

Sharing Responsibility for the Rohingya Crisis

What Role Can Labor Mobility Agreements Play?

Mahreen Khan and Helen Dempster

Bangladesh provides a significant global public good by hosting over one million Rohingya refugees. Most are living in camps in Cox's Bazar district, where local resources and livelihoods are strained. The refugee situation is likely to be protracted and medium-term planning is critical. CGD has been working with local and international partners to understand what that medium-term response could look like. This is one of five publications where we outline steps for developing a medium-term plan for Bangladesh, to benefit refugees and their host community alike. The other four cover forest and landscape restoration, policy priorities, trade, and private sector investment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cox's Bazar, one of Bangladesh's most climate-vulnerable and economically disadvantaged regions, is hosting over a million Rohingya refugees from neighboring Myanmar. The vast majority are concentrated in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar's Ukhia and Teknaf subdistricts, where refugees outnumber the local population nearly three to one. In a region where a third of the local population lives below the poverty line,¹ the additional pressure of the refugee crisis poses significant economic and social challenges, such as increased cost of living, labor market effects, climate vulnerability, competition for limited public resources, and security risks.²

While the ultimate goal remains safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation of the refugees back to Myanmar, realistic scenarios for repatriation show significant numbers of Rohingya will remain in Bangladesh for more than 10 years.³ Consequently, there is growing interest in trying to move be-

- 1 Compared to the national level of 25 percent. Alberto Francesco Lemma, Maria Quattri, Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Caitlin Wake, Selim Raihan, & Abu Eusuf, "Strategies for Inclusive Growth in Cox's Bazar. The Asia Foundation Economic Dialogue on Inclusive Growth: Research Report No. 4", 2018, <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/EDIG-No.4-Strategies-for-inclusive-growth-in-Coxs-Bazar.pdf>.
- 2 "Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities", United Nations Development Programme, November 2018, <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/bangladesh/docs/Publications/Pub-2019/Impacts%20of%20the%20Rohingya%20Refugee%20Influx%20on%20Host%20Communities.pdf>, accessed 7 August 2019.
- 3 UNDP Bangladesh Country Office, "Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities," November 2018, https://issuu.com/bdundp/docs/impacts_of_the_rohingya_refugee_inf.

yond the existing short-term aid-based solutions to inclusive, medium-term approaches that include economic, environmental, and human development in the region.⁴ This latter set of approaches can serve the interests of both host and refugee communities in Cox’s Bazar, while also contributing to Bangladesh’s long-term development agenda.

In this note, we discuss one of these approaches: promoting labor mobility agreements with a strong link to employment-oriented skills development for Bangladeshis and Rohingya. Such interventions can enable the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to mitigate the economic stress of the crisis (at the local and national level), while expanding on mutually beneficial labor migration opportunities, which continue to be a focus of Bangladesh’s national development agenda.⁵ These approaches will ensure the international community supports Bangladesh in addressing the Rohingya crisis, referred to here as “responsibility sharing.”

We present three ways in which labor mobility agreements, complemented by employment-oriented skills development initiatives, could support host communities in Cox’s Bazar, Rohingya refugees, and Bangladesh’s national development objectives.

1. Upskill the host community under a Global Skill Partnership model

Labor mobility opportunities remain underutilized due to a mismatch between demand in countries of destination and the supply of Bangladeshi migrant workers with the competencies and experience needed to meet that demand.⁶ The Global Skill Partnership model addresses this skills mismatch.⁷ A Global Skill Partnership is a bilateral agreement between a country of origin and a country of destination whereby the latter invests in the training of migrants in the former before they move, in targeted skills needed in both countries. Some trainees remain in the country of origin (the “home” track), increasing human capital, while others move to the country of destination (the “away” track), plugging skills gaps and increasing their incomes.

A Global Skill Partnership pilot in Cox’s Bazar could train locals and build on existing skill development initiatives, funded through bilateral official development assistance (ODA),⁸ and negotiated with countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and those in the European Union (EU). The model is designed to address specific skill shortages in countries of destination⁹ while granting them greater control over the migration process. These countries could work with the GoB to create special provisions for inclusion of the Rohingya community as part of the “home” track. This would allow the refugees to contribute economically to Myanmar if repatriated, or to Bangladesh if temporary work permits can be made available.

4 Irene Yuan Sun and Cindy Huang, “Designing a Medium-Term Response for the Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Ideas for Bangladesh, the International Community, and the Private Sector,” forthcoming CGD report which will be available at <https://www.cgdev.org/page/solutions-for-bangladesh-hosts-refugees>.

5 Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016-FY2020, 2016, General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/sites/unicef.org.bangladesh/files/2018-10/7th_FYP_18_02_2016.pdf.

6 “Skills for the international labour market: Bangladesh country report”, p. xiii, ILO, 2015, http://apskills.ilo.org/resources/skills-for-the-international-labour-market-bangladesh-country-report/at_download/file1.

7 Michael Clemens, “Global Skill Partnerships: A Proposal for Technical Training in a Mobile World (Brief)”, The Center for Global Development, October 2017, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/global-skill-partnerships-proposal-technical-training-in-mobile-world-brief>.

8 For more information, please visit <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/60103.html>.

9 For example, a need for skilled ICT workers in Belgium’s Flanders region supplied by Moroccan ICT workers who receive extensive training prior to migration as in the case of the Morocco - Flanders Partnership model.

2. Extend labor mobility agreements with Gulf Cooperation Council and East and South-east Asian countries

International labor migration is an integral part of Bangladesh's current and future development and growth strategy.¹⁰ Initiatives to extend labor mobility agreements can thus serve a dual purpose: promoting economic benefits and enhancing responsibility sharing. On the first, such migration can benefit migrants directly through alternative sources of income, while also supporting their families and local economies through remittances and contributing more broadly to Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves. On the second, improving access to employment abroad may moderately mitigate competition for wages and resources in Cox's Bazar¹¹ (if locals from that area are preferentially selected). More importantly, this approach shows solidarity with Bangladeshi host communities, a narrative that could help ease the recent rise in social tension.¹²

While this approach is theoretically possible with all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and newly industrialized East and Southeast Asian countries, in this note we focus on countries that already have bilateral labor mobility agreements in place with Bangladesh, have expressed some commitment to responsibility sharing, and have demonstrated mutual benefit from such arrangements. Consequently, we focus on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar among the GCC countries; and Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong Special Administrative Regime (SAR) in the East and Southeast Asian region.¹³

3. Promote limited labor migration opportunities for Rohingya refugees

In addition to traditional refugee resettlement, a final option would be to explore new opportunities for the direct labor migration for the Rohingya through programs such as Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB). TBB is conducting a pilot for a small number of Syrian refugees based in Lebanon and Jordan, matching them with employment opportunities in Canada and Australia (with plans for expansion into the Middle East). While TBB is still in the initial phases of its operation (10 to 15 families are currently in the program), a similar pilot for a small number of applicants could be applied to the Rohingya population, creating pathways to citizenship and/or permanent resettlement in a third country. A full mapping of skills as a first step could help identify potential candidates for such a pilot. Additionally, given the low literacy levels among the Rohingya,¹⁴ a TBB pilot could be linked to local skills training programs, helping refugees in the camps develop the necessary profiles over time. Resettlement initiatives such as this can benefit Bangladesh by reducing pressure and increasing remittances.

All the labor mobility options presented above must account for the Rohingya population's preferences for mobility; ensure safe working conditions; and provide accessible and affordable opportunities through an overhauled intermediation system. Provided these conditions are met, the above options

10 Roughly half a million workers traveling overseas annually for the past decade sending back remittances that comprise the second largest source of foreign currency. Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET).

11 Abdur Razzaque, "The Rohingya Refugee Crises: Socio-economic Impacts on the Host Community," Policy Research Institute, July 2019, presented in Dhaka, Bangladesh in July 2019.

12 Ibid.

13 Countries in each of the two regions are ordered in accordance with the existing stock of Bangladeshi migrants at the respective destinations.

14 Abhishek Bhatia, Ayesha Mahmud, Arlan Fuller, Rebecca Shin, Azad Rahman, Tanvir Shatil, Mahmuda Sultana, K. A. M Morshed, Jennifer Leaning, and Satchit Balsari, "The Rohingya in Cox's Bazar: When the Stateless Seek Refuge", Health and Human Rights Journal, August 2018, <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2018/08/the-rohingya-in-coxs-bazar-when-the-stateless-seek-refuge/>, accessed on 7 August 2019.

provide a way forward for members of the international community who are committed to share responsibility with Bangladesh for the Rohingya crisis.

I. THE IMPACT OF THE ROHINGYA CRISIS ON COX'S BAZAR

Bangladesh provides a significant global public good by hosting over one million Rohingya refugees. Most refugees are living in camps in Cox's Bazar's poorest subdistricts, Ukhia and Teknaf, where local resources and livelihoods are under significant strain. While the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) continues to focus on repatriation, realistic scenarios show significant numbers of Rohingya will remain in Bangladesh for over 10 years.¹⁵

The protracted nature of the 2017 crisis,¹⁶ which resulted from a rapid and sizable influx of Rohingya, followed by an extensive aid-based humanitarian response, has exacerbated the challenges to the Cox's Bazar host community—a reality underscored by a 2018 household survey where two-thirds of respondents from host communities said they had been directly affected by the refugee influx.¹⁷ The region experienced widespread deforestation to make way for camps and firewood collection, which impacted livelihood opportunities for host communities, particularly in the agriculture and fishing sectors. Economic opportunities for locals were further impacted by Rohingya refugees working as daily labor in the informal economy, leading to a decline in the cost of daily wage labor. There have been increased strains on public service provision such as water and sanitation management systems as well as health and education. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) found in focus group discussions with host community members that sources of tension center on economic frustrations around increased employment and business competition, and strains on local infrastructure due to population density.

While some of the negative socioeconomic effects on host communities have been offset by economic opportunities generated through increased demand for goods and services from the Rohingya refugees, these benefits are not felt evenly. Nearly 44 percent of Rohingya refugees and 40 percent of the host community continue to have poor or borderline food consumption, while poverty levels among refugees and host communities are high.¹⁸ Local government officials indicated in discussions with IRC that the host community members who were most negatively impacted by the influx have received the support required to mitigate the impact.

The Rohingya refugees face a range of complex barriers to accessing quality services and pursuing livelihoods in Cox's Bazar, despite the escalation in service provision in 2017. Rohingya refugees remain almost entirely dependent on food aid while opportunities for self-reliance, such as accredited education and formal jobs, remain restricted. Significant gaps in access to services remain, with some outcomes worsening for Rohingya over time. Persistent high levels of vulnerability, combined with lack of economic opportunities, have left some Rohingya refugees with no choice but to turn to harmful coping strategies like child marriage, child labor, and drug and human trafficking.¹⁹

15 UNDP Bangladesh Country Office, "Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities," November 2018, https://issuu.com/bdundp/docs/impacts_of_the_rohingya_refugee_inf.

16 Cindy Huang and Nicole Cassou, "Two Years On, and No End in Sight: How Should We Respond to the Rohingya Crisis in the Medium-Term?," The Center for Global Development, August 2019, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/two-years-and-no-end-sight-how-should-we-respond-rohingya-crisis-medium-term>.

17 Abdur Razzaque, "The Rohingya Refugee Crises: Socio-economic Impacts on the Host Community," Policy Research Institute, July 2019, presented in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

18 "Refugee influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment – REVA 2018," World Food Programme, 2019, <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000106095/download/?iframe>.

19 Lauren Post, Rachel Landry, & Cindy Huang, "Moving Beyond the Emergency: A Whole of Society Approach to the Refugee Response in Bangladesh", International Rescue Committee - The Center for Global Development, September 2019, <https://www.ircwfp.org/publications/moving-beyond-the-emergency-a-whole-of-society-approach-to-the-refugee-response-in-bangladesh>.

The inadequacy of the current aid response has implications for host communities, refugees, and Bangladesh's development trajectory. The above effects of the crisis imply that the well-being of host communities and refugees is at risk and that social cohesion is deteriorating. Meeting the needs of both groups, and ensuring that they have opportunities to create their own livelihoods in Cox's Bazar, can help mitigate negative impacts, reduce tensions, and foster social cohesion, as life in the district improves for everyone.

Our examples of labor mobility opportunities, targeted primarily at Cox's Bazar's host communities,²⁰ enable a model of responsibility sharing by the international community that can generate benefits, reduce growing social tensions, and alleviate the burden of the crisis for Bangladesh, both locally and nationally. The Global Skill Partnership model in particular, though limited in the number of migrants it can accommodate, may nonetheless help mitigate pressure on the local labor market in Cox's Bazar and complement more direct private sector interventions in Cox's Bazar.²¹ The skills development component for the "home" track can be particularly attractive and have high visibility by targeting potential candidates from the host communities. This approach can foster a greater sense of inclusion and welfare generation for the host communities, thus mitigating the growing social tension.

One important caveat relates to the legal status of the Rohingya in Bangladesh. While the bulk of the approaches above target the host communities, the lack of documentation among the Rohingya may impede their inclusion in skill building initiatives such as the "home" track in the Global Skill Partnership model, or in facilitating the limited numbers of mobility opportunities proposed for the refugee population. Sustained advocacy would need to address this and other issues for the Rohingya, especially regarding civil documentation,²² access to justice, the right to education, and access to work.

II. INTERNATIONAL LABOR MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH

International labor migration is an integral part of Bangladesh's development and growth strategy—remittances are the country's second largest source of foreign currency, while international migration eases pressure on the domestic labor market.

At the micro level, migration's contribution to poverty reduction is reflected by the positive, significant association of remittances on household consumption and savings.²³ Roughly half a million workers migrated overseas annually for the past decade.²⁴ Migrant remittances of US\$15 billion in 2018 represented a 15 percent increase over 2017, and significantly overshadowed 2018 foreign direct investment (FDI) of US\$3.6 billion.²⁵ The majority of Bangladeshi migrants work in low skilled jobs at the destination countries (see trends in figure 1). The GoB has a goal to raise the share of overseas

cgdev.org/publication/moving-beyond-emergency-whole-society-approach-refugee-response-bangladesh.

20 The labor mobility opportunities also affect Bangladeshi nationals more broadly and the Rohingya population to a limited extent.

21 Irene Yuan Sun, John Speakman, & Cindy Huang, "How business can invest in the future of the Rohingya and host community in Bangladesh", Tent Partnership for Refugees - The Center for Global Development, December 2019 (forthcoming at <https://www.cgdev.org/page/solutions-for-bangladesh-hosts-refugees>).

22 Effective access to civil documentation for the most vital events, such as birth, marriage, divorce, and death is a priority.

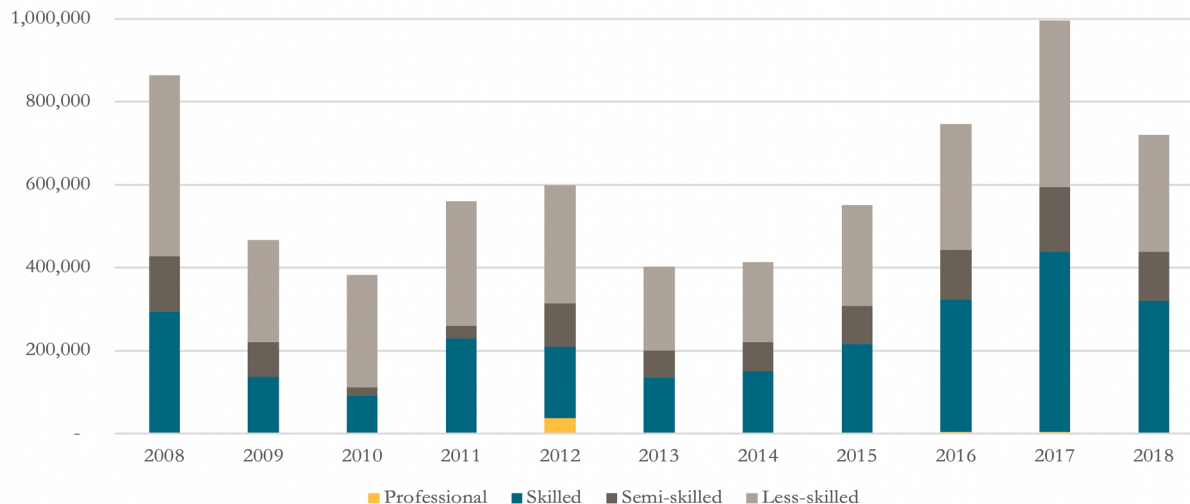
23 "Building Partnerships for Effectively Managing Labor Migration: Lessons from Asian Countries", ADB Institute; OECD, and ILO, 2019.

24 Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>.

25 Ibrahim Hossain Ovi, "Bangladesh sees highest ever foreign Investment," The Dhaka Tribune, May 9, 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2019/05/09/fdi-rises-by-67-in-2018>.

employment of skilled and professional labor from about 34 percent of the migrant population to 50 percent by 2030.²⁶ Consequently, creating new labor mobility agreements and expanding existing ones with a focus on upskilling the potential migrant population are important policy considerations in Bangladesh’s efforts to reach middle-income status in the coming decade.²⁷

FIGURE 1. Overseas migration from Bangladesh by skill level, 2008-2018



Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>

Bangladesh has one of the world’s largest diaspora populations.²⁸ The 7.5 million²⁹ Bangladeshis working overseas constitute about 5 percent of the total population and about 12 percent of the labor force, respectively.³⁰ The main countries of destination are the GCC countries, namely KSA and UAE (as shown in figure 2). Together, they accounted for almost 50 percent of Bangladeshi’s overseas employment from 1976 to 2018.

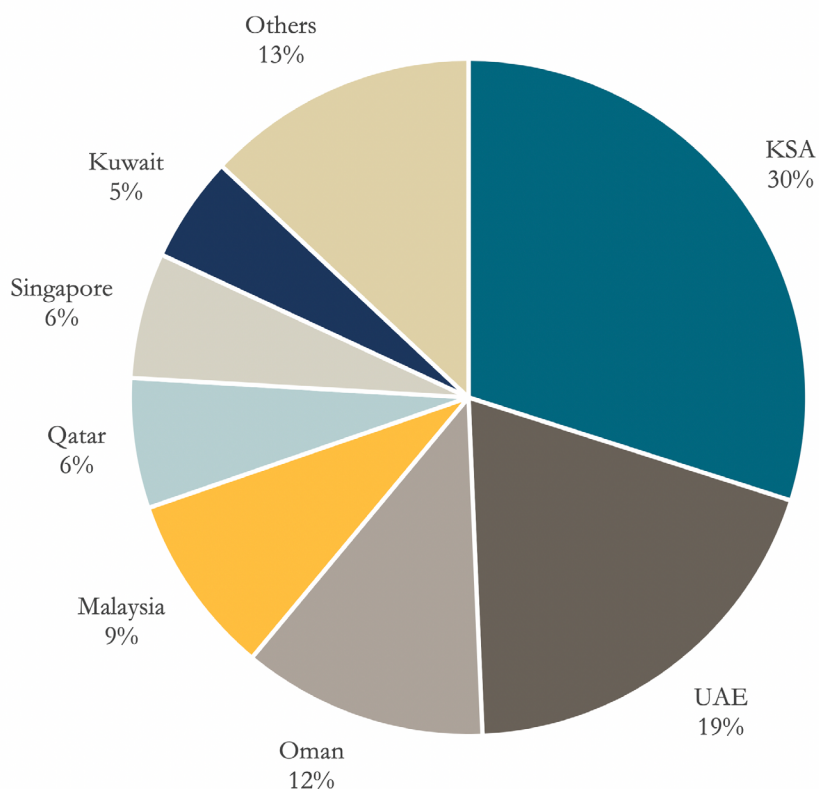
26 General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016 - FY2020, December 2015, pg. 249-252, https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/sites/unicef.org.bangladesh/files/2018-10/7th_FYP_18_02_2016.pdf, accessed on June 5, 2019.

27 Ibid.

28 International Migration Report, 2017, pg. 13, United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf.

29 Ibid.

FIGURE 2. Overseas migration from Bangladesh to relevant destinations, 1976-2018



Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>

Cox's Bazar and the surrounding South West districts have contributed minimally to Bangladesh's overall migrant stock in the past decade and indicate significant scope for growth in the coming years. While systematic studies are unavailable, anecdotal evidence suggests that low regional migration may be attributed to strong family ties and low propensity to out migrate.³¹ These trends, combined with low literacy and education attainment in the area,³² point towards a need for greater information dissemination on migration opportunities and targeted skills development for workers as part of any labor mobility agreements.

The labor mobility opportunities linked with employment-oriented skills development presented in this note, in particular the Global Skills Partnership pilot, are well aligned to fill the skills gap for potential Bangladeshi migrants. A provision for including Rohingya as part of the "home" track of these agreements needs to be explored with consideration to the local environment.

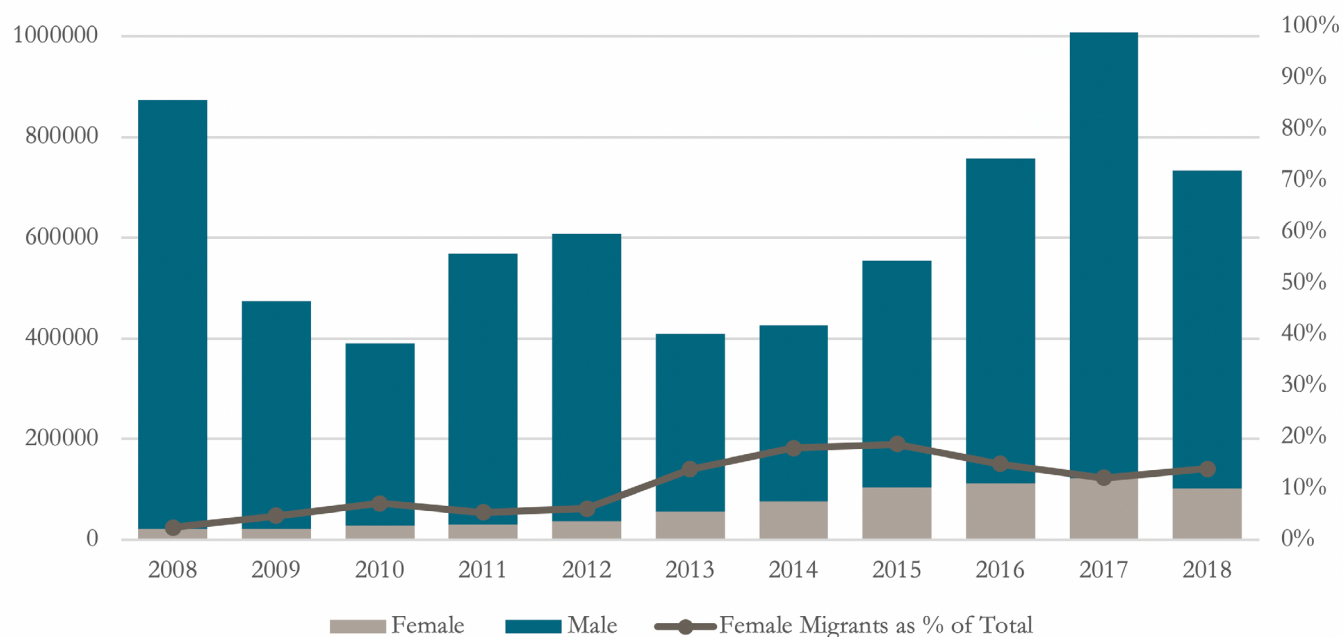
An important opportunity for labor mobility can come from promoting international migration among the female workforce. Female migration has increased significantly in the past decade, from 7 percent in 2010

³¹ Inferred from discussions with migration program officers at the International Office of Migration (IOM) in July 2019.

³² Cox's Bazar was one of the lowest performing districts for education in Bangladesh, with a net intake rate for the first grade of primary school at 72.6 percent for boys and 69.1 percent for girls, compared to the national average of 98 percent.

to 14 percent in 2018 (see figure 3). This positive trend is mainly driven by demand for domestic housekeepers and workers in the garment sector in Lebanon, Jordan, and KSA. On the supply side, the significant employment of women in the Bangladeshi garment sector has served to reduce the social barriers for female labor market participation and increase the number of potential female migrants.³³ However, such an approach should be pursued with a close consideration of protective measures to ensure low costs of migration, safe working conditions and adequate working standards, access to arbitration and recourse in case of harassment, and strict management of trafficking, among other measures of safe migration.

FIGURE 3. Overseas migration from Bangladesh by gender, 2008-2018



Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>

The Bangladesh population is expected to rapidly increase, and peak in 2053 at 192 million.³⁴ With an existing labor force participation rate of roughly 60 percent,³⁵ the size of the workforce can be estimated to increase from 64 million today to 77 million in 2053.³⁶ Even at a sustained economic growth rate of 8 percent,³⁷ and the resultant job creation, there is likely to be an excess supply of workers. Most importantly, a combination of growth in the future workforce and skills demand imply that the labor mobility agreements completed by employment-oriented skills development initiatives will simultaneously benefit Bangladesh's future migrants and resident workers.

33 Humera Sultana, "Factors influencing migration of female workers: a case of Bangladesh", IZA Journal of Development and Migration, December 2017, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40176-017-0090-6>.

34 World Population Prospects, 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bangladesh-population/>.

35 World Bank, <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/bangladesh/labour-force-participation-rate>.

36 Author's estimation.

37 World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=BD>.

III. UPSKILL THE HOST COMMUNITY UNDER A GLOBAL SKILL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The scope for labor mobility opportunities for Bangladesh remains unmet due to a mismatch between demand in countries of destination and the supply of Bangladeshi migrant workers with the right competencies and experience.³⁸ The Global Skill Partnership is one potential model for addressing this skills mismatch. The model facilitates a bilateral agreement between a country of origin and a country of destination whereby the latter invests in training migrants in the former before they move in skills needed in both countries. Some trainees will stay and increase human capital—we call this the “home” track. Others—the “away” track—will move, plugging skills gaps and increasing incomes.

Countries of destination, such as Canada, Belgium, Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom, are experiencing declines in their working-age populations, combined with rising elderly dependency rates.³⁹ These long-term trends are expected to increase the demand for workers with skills in sectors such as long-term care (e.g., nursing), construction, hospitality, information technology (IT), and agriculture,⁴⁰ which locals will be unable to fill. The Global Skill Partnership model helps plug these skill gaps in countries of destination using migrants. Training programs developed under the scheme are sector specific, include both soft and hard skills training, and are held in the migrants’ country of origin, where costs are generally lower. Thus, the country of destination benefits by receiving migrants with specific needed skills who can integrate quickly and are unlikely to become a net drain on fiscal or human resources. In addition, the country of destination has greater control over the migration process and the terms of the contract, and does not need to deal with uncertainty about skill certifications issued by migrants’ countries. The Global Skill Partnership model offers a restricted and targeted pathway for a small number of migrants with specific skills that can be politically viable for these countries, despite the current anti-immigration rhetoric.

Bangladesh as a whole, and the residents of Cox’s Bazar in particular, would benefit from this model. Those who receive training can migrate regularly and safely or stay and enter the local labor market with better skills and increased earning potential. In addition, as noted above, remittances form a major part of Bangladesh’s economy, and this model would increase remittance flows to Cox’s Bazar, a historically poor and economically underdeveloped area compared to other regions in Bangladesh. Local industries at home, most notably construction, would benefit from greater availability of skilled workers. Other benefits for Bangladesh include new technology and training facilities, an increase in human capital from those who stay in the “home” track, and a reduction in pressure to absorb new labor market entrants.

The model could be piloted in two ways. Firstly, the upskilled Bangladeshi population could be accepted directly to these high-income countries. Secondly, the high-income countries could finance the migration of these workers between third countries (such as between Bangladesh and GCC or East and Southeast Asian countries discussed in the following section). In both scenarios, the Global Skill Partnership scheme could build on pre-existing skill development and training programs in order to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives and prevent duplication of training resources. Given the generally low literacy levels of the Bangladesh population, this model will target only a limited segment of the workforce, who have already completed some minimal education requirements,

38 “Skills for the international labour market: Bangladesh country report”, p. xiii, ILO, 2015, http://apskills.ilo.org/resources/skills-for-the-international-labour-market-bangladesh-country-report/at_download/file1.

39 John Martin, “Live Longer, Work Longer: The Changing Nature of the Labour Market for Older Workers in OECD Countries”, IZA Discussion Paper Series, April 2018, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp11510.pdf>.

40 Based on discussion with various local experts working on migration issues in Bangladesh.

such as secondary schooling or vocational training, or have prior migration experience in relevant job categories. The skills training could be implemented by partnerships between such agencies as the International Labour Organization, BRAC, and the Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training. There are currently three ongoing pilots (Australia / Pacific;⁴¹ Belgium / Morocco;⁴² and Germany / Kosovo⁴³) that can be used as a reference for the Bangladesh pilot. While the number of migrants in current pilots are small, the possibility to scale up, particularly in the home track, remains

BOX 1. THE GLOBAL SKILL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

A Global Skill Partnership is a bilateral agreement to take control of migration. It is designed to channel migration pressures into tangible, mutual benefits for both a country of migrant origin and a country of migrant destination. It maximizes the benefits of migration and shares them fairly.

A Global Skill Partnership is an exchange between equal partners. The country of destination agrees to provide technology and finance to train potential migrants with targeted skills in the country of origin, prior to migration, and gets migrants with precisely the skills they need in order to integrate and contribute best upon arrival. The country of origin agrees to provide that training and gets support for the training of non-migrants too—increasing rather than draining human capital at the origin.

Three traits distinguish a Global Skill Partnership from other, related policies around migration and skills. First, it is a tool to manage future migration pressure. It is explicitly a way to address many legitimate concerns about migration, in destination countries (such as integration and fiscal impact) and in origin countries (such as skill drain). Second, a Global Skill Partnership directly involves destination-country employers to create specific skills they immediately need that can be learned relatively quickly. It is a public-private partnership for semi-skilled work, jobs that take between several months and three years to learn, not a university degree. And it creates those skills before migration, with cost savings to the destination country and spillover benefits for origin-country training centers. Third, a Global Skill Partnership bundles training for migrants with training for non-migrants in the origin country, according to the differing needs of each. Global Skill Partnership training occurs in two tracks: a “home” track for non-migrants, and an “away” track for migrants.

For more information, please refer to cgdev.org/gsp

Source: Michael Clemens and Kate Gough, “A Tool to Implement the Global Compact for Migration: Ten Key Steps for Building Global Skill Partnerships,” Center for Global Development, December 2018, <http://www.cgdev.org/publication/tool-implement-global-compact-migration-ten-key-steps-building-global-skill-partnerships>.

41 Michael Clemens, Colum Graham, and Stephen Howes, “Skill Development and Regional Mobility: Lessons from the Australia-Pacific Technical College - Working Paper 370”, The Center for Global Development, June 2014, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/skill-development-and-regional-mobility-lessons-australia-pacific-technical-college>.

42 Enabel, “Palim – European Pilot Project Linking Moroccan ICT Development and Labour Shortages in Flanders,” <https://www.enabel.be/content/europees-proefproject-palim-linkt-it-ontwikkeling-marokko-aan-knelpuntberoepen-vlaanderen-0>.

43 Michael Clemens, Helen Dempster, and Kate Gough, “Maximizing the Shared Benefits of Legal Migration Pathways: Lessons from Germany’s Skills Partnerships”, The Center for Global Development Policy Paper 150, July 2019, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/maximizing-shared-benefits-legal-migration-pathways>.

favorable given the local demand for skilled workers likely to arise as a consequence of the private sector initiatives associated with the Matabari-Moheshkhali development.⁴⁴

Under this model, we envision that most spots would benefit host community members in Cox's Bazar, but destination governments could also work with the GoB to create provisions for a small number of Rohingya to be upskilled in the “home” track. Allocating some places to refugees would serve Bangladesh's interests, since global experience shows that poverty is a barrier to repatriation.⁴⁵ Upskilling some Rohingya would improve the chances of successful repatriation once conditions for safe and dignified return to Myanmar are secured. These Rohingya could also contribute meaningfully to Bangladesh's economy in the interim if temporary work permits were allowed.

A number of existing political barriers would need to be addressed if Rohingya are to be included in the migration scheme. Some barriers are specific to the Rohingya (e.g., pushback from competing potential migrants among Bangladeshi nationals) while others are more generally applicable to stateless populations (e.g., the right of return after completing a migration episode is unclear since Myanmar is yet to accept the Rohingya as citizens).⁴⁶

3.1 Canada

The Canadian government is currently funding the Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP) Project, with a focus on five industry sectors: agro-food processing, tourism, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, and furniture manufacturing. This program has already engaged with Bangladesh's Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET). It could be extended to develop a curriculum that prepares male and female workers to take advantage of the labor mobility opportunities detailed in the previous section. Furthermore, given Canada's continued support of refugees globally with a specific offer to take in a limited number of vulnerable refugees,⁴⁷ there may be strong incentives for Canada's engagement and support for a pilot of the Global Skill Partnership, whether in bringing migrants to Canada or in promoting regional mobility.

3.2 European Union (EU)

The EU is Bangladesh's largest trade partner in the garments sector, accounting for around 24 percent of Bangladesh's total trade in 2015.⁴⁸ In light of this important trade relationship, the EU indicated a strong commitment to engage with the GoB and civil society on the plight of the Rohingya refugees during the first ever visit of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights in June 2019.⁴⁹

44 Irene Yuan Sun and Cindy Huang, “Designing a Medium-Term Response for the Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Ideas for Bangladesh, the International Community, and the Private Sector,” forthcoming CGD report which will be available at <https://www.cgdev.org/page/solutions-for-bangladesh-hosts-refugees>.

45 Harild, Niels V.; Christensen, Asger; Zetter, Roger William, “Sustainable refugee return : triggers, constraints, and lessons on addressing the development challenges of forced displacement,” World Bank Group, 2015, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/542611468188337350/pdf/99618-WP-PUBLIC-Box393206B-Sustainable-Refugee-Return-15Sept-WEB-PUBLIC.pdf>.

46 Katy Long, “From Refugee to Migrant? Labor Mobility's Protection Potential,” Migration Policy Institute, May 2015, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/refugee-migrant-labor-mobilitys-protection-potential>.

47 Jared Ferrie, “Exclusive: Bangladesh silent on Canadian offer to take Rohingya refugees – officials,” Reuters, September 8, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-rohingya-refugees/exclusive-bangladesh-silent-on-canadian-offer-to-take-rohingya-refugees-officials-idUSKCNINE009>.

48 European Commission, Bangladesh Trade Policy, <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/bangladesh/>.

49 The EU mobilized € 104.5 million in financial support for the refugees and host communities in Bangladesh since 2017. Source: <https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/hong-kong/63941/european-union-special-representative-human-rights-eamon-gilm->

On the aid agenda, the EU plays an important role in skills development by supporting the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program. This program contributes to the establishment of a sustainable and comprehensive TVET system by increasing the number of certified teachers and the student enrolment rate, and promoting degree recognition through a National Qualification Framework. Thus, the program could provide an established platform for piloting the Global Skill Partnership model.

Relatedly, the EU is negotiating the repatriation of irregular Bangladeshis from 28 European countries with the GoB and has finalized a draft agreement on the modalities of return. A relaxing of this process, or the negotiation of an agreement that combines returns with promoting alternative legal pathways, can serve as an important tool in the responsibility sharing process.

3.3 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has been supporting Bangladesh with aid contributions in response to the Rohingya crisis. While the United Kingdom's future engagement on immigration issues remains unclear given its domestic political environment, it can continue to play a role in responsibility sharing by providing support for Global Skill Partnership pilots. Such pilots could plug skills gaps such as the need for caregivers and nurses in the United Kingdom or foster the movement of Bangladeshi migrants to other destinations in the region.⁵⁰

The United Kingdom's support for a Global Skill Partnership pilot can build on BRAC's skills development program (funded by the Department for International Development (DFID)), which includes apprenticeship opportunities, TVET in secondary schools, and National Technical Vocational Qualification Framework training. The last piece is most relevant for potential migrants as it targets a wide range of sectors, including construction, hospitality, ready-made garments, IT, graphic design, electrical engineering, and others. A closer link can be made between this and migrant needs in the context of a Global Skill Partnership model.

3.4 United States

The United States, with contributions amounting to over US\$494 million since August 2017, is the leading the Rohingya humanitarian response, particularly the 2019 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian crises.⁵¹ The United States-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue in June 2019 reiterated this support.⁵² Given this political incentive to cooperate with the GoB in responsibility sharing, and given current immigration policy, the United States may be incentivized to support a Global Skill Partnership pilot to non-US third party destinations.

IV. EXTEND LABOR MOBILITY AGREEMENTS WITH GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL AND EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

Formalized bilateral labor agreements (BLAs; see box 2) or memoranda of understanding (MoUs) may facilitate increased migration for potential Bangladeshi workers using regular pathways. While the

[ore-visits-bangladesh-dhaka-and_en](#).

50 Caitlin McKee and Michael Anderson, "How to Tack the UK's Chronic Nursing Shortage – and Help Development," The Center for Global Development, June 2017, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-tackle-uks-chronic-nursing-shortage-and-help-development>.

51 "Response Plan/appeal Snapshot for 2019," Financial Tracking Service, <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/719/summary>.

52 "Joint Statement on U.S.-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue," U.S. Department of State, June 2019, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-u-s-bangladesh-partnership-dialogue/>.

Global Skill Partnership model proposed in the previous section refers to a more elaborate formulation of BLAs targeting specific sectors and/or employers, this section addresses Bangladesh's existing BLAs and MOUs more broadly and does not hinge upon a skills training aspect. This approach holds promise for greater traction in Bangladesh given that the GoB has reformed its laws regulating migration in the past decade.⁵³ With appropriate monitoring and regulation, combined with well-designed recruitment systems, BLAs or MoUs can lead to a triple win for host communities, refugees, and Bangladesh's broader development objectives.⁵⁴

BOX 2. WHAT ARE BILATERAL LABOR AGREEMENTS?

Managed temporary international work-migration provides a pathway to, at least partially, capture the gains from the unmatched demand and supply of low-skilled workers across countries. Given the high demand of low-skilled migrant workers in the destination countries, and the enthusiastic supply of workers from the sending countries, temporary labor migration arrangements have emerged as a partial solution. Bilateral labor agreements (BLAs) between the sending and receiving countries are common policy instruments for such arrangements.

BLAs allows the destination countries to address the labor shortages in their countries in specific occupations and/or at specific times in the year. They often tie migration opportunities with a specific type of work (or even a specific job) and are explicitly temporary. Because the employment contract is temporary, migration under such schemes is not expected to strain the welfare systems of the destination countries and is politically more palatable. For the sending countries, BLAs provide a way to formalize and facilitate migration outflows.

BLAs for temporary international migration are common across the world. They have been used in the United States, the EU, and other OECD countries to recruit workers from neighboring countries for seasonal work, typically in agriculture and tourism (see, Gibson and McKenzie 2014 for a study of New Zealand's Recognized Seasonal Employer program with the Pacific Islands). BLAs for longer-term temporary migration are also popular among the countries in the Middle East (receiving) and South Asia (sending). Between 2012 and 2016, 2.5 to 3 million workers migrated temporarily from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka every year under such temporary labor agreements.

BLAs vary widely in content and nature, including the extent of government involvement in worker intermediation. One feature of the BLAs as a policy instrument is the flexibility it offers. Sending and destination countries can mutually agree on various ways to manage the migration process, including in the degree of government involvement in intermediation.

Source: World Bank, 2018

53 The Overseas Employment Policy of 2006 was developed to enable GoB to extend assistance to all Bangladeshi citizens in the process of choosing standard employment and protect migrant welfare. This was followed by a reform in the form of the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (2013), which developed the regulations with regards to the recruitment process.

54 Cindy Huang and Kate Gough, "Toward Medium-Term Solutions for Rohingya Refugees and Hosts in Bangladesh: Mapping Potential Responsibility-Sharing Contributions", The Centre for Global Development, February 2019, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/toward-medium-term-solutions-rohingya-refugees-and-hosts-bangladesh-mapping-potential>.

So far, the GoB has concluded 13 MoUs and two BLAs with 12 countries of destination, with varying degrees of involvement of private and public sector agencies, that present potential for extension.⁵⁵ The BLA with Saudi Arabia proposes that recruitment is undertaken primarily through private sector intermediaries, with the GoB playing a monitoring and regulatory role by issuing permits. The BLAs with other GCC countries (Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and Jordan) are similarly structured. The BLA with Korea, on the other hand, is primarily delegated to the GoB with almost no private sector participation. This was initially the case with Malaysia as well, but private sector participation was extended in a subsequent iteration, with varying levels of effectiveness.

Efforts to extend existing BLAs or sign new labor mobility agreements can serve a dual purpose: promoting economic benefits and enhancing responsibility sharing.

Promoting economic benefits. GCC countries continue to experience domestic labor shortages, allowing them to accommodate a greater share of migrant workers from Bangladesh, particularly in the low- and semi-skilled categories. Large-scale infrastructure projects (e.g., the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar and Expo 2020 in UAE) can create demand for immigrant labor in construction, hospitality, and related service sectors. Similarly, there is a large unmet demand for workers in the agricultural sectors in KSA and Malaysia. Economic growth and improvements in living standards in GCC and Southeast and East Asian countries have created demand within the hospitality and personal service sectors that is likely to continue in the short-term. Additionally, aging demographics are expected to increase the demand for migrant workers in eldercare and nursing.

Extending such labor migration opportunities can benefit migrants directly through alternative sources of income and help them to support their families and communities through remittances. It can also contribute more broadly to boosting Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves. Prioritizing migrants from Cox's Bazar would reduce the socioeconomic and environmental pressures described above. Such agreements could integrate targeted skills development that are aligned with local and international economic needs, such as agro-processing, fishing, clean energy, construction, and tourism.⁵⁶ Relaxing the restrictions to allow Rohingya to participate in training combined with targeted and restricted labor market opportunities (e.g., working for predetermined hours in the construction of the Matabari-Maheshkhali development) could contribute to the self-reliance toolkit of the Rohingya.⁵⁷ Upskilling can position workers to exploit future international labor mobility opportunities and help mitigate pressure on host communities if direct pathways can be created for Rohingya to migrate.

Enhancing responsibility sharing. The international community stepped forward with high-level commitments to support Bangladesh following the most recent influx of the Rohingya in 2017. These responses range from a condemnation of the Myanmar military and diplomatic leverage to push for repatriation to emergency aid support through various international agencies. As members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the GCC countries and Malaysia reaffirmed their support

55 Bangladesh has signed BLAs with Kuwait (in 2000) and Qatar (in 1998 & 2008) and MoUs with Iraq (2013), South Korea (in 2007), UAE (in 2007), Oman (in 2008), Libya (2008), Malaysia (2003/2006/2012), Jordan (2012), the Maldives (2012), Japan (2018) and Hong Kong SAR (2012/2013).

56 Irene Yuan Sun and Cindy Huang, "Designing a Medium-Term Response for the Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Ideas for Bangladesh, the International Community, and the Private Sector," forthcoming CGD report which will be available at <https://www.cgdev.org/page/solutions-for-bangladesh-hosts-refugees>.

57 Caitlin Wake, Veronique Barbelet, and Marcus Skinner, "Rohingya refugees' perspectives on their displacement in Bangladesh," Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper, June 2019, <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12719.pdf>.

for the Rohingya in public statements in 2018⁵⁸ and 2019,⁵⁹ and pledged to take up the issue with the International Court of Justice. Pledges from Japan include specific infrastructural support for health and sanitation inside the camps, a deep sea port in Cox's Bazar, and geopolitical support in direct negotiations with Myanmar on repatriation.⁶⁰ South Korea pledged US\$1.4 million through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)⁶¹ while also extending discussions with GoB on potential duty- and quota-free access of goods from Bangladesh—a means of indirect responsibility sharing.⁶² Meanwhile, a recent meeting between the Chinese and Bangladeshi prime ministers resulted in a high-level Myanmar delegation's visit to Cox's Bazar to work towards repatriation efforts, indicating China's geopolitical power in the region.

However, the pledges to date remain insufficient given the protracted nature of the crises. The potential labor mobility opportunities identified in this note can help bridge the gap. Providing safe pathways for labor migration that target host communities in Cox's Bazar can help address the complex challenges that have arisen following the 2017 influx. This approach can generate benefits, reduce growing social tensions, and alleviate the burden of the crisis for Bangladesh, both locally in Cox's Bazar and nationally.

Members of the host communities will be the primary targets of these agreements. Barring a transformational shift in the Government of Bangladesh's policy approach, the provision for the inclusion of Rohingya remains a far future possibility. Bangladeshi nationals who are prospective migrants may also feel that such provisions take away opportunities from them. This is reflected in the increasing concern that Rohingya are obtaining fake documents to benefit from migration opportunities abroad.⁶³ The following section focuses on extending existing BLAs and MOUs for Bangladeshi nationals, focusing on residents of the Cox's Bazar region.

4.1 Opportunities in the GCC

The Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), namely the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar, together accounted for about 60 percent of Bangladeshi workers who traveled overseas for employment in 2018. Of these, KSA, UAE, and Qatar were the three largest destinations (see figure 4). While Oman and Kuwait have historically been major destinations, the share of Bangladeshi migrants they have welcomed has diminished in the past decade owing to policy shifts that have refocused attention on recruiting the local workforce.

Most jobs undertaken by Bangladeshi migrants in GCC countries fall into the semi- and low-skilled categories—construction, farming, hospitality, and service sectors—characterized by low wages, work-

58 Faisal Mahmud, "OIC to assume 'stronger role' over Rohingya crisis," Al Jazeera, May 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/oic-assume-stronger-role-rohingya-crisis-180506171514197.html>.

59 "Draft Final Communiqué Of The 14th Islamic Summit Conference," OIC, May 2019, <https://www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2019-06/Draft%20Final%20Communique%20English.pdf>.

60 "Japan's Kono pledges support for Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh," The Mainichi, July 31, 2019, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20190731/p2g/00m/0na/014000c>.

61 "Korea to give \$1.4m fund for Rohingyas," The Daily Star, December 29, 2017, <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/korea-give-14m-fund-myanmar-rohingyas-bangladesh-1512076>.

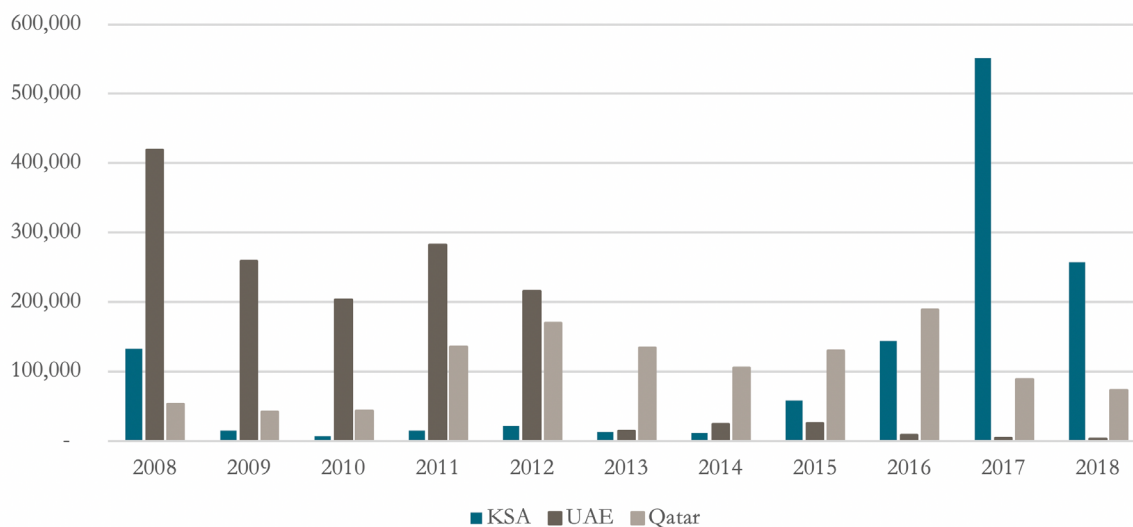
62 "PM seeks Seoul's support to resolve Rohingya crisis," The Daily Star, July 14, 2019, <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/pm-hasina-seeks-seoul-support-resolve-rohingya-crisis-1771336>.

63 Tanjir Rahman and Ranajit Chandra, "How 3 Rohingyas got Bangladeshi passports with fake identities", September 13, 2019, The Dhaka Tribune, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2019/09/13/how-3-rohingyas-got-bangladeshi-passports-with-fake-identities>.

ing conditions, and violations of labor rights.⁶⁴ Although employers initially bore the costs of migration, with increased supplies of migrant workers from surrounding countries, costs are now largely borne by the migrants. A 2015 survey by the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development finds that Bangladeshis paid higher recruitment costs in Kuwait relative to their counterparts from Nepal, Pakistan, and India. Similar trends are visible in other destination countries.⁶⁵ While studies have not determined why this is the case, anecdotal accounts note the role of social networks, policies, and poor monitoring by government agencies, and the role of middlemen, as possible explanations.

Jobs in the GCC offer better alternatives for low-skilled Bangladeshis relative to opportunities available at home. For example, the minimum wage in the garments sector (until the recent 2018 revision) offered workers approximately US\$62 per month compared to the mean of US\$345 per month in KSA and about US\$500 in UAE and Qatar.⁶⁶ Consequently, despite reports of low wages, restrictions in job mobility, precarious working conditions, and high costs of migration, demand for overseas employment by Bangladeshi workers remains strong.

FIGURE 4. Overseas migration from Bangladesh to KSA, UAE, and Qatar, 2008-2018



Source: Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>

Overall, Gulf citizens have been vocal in calling for support to, and solidarity with, the Rohingya.⁶⁷

64 “Building Partnerships for Effectively Managing Labor Migration: Lessons from Asian Countries”, ADB Institute, OECD and ILO, 2019, <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/ADBI-Labor-Migration-2019.pdf>.

65 Thomas Farole and Yoonyoung Cho, “Jobs Diagnostic Bangladesh,” World Bank Jobs Series Issue No. 9, 2017, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/790771507299849471/pdf/120295-NWP-v1-P155918-28p-bangladeshjobsdiagnosticoverview.pdf>.

66 Philip Martin, “What do Migrant Workers Pay for Foreign Jobs? KNOMAD Data and SDG Indicator 10.7.1,” International Office of Migration, November 2016, <https://gmdac.iom.int/sites/default/files/papers/WhatdoMigrantWorkersPayforForeignJobsPMartin.pdf>.

67 Taylor Luck, “Why plight of Rohingya Muslims has suddenly captivated the Arab world”, The Christian Science Monitor, September 2017, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2017/0913/Why-plight-of-Rohingya-Muslims-has-suddenly-captivated-the-Arab-world>.

Given this context, KSA, UAE, and Qatar might be particularly attractive prospects for expanded labor mobility agreements. Key challenges include improving the skill levels of the Bangladeshi workforce, lowering migration costs, increasing accessibility to recruiters, and ensuring safety at the workplace. While a detailed exploration of these issues remains beyond the scope of this report, a viable approach should include pragmatic steps to address these challenges.

4.1.1 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

According to the BLA between KSA and Bangladesh, most of the recruitment is undertaken through private intermediaries, with the GoB primarily responsible for occasional monitoring and regulation. Roughly 2.5 million male and female Bangladeshi migrants are currently working in KSA; over 250,000 Bangladeshis migrated in 2018.⁶⁸

Bans and restrictions pose challenges for current and future migrants from Bangladesh to KSA. In 2008, KSA imposed a seven-year ban on permits for Bangladeshi migrant workers, which was unofficially attributed to malpractices in recruitment. Migration to KSA from Bangladesh continues to be in crisis thanks to a combination of poor economic conditions, greater enforcement of the “Saudization” policy to promote local employment, and continued crackdowns on irregular migrant workers.⁶⁹

The existing MoU could be updated with an agreement to reduce the deportation of Bangladeshi migrants by easing the process for irregular migrants to regularize their paperwork. Additionally, provisions maybe created for hiring Bangladeshi migrants in more skilled sectors by partnering with skills training programs that can certify workers abilities.

Increasing the number of female migrants is an important area for expanding existing migration recruitment efforts to KSA. Recent recruitment drives to KSA stipulate female to male quotas for agents. Despite GoB’s goal to increase the share of female migrant workers from 18 percent in 2014 to 30 percent in 2020, motivating women to migrate remains difficult because of cultural norms, informational gaps, and perceived poor working conditions in KSA. Focusing recruitment efforts in the Cox’s Bazar area can help tap into the latent demand for international migration in these areas by shifting recruitment from illicit to safer, transparent pathways.⁷⁰

Finally, a related aspect of labor mobility negotiation can address the deportation of Rohingya refugees who have managed to enter KSA through various legal and illegal channels to Bangladesh.⁷¹ A BLA negotiation between KSA and Bangladesh may incorporate a provision for KSA to stop this type of deportation and work towards improving and regularizing the status of Rohingya already within its borders.

4.1.2 United Arab Emirates

United Arab Emirates (UAE), like its GCC counterparts, is highly reliant on high- and low-skill work-

68 Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>.

69 “Labor Crisis over 600 Bangladeshi Workers Deported from Saudi Arabia,” The Dhaka Tribune, November 10, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/migration/2018/10/11/labor-crisis-over-600-bangladeshi-workers-deported-from-saudi-arabia-in-14-days>.

70 Naimul Karim, “Bangladesh boosts efforts to stop trafficking of Rohingya amid U.S. criticism”, Reuters, July 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-trafficking-migrants/bangladesh-boosts-efforts-to-stop-trafficking-of-rohingya-amid-us-criticism-idUSKCN1U41Y7>.

71 “Saudi Arabia to deport 250 Rohingya to Bangladesh: Activist group,” Al Jazeera, January 20, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/saudi-arabia-deport-250-rohingya-bangladesh-activist-group-190120155247369.html>.

ers. A large proportion of the low-skill workforce is dominated by male workers from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The past decade has seen a surge in the proportion of women migrant workers from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines.⁷²

Migration from Bangladesh to UAE surged in the early 2000s and continued to grow, with UAE emerging as the second largest destination for Bangladeshi workers. However, a ban on work visas in 2012 resulted in a significant decline in the number of new migrants to UAE (see figure 3). As with KSA, the ban was unofficially attributed to security concerns over identification and fake documents used by Bangladeshis in UAE.⁷³ A new MoU was signed between the GoB and UAE in April 2018 for the recruitment of Bangladeshis, but its effects remain to be established, presenting scope to include a provision for recruiting from Cox's Bazar host community as part of the agreement.

UAE is preparing to host the World Expo in 2020 in Dubai, which is expected to create and sustain the demand for low- and semi-skilled migrant workers in sectors like construction and hospitality in the coming years. Because the local workforce's capacity to meet these needs is limited,⁷⁴ this demand presents opportunities for more migrant workers.

In light of UAE's upcoming economic expansion, GoB can push for improved implementation of the 2018 MoU between the two countries. Although private sector actors handle recruitment under the terms of the MoU, GoB agencies can more effectively monitor local agencies to keep costs affordable and initiate a greater focus on recruitment from the Cox's Bazar region. This can be done by easing processes such as passport issuance and certifications for Cox's Bazar residents, as well as by providing subsidies or tax rebates for establishing medical centers in Cox's Bazar where potential migrants can receive the medical examinations required to join the labor market in the GCC countries⁷⁵. Thus, the scope to increase labor migration to UAE from host communities offer notable opportunities for easing the pressure of the protracted Rohingya crises in the Cox's Bazar area.

4.1.3 Qatar

In 2018, Qatar, with over 76,000 migrants, was the second largest destination for Bangladeshi migrants. While total employment of Bangladeshis in Qatar has declined in the past two years (see figure 3), we can expect sustained demand for semi- and low-skilled workers in the short-term given Qatar's role in hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Sectors such as construction, hospitality, and services are expected to experience high growth rates in labor demand.⁷⁶ International scrutiny of the treatment of migrant workers has resulted in some reforms, such as the removal of the requirement that foreign workers receive permission from their employers to leave the country. Consequently, new labor mobility opportunities in Qatar may offer potential migrants better alternatives than in neighboring GCC countries while also helping Qatar to re-build its reputation with regards to human rights.

72 Froilan T. Malit Jr. and Ali Al Youha, "Labor Migration in the United Arab Emirates: Challenges and Responses," Migration Policy Institute, September 2013, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/labor-migration-united-arab-emirates-challenges-and-responses>.

73 Bassima Al Jandaly, "No new UAE visas for Bangladeshis," Gulf News, October 3, 2012, "" <https://gulfnews.com/uae/no-new-uae-visas-for-bangladeshis-1.1084751>.

74 "On Shaky Ground: Migrant Workers' Rights in Qatar & UAE Construction", Business and Human Rights Centre, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/sites/default/files/BHRRC-Shaky-Ground-Construction-Briefing-v1.1.pdf>.

75 Medical examinations must be completed at health center authorized by Gulf Approved Medical Centres Association (GAMCA).

76 Categories of workers expected for these sectors include construction workers, cooks, drivers, fitters, foremen, private service workers, and engineers.

Qatar has a strong incentive to engage in responsibility sharing. Economically, the country can benefit from low-cost labor sources, while politically, it is vested in the protection of the Muslim Rohingya population to improve geopolitical relations. As other Western partners have thrown support behind Saudi Arabia and UAE, Qatar may be further incentivized to engage in responsibility sharing in order to build strength in the international arena through active engagement in the process.

There is scope to renew the existing BLA (signed in 2008) with some provisions for extension to the Cox's Bazar region. A key challenge for expanding the scope will be the regulation of migration costs. A 2017 investigation found that hundreds of Asian workers had paid recruitment fees of up to US\$3,800 for construction jobs. This must be sufficiently addressed for Qatar to be a feasible destination; bilateral negotiations that regulate recruitment intermediaries could address this issue. However, trade-offs exist in trying to lower migration costs through closer regulation while also expanding the total number of migrants given existing resources of GoB agencies.

4.2 Opportunities in East and Southeast Asia

In the 1990s, international labor migration from Bangladesh began to expand to include a wider range of destinations in East and Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong SAR. While the total potential for migration is significantly smaller relative to GCC countries, the Asian countries offer skilled job opportunities that are likely to be more sustainable with respect to wages and working conditions. Furthermore, these countries may be inclined to share in the responsibility of the Rohingya given their proximity to the crises. Singapore, another major destination historically for Bangladeshi migrants, is not considered in depth here given its relatively small size and reduced scope in accepting low-skill migrants since 2017.⁷⁷

4.2.1 Malaysia

Malaysia is a member of both the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), potentially raising conflicting objectives regarding the Rohingya crisis. As an OIC member, Malaysia censures the human rights violations against the Rohingya, while as an ASEAN member it is compelled to oppose any sanctions that might impede Myanmar's trade activities. Under this geopolitical scenario, indirectly alleviating the pressure on Bangladesh imposed by the Rohingya influx can be an optimal way for responsibility sharing that accomplishes the goals of both OIC and ASEAN without compromising either, while providing economic benefits to Malaysia.

Bangladesh and Malaysia set up a government-to-government (G2G) agreement in 2012 with a goal to recruit about 30,000 workers in the palm-oil sector of Malaysia. The process meant to streamline the costs of migration by administering the process through Bangladesh's BMET. Over the years, the program came under massive public criticism for failing to reach its targets.^{78,79}

In 2018, a reform of the G2G to the G2Gplus mechanism shifted focus: the private sector conducted recruitment, while the government provided regulatory oversight. However, this mechanism continued to face criticism alleging nepotism in the selection of recruitment and sustained high costs of

77 Fathin Ungku and Ruma Paul, "Singaporean dream sours for some Bangladeshi workers as they go home with big debts," June 19, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-singapore-migrants-jobs/singaporean-dream-sours-for-some-bangladeshi-workers-as-they-go-home-with-big-debts-idUSKBNI9A320>.

78 The 2012 Bangladesh–Malaysia MOU handled only about 10,000 workers during its operation from 2012 to 2015.

79 Piyasiri Wickramasekara, "Core elements of a bilateral agreement or a memorandum of understanding on labour migration" International Labour Organization, 2018, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_683754.pdf.

migration.⁸⁰ At present, there remain significant possibilities for reforming the recruitment system to target migrants from the Cox's Bazar region.

Malaysia is aiming to reach high-income country status by 2020, and immigration is expected to play a significant role in its continued economic growth.⁸¹ Additionally, Malaysia, as a Muslim majority country, has shown solidarity with the Rohingya. In 2015, the government granted 300 (of approximately 82,000) Rohingya refugees⁸² the right to work in the country's plantation and manufacturing sectors.⁸³ These features indicate that responsibility sharing through an expansion of labor migration pathways could be a viable option between Malaysia and Bangladesh in the above sectors. These pathways could target host communities in Cox's Bazar and include a direct alternative pathway for Rohingya refugees.

Given the uncertain legal status of refugees both in Bangladesh and Malaysia, care must be taken to ensure that proper protection mechanisms are in place to ensure that Rohingya do not face exploitative conditions. As in the case of KSA, Malaysia can be pressured to commit to improving and regularizing the status of Rohingya already within its borders.

4.2.2 South Korea

South Korea has emerged as an important potential destination for Bangladeshi migrant workers in the past decade. The two countries signed a MoU in June 2007 to facilitate labor migration under the auspices of South Korea's Employment Permit System (EPS; see box 3).⁸⁴ The EPS facilitates temporary migration for workers to enter South Korea's domestic labor markets. The goal of the EPS was to address the labor shortages in specific sectors and occupations, primarily in manufacturing.⁸⁵ Since 2004, the EPS has expanded to cover 16 countries and has provided employment to more than 540,000 individuals globally. In total, approximately 40,000 workers from Bangladesh have benefitted from migration opportunities to South Korea since 1994, with remittances amounting to about US\$98 million in 2018,⁸⁶ indicating opportunities to extend options for aspiring Bangladeshi migrants.

In 2017, the Korean government indicated an intent to expand the scope of the EPS in sectors requiring low-skill workers. Korea experienced one of the sharpest declines in the number of less-than-tertiary educated workers among the OECD countries between 2005 and 2015,⁸⁷ who are also rapidly aging. By 2025, the total number of low-qualified young workers (age 25-34) is expected to fall below one million. Given the sustained demand for a low-skill workforce in manufacturing (15 percent of

80 Government intermediation makes migration more affordable and more attractive by lowering the costs. Migrants under the G2G intermediation paid about 45 thousand Taka to migrate whereas non-G2G migrants paid 390 thousand Taka for migration.

81 Piyasiri Wickramasekara, "Review of the Government-to-Government Mechanism for the Employment of Bangladeshi Workers in the Malaysian Plantation Sector", May 2018, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2785974.

82 The World Bank, "Malaysia - Estimating the Number of Foreign Workers (A report from the Labor Market Data for Monetary Policy task)", March 2019, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/953091562223517841/Malaysia-Estimating-the-Number-of-Foreign-Workers-A-Report-from-the-Labor-Market-Data-for-Monetary-Policy-Task.docx>.

83 "UNHCR lauds government work scheme for refugees," UN High Commissioner for Refugees, February 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/malaysia/unhcr-lauds-government-work-scheme-refugees>.

84 Cho et al, "Lessons from Korea's Employment Permit System", The World Bank, 2018 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/684731537420880821/pdf/130020-P156586-Korea-report-F-singles-web.pdf>.

85 More than 80 percent of EPS workers are involved in the manufacturing sectors (metallic and non-metallic products, electronics, chemicals, and machinery). Albeit small, the share of workers in the agriculture, livestock, and fisheries sectors has been increasing in the past few years. With few exceptions, the EPS is not open to the construction and services sectors.

86 Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>.

87 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing, "Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators", 2019, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2019_f8d7880d-en#page1.

employment); service sector (70 percent); agriculture and construction, the scope of the EPS program is likely to continue to gain traction. Sustained growth in demand for migrant workers is expected in sectors such as construction (including skills in civil engineering, masonry, and carpentry); domestic and care work; and housekeeping in hospitals.

South Korea has a long history of bilateral relations with Bangladesh as reflected by their engagement and support in trade and development cooperation since the 1970s. Korea's involvement spans a wide range of areas including trade; investment (in development of export processing zones in Chittagong; the ready-made garments sector; electronics through Samsung and LG); infrastructure development; human resource development; and science and technology.⁸⁸

While the enduring history between Korea and Bangladesh provides strong impetus for the former to engage in responsibility sharing, Korea also developed significant trade relations with Myanmar since its democratic transition in 2012. Myanmar exported US\$335 million to South Korea in 2016 (compared to Bangladesh's US\$293 million) and imported about US\$473.8 million from South Korea (compared to US\$1.15 billion by Bangladesh) in 2016. South Korea is the fifth largest foreign investor in Myanmar, with FDI totaling US\$3.4 billion in 2015. Accordingly, South Korea will like to balance both interests—those of Bangladesh and those of Myanmar.

The increasing economic and development cooperation in Myanmar can provide an additional incentive for Korea to engage with both Bangladesh and Myanmar constructively to stabilize the situation. Given Korea's future need for low-skill workers and scope for expansion of the EPS, an important avenue for cooperation could be through greater engagement in labor mobility agreements with Bangladesh. The negotiation of future agreements may incorporate greater engagement in the Cox's Bazar and Chittagong regions with a possibility to include a small number of Rohingya as part of the agreements.

4.2.3 Japan

Japan has enacted policy shifts that have facilitated a steady rise in migrants since 2012.⁸⁹ The shift came in the wake of growing labor shortages due to demographic changes like an aging population and rising demand for workers in sectors such as accommodation, nursing care, construction, and farming. Also, projects like the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics increased the demand for low-skilled labor, particularly in the construction sector.

The above changes are expected to sustain the influx of about 500,000 total migrant workers by 2025, offering new opportunities for Bangladesh to extend labor mobility agreements with Japan. In 2019, the Japanese government implemented a fast track for skilled immigrants to apply for permanent residency after only one year in the country, while another new rule will greatly expand the number of guest workers in low-skilled occupations. Over the next five years, the government expects up to 345,150 foreign migrant workers to acquire a newly created resident status⁹⁰ enabling workers to stay for up to five.⁹¹

Japan's economic benefits in supporting Bangladesh are further supported by strong bilateral rela-

88 Mahfuz Kabir, "Bangladesh-South Korea: Enduring Friendship", The Daily Star, June 22, 2013, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh-south-korea-enduring-friendship>

89 "Japan Begins Experiment of Opening to Immigration," Bloomberg, May 22, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-05-22/japan-begins-experiment-of-opening-to-immigration>.

90 Namely, Specified Skilled Worker No. 1 and 14

91 First exam held in Japan for foreign nationals seeking new working visas", April 2019 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/04/15/national/first-exam-held-japan-foreigners-seeking-working-visas-new-system/#.XQKz7NNKjjA>.

BOX 3. HOW DOES THE EMPLOYMENT PERMIT SYSTEM WORK?

The Employment Permit System (EPS) is a temporary migration program for low-skilled workers that is being implemented in South Korea with a goal to serve the economies of both the origin and destination countries. It has a total quota of 60,000 to 80,000 migrant workers spread over 15 countries. It is a successor of the Industrial Trainee System (ITS), which was a more specialized apprenticeship system. This labor mobility model of “co-development” can be an attractive option for the receiving country to meet labor shortages in specific sectors and for the sending country to create work opportunities with the possibility of migrant remittances as an additional incentive.

The EPS is implemented entirely as a G2G arrangement, distinguishing it from BLAs that involve private recruiters and intermediaries. In the EPS, all aspects of recruitment, intermediation, training, and settlement is managed by the government. The transition from a private-sector driven to a government-managed program coincided with the transition from ITS to EPS. Lessons from the ITS indicated that the G2G process helped to ensure better transparency and worker protection, reduce migration costs, promote business competitiveness, and ensure the return of foreign workers while managing the delicate political economy surrounding the foreign workforce.

Source: Yoonyoung Cho, Anastasia Denisova, Soonhwa Yi and Upasana Khadka, “Bilateral Arrangement of Temporary Labor Migration: Lessons from Korea’s Employment Permit System”, The World Bank, 2018

tions between the two countries. Existing trade exchanges are dominated by garment imports and labor migration, while Bangladesh is one of Japan’s five largest recipients of development assistance. Japan provided over US\$82 million in emergency humanitarian assistance to various organizations since the Rohingya influx of August 2017.⁹²

The recent MoU between JERA Asia, a Japanese power company, and Bangladesh’s Summit group for a power plant and deep-sea port project in the Matarbari region of Cox’s Bazar presents scope for extending future skills training opportunities with employment targets.⁹³ Thus, labor market interventions to accommodate employment opportunities for the host and Rohingya communities can complement these projects.

Most Bangladeshi workers migrate to Japan temporarily under the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), which started in 1993. Bangladesh and Japan signed an MoU in 2018 to formalize the scope of skill and language training, and recruitment of Bangladeshi youth, under the TITP. As of 2018, only 150 Bangladeshi interns were profiting from this program, so there is significant scope to benefit from this arrangement.⁹⁴ This requires proactive work to train the Bangladeshis for these positions.

With its relatively safe working environment and high-income structures, and its suitability for occupations such as nursing and caregiving, Japan is an important migration destination for women migrant workers. The opportunities for training set forth in the MoU can play an important role in

92 “Japan to Provide USD 32.5m for Rohingya Host Communities,” The Dhaka Tribune, February 26, 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/02/26/japan-to-provide-us-32-5m-for-rohingya-host-communities>.

93 Irene Yuan Sun and Cindy Huang, “Designing a Medium-Term Response for the Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Ideas for Bangladesh, the International Community, and the Private Sector,” forthcoming CGD report which will be available at <https://www.cgdev.org/page/solutions-for-bangladesh-hosts-refugees>.

94 “Bangladeshi youths to get more work in Japan,” January 29, 2018, The Daily Star, <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/bangladeshi-youths-get-more-work-japan-1526884>.

facilitating the migration of women under the auspices of the TITP. The GoB can collaborate with its recruiting partner in Japan to establish training centers in Cox's Bazar.

Bangladesh and Japan could agree to scale up and improve the design of the TITP MoU. The pilot of the extended version of this program need not be large, but it should be substantial enough that Bangladesh and Japan could test for challenges, practical and policy-wise, and then scale-up to provide labor migration opportunities for many more Bangladeshis.

The collaboration with the Japanese government in promoting greater responsibility sharing holds promise given Japan's regional interests. Thus, extension of the existing TITP MoU could be based on a vision of a long-term engagement that could include opportunities for Rohingya labor migrants in the future, contingent on documentation and protection opportunities for the Rohingya.

4.2.4 Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR)

Hong Kong SAR hosts about 390,000 domestic workers/caregivers, primarily originating from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam. It will need a further 240,000 workers in these areas in the next three decades. These low-skilled jobs are expected to fill the shortage for home-based eldercare arising from an ageing population and growing middle class.⁹⁵ This presents future migration opportunities for Bangladeshis to fill in for the deficiency. The GoB is already looking to Hong Kong SAR as a new job markets for women migrants. About 1,300 Bangladeshi women were employed as domestic workers between 2013 and 2017, with an additional 800 potential women migrants in housekeeping training targeting Hong Kong SAR.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the average domestic worker/caregiver in Hong Kong SAR may be paid more while working under better conditions compared to the GCC countries.

Hong Kong SAR and Bangladesh already have strong trade relations. Hong Kong firms are reported to have invested US\$800 million in 150 projects in Bangladesh, making them the eighth largest investor in 2019.⁹⁷ In July 2013, BMET signed a MoU with the relevant Hong Kong SAR-based recruiting agents' association (also involving the technical training providers and recruiting agents in Bangladesh) regarding safe recruitment of domestic female workers.

Significant challenges remain in recruiting an adequate number of workers. These can be addressed by focusing on effectively implementing the existing BLA between Hong Kong and Bangladesh. According to recruitment agents, the profit margins for Hong Kong SAR are slim⁹⁸ and migrants require a three-month, intense training period covering language and cooking lessons. Also, once in Hong Kong SAR, some women have left their legal employers to work illegally, in some cases as dishwashers in restaurants, making more money than the minimum wage for a domestic worker. These irregular behaviors by current migrants pose challenges that need to be dealt with as part of the recruitment process.

Given China's trade and development interest in both Bangladesh and Myanmar, and Hong Kong

95 Phila Siu, "Hong Kong's domestic worker shortage: Bangladesh can help out, even if Indonesia can't," June 9, 2019, South China Morning Post, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3013639/hong-kongs-domestic-worker-shortage-bangladesh-can-help-out-even>.

96 Syeda Rozana Rashid and ASM Ali Ashraf, "The Mapping and Scoping of Services for The Migrant Workers of Bangladesh at Various Stages of Labour Migration Cycle," International Organization for Migration, 2018, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_686953.pdf.

97 Marc O'Neill, "Bangladesh: a new frontier for Hong Kong companies," March 9, 2019, EJ Insight, <http://www.ejinsight.com/20190307-bangladesh-a-new-frontier-for-hong-kong-companies/>.

98 The Middle East was also seen as more attractive by agencies, which made a profit of US\$400 to US\$500 for sending each worker to the region – in contrast to US\$100 to US\$120 for each placement to Hong Kong.

SAR's reliance on China on broader policy issues, the scope for labor mobility between Hong Kong and Bangladesh is worth exploring at greater length. While the recent spate of protests in Hong Kong against the policies of mainland China indicate some challenges in the short term, the mutually beneficial arrangement through BLAs will remain relevant once the situation has stabilized.

V. PROMOTE LIMITED LABOR MIGRATION FOR ROHINGYA REFUGEES

Safe, voluntary, repatriation to Myanmar remains the priority for Bangladesh, a sentiment echoed by the majority of the Rohingya.⁹⁹ The conditions stipulated for return include citizenship or identity documents and freedom to return to their previous land or homes for the Rohingya, and justice for perpetrators of violence. These conditions remain unachievable in the current context, creating the need to consider alternatives.

The next best alternative to safe repatriation is local integration in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar area. However, the status of Rohingya in Bangladesh remains uncertain as the country does not recognize international refugee conventions,¹⁰⁰ which would give refugees specific rights to access education, health, and other public services. Furthermore, the GoB persists in stressing the temporary nature of the encampment. It has also announced the creation of an encampment area on Bhasan Char island, which is feared will further isolate the population from access to resources.

Given the challenges of repatriation and resettlement, using labor mobility options for refugees directly can provide a viable third alternative. This alternative may appeal to the GoB while also fulfilling the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, which recommends increased responsibility sharing of refugees globally through accommodating refugees as labor migrants.

5.1 Talent Beyond Boundaries

Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) is engaged in developing international skilled work opportunities with and for refugees, enabling them to move on skilled labor visas, as a solution to their protection needs. They are currently conducting a pilot for a small number of Syrian refugees based in Lebanon and Jordan, matching them with employment opportunities in Canada and Australia with plans for expansion into the Middle East.

A number of key issues need to be explored and investigated prior to delving into a pilot of the program for the Rohingya population. Firstly, the skill set of the Rohingya varies significantly from that of the Syrian refugees targeted in the existing TBB initiative. The skills of the Rohingya need to be extensively mapped in the initial phase of a pilot.

Secondly, existing TBB operations target high-income countries like Canada and Australia, where the expectations for even low-skilled jobs are higher than in middle-income destinations like the GCC or Southeast Asia. But even for low-skill jobs in the latter, a minimum level of literacy and physical ability may be necessary. In a sampling of 800 Rohingya households that arrived in 2017,

99 Caitlin Wake, Veronique Barbelet, and Marcus Skinner, "Rohingya refugees' perspectives on their displacement in Bangladesh: uncertain futures," Overseas Development Institute, June 2019, <https://www.odi.org/publications/11353-rohingya-refugees-perspectives-their-displacement-bangladesh-uncertain-futures>.

100 Bangladesh has not adopted the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Rohingya refugees do not have freedom of movement, they do not have access to the labor market, and they are prohibited from attending formal schools. There is little indication that these policies will shift in the short or medium term.

76 percent had never had any schooling.¹⁰¹ The low literacy levels of this population would create significant challenges to finding appropriate matches for destinations and sectors for direct labor migration opportunities. Consequently, a successful intervention would require TBB to partner with education and skill development programs for the Rohingya population, such as those discussed in the prior section.

Thirdly, a key administrative challenge is the legal status of refugees in Bangladesh. Sustained advocacy would need to address this and other important protection issues, especially civil documentation,¹⁰² access to justice, the right to education, and access to work.

Despite these challenges, creating direct labor migration opportunities mediated by TBB can present a viable solution. This process mitigates the conflict of interest that may arise for the GoB, which has a vested interest in advocating for the expansion of labor migration opportunities for its own citizens.¹⁰³

6. THE WAY FORWARD

This note presents three potential avenues for extending or creating labor mobility options that can enable the international community committed to sharing responsibility for the Rohingya crisis to engage in mutually beneficial arrangements. However, it is important to highlight that in implementing all three options, attention must be paid to the following considerations.

6.1 Overriding considerations

1. *Take the Rohingya population's preferences into account*

Surveys of the Rohingya communities in Cox's Bazar indicate a strong prevailing desire among the men to return to Myanmar under safe and secure conditions, while the women desire improved living conditions for their families in the encampment area in Cox's Bazar. Consequently, any proposal for solutions that advocate an extension of migration opportunities for the Rohingya population should incorporate the voice the displaced Rohingya population.

2. *Improve working conditions*

The reopening of the Saudi corridor is at present focused almost exclusively on female migration. The opportunities in Hong Kong SAR, South Korea, and Japan may also target more female migrants. However, based on experience, women face far greater danger of physical and sexual violence in the host country, which may necessitate new or expanded institutions for their protection. Domestic workers in particular are at risk of physical, sexual, and emotional abuses, including rape, confinement, underpayment or non-payment of wages, and a range of other abuses, since their living and working conditions are often entirely dependent on the personal relationship between the worker and the employer.

Similarly, in the case of migration to many GCC countries, reports of precarious working conditions are frequent. While there has been a general reluctance among labor-receiving countries to sign legally binding BLAs or MOUs with Bangladesh, this should remain a priority. GoB agencies like BMET

101 "Rapid Needs Assessment in Cox's Bazar – Phase I: March 2018", Harvard FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, 2018, <https://cdn2.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/114/2018/04/RNA-BRAC.pdf>.

102 Effective access to civil documentation for the most vital events, such as birth, marriage, divorce and death is a priority.

103 Martin Ruhs, "Can Labor Immigration Work for Refugees?" Migration Policy Centre, January 2019, <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/can-labour-immigration-work-for-refugees/>.

have an important regulatory function: developing and monitoring a set of minimum standards for its overseas workers that are maintained throughout the migration process. However, sustainable mitigation of these conditions can only be addressed through better intermediation processes that lead to better jobs, better safety nets, and grievance redress mechanisms for when violations occur.

3. *Make migration opportunities accessible and affordable through an overhauled intermediation system*

The high costs of migration by Bangladeshi workers create an important constraint to the process. There are over two dozen steps a potential migrant must overcome before obtaining the authorization to migrate, which create space for corruption and abuse.¹⁰⁴ Further, a large proportion of migrant workers were recruited through private agencies that did not seem to be effectively regulated and monitored. There were reports of such agents charging exorbitant fees, sometimes amounting to two- to four-years' salary.¹⁰⁵

One way to mitigate this is by introducing legitimate competition in the recruitment market through transparency in the intermediation system. BLAs/MoUs by themselves are not sufficient; implementation support and a proper intermediation system are also needed. The nature of the recruitment market—that recruitment agencies have more information about specific job opportunities abroad than the potential migrant—implies that recruitment agencies will extract rents from the potential migrants. This power asymmetry can be mitigated, for example, through an outcome-based model of compensation for intermediaries. Another solution could be more regulations involving recruitment practices and costs, although such efforts have had limited success in the past.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, enforcement and monitoring issues are continued challenges in achieving this objective.

104 Muhammed Zamir, "Migrant workers and their miseries", The Dhaka Tribune, January 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2019/01/13/migrant-workers-and-their-misery>.

105 Naimul Karim, "Bangladesh jobs website aims to curb abuse of migrant workers", Reuters, April 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-workers-migrants/bangladesh-jobs-website-aims-to-curb-abuse-of-migrant-workers-idUSKCNIS50N3>.

106 Example includes the failed pilot of the Bangladesh-Malaysia G2G for labor recruitment.



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MAHREEN KHAN is a consultant for the Center for Global Development.

HELEN DEMPSTER is assistant director and senior associate for policy outreach for Migration, Displacement, and Humanitarian Policy at the Center for Global Development.

Contact:

Helen Dempster, hdempster@cgdev.org