*Diaspora Engagement Strategy*" (*including a re-integration mechanism*) could play a pivotal role in embarking on the pathway to include Bangladeshi diaspora in national development. Amendments to the "Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016" are also required. Through a consultative process, the *Diaspora Engagement Strategy* should define the diaspora by categories of generations. The proposed IMSCM&D could assign a relevant agency to develop this strategy, backed by systematic research.

The study includes 47 specific recommendations under 13 broad categories, indicating the lead and partner implementing agencies, along with a time frame. It consists of the recommendations in an action plan to support developing a comprehensive strategy to fit the Annual Development Programmes and national policy and planning documents.

No intervention will produce significant results without a strong political commitment. Members of the Bangladeshi diaspora can contribute meaningfully to the national development only if a culture of "decent politics" is established at every level.