

Technical note

A Review of Labour Market Policies and Employment Services in Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

Labour market policies and public employment services play a crucial role in preventing the labour market from seizing up, especially in economic downturns and crises. These are perceived as interventions including dissemination of labour market information with the objective of facilitating of allocation of human capital and skillsets embodied in the labour force to increase the likelihood that the unemployed will find jobs and/or the underemployed will enhance their productivity. The emergence of relatively newer labour market challenges resulting from structural transformation, fast-changing technology, and a highly competitive business environment create job insecurity among the workers. Different countries adopt different public employment service strategies aiming to support the workers in such situations. It provides support to workers through providing updated labour market information, placement services, and active labour market policies in the form of skill enhancement training on different trades, public works, employment subsidies, self-employment and micro-enterprises promotion etc. to get back to jobs as quickly as possible. Thus, strengthening public employment services are now recognised as essential for promoting unemployment protection measures and ensuring the greater welfare of the workers. Moreover, effective public employment services enable the enforcement of legal provisions to protect the workers against malpractices arising from unfair dismissals, layoffs, delays in or not paying wages, benefits, or other allowances, other forms of exploitation.

While Bangladesh has made considerable progress in various socio-economic aspects over the past several decades, labour market challenges have become more prominent than ever. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, persistent high youth unemployment, low and stagnant labour force participation rate, underemployment of the workforce, excessive dependence on the informal sector for employment, minimal/non-existence of unemployment protection measures, huge skill-gaps, low adaptability in terms of skills acquisition to cope with fast-changing technological progress and automation were major concerns. COVID-19 will likely to have exacerbated these factors. The presence of these challenges is considered as bottlenecks suppressing the prospects for human resource development and enhanced productivity. While promoting the welfare of workers have received renewed attention in the aftermath of COVID-19, Bangladesh's National Social Security Strategy—adopted in 2015—called for setting up a National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) to create such benefits as unemployment insurance (UI), workers' sickness benefits, etc. However, for an effective UI scheme, the role of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) and employment services cannot be overemphasised (Carter et al., 2013; Landry & Brimblecombe, 2021). Strengthening public employment services and ALMPs is increasingly becoming important to address those emerging labour market challenges. However, in the context of Bangladesh, the provision of public employment services and ALMPs is not clearly articulated in the national development policies and strategies. Moreover, there is no systematic review of the public employment services and ALMPs that are being currently provided in the country. A proper understanding of these issues is of critical importance especially in designing policies to realise desirable labour market outcomes.

In Bangladesh, there exist various labour market interventions e.g., technical and vocational education and training (TVET), credit services, apprenticeship, etc. While the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and the Department of Labour (DoL) are responsible for providing these interventions, some other ministries and/or departments have their specialised programmes. Currently, there is no well-documented review or report on the responsible ministries' and/departments' labour market interventions and their institutional capacity in delivering those. Moreover, there is no review if the existing labour market interventions are appropriate and adequate and if these should adjust according to the needs of the labour market.

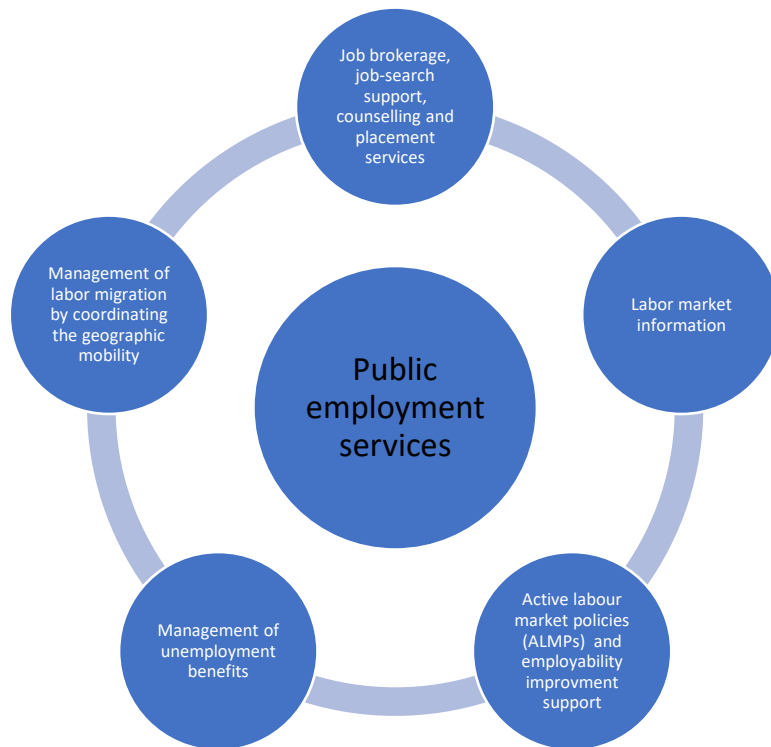
Against this backdrop, the objective of this paper is to review the prevailing public employment services and ALMPs provided in Bangladesh, especially by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and the Department of Labour (DoL) and assess their institutional feasibility to provide such services. The paper is organised as follows: after this introduction, Section 2 highlights the different forms of public employment services; Section 3 outlines the existing labour market programmes in Bangladesh; Section 4 provides an assessment of the institutional capacity of the existing implementing agencies of employment services and labour market programmes; finally, Section 5 concludes.

2. Labour Market Policies and Public Employment Services (PES)

Public employment services (PES) are usually part of work programmes of the ministry of labour and less often are also operated by separate executive agencies (Andersen et al., 2015). They plan and execute many of the active and sometimes passive labour market policies to help workers enter the labour market, facilitate labour market adjustments, and cushion the impact of economic transitions. To do this, PES typically provide five major types of services namely, labour market information, active labour market policies (ALMPs) and employability improvement support, management of unemployment benefits, management of labour migration by coordinating the geographic mobility, and finally job brokerage, job search support, and counselling and placement services (Figure 1). Moreover, it also manages various other labour market programmes, for instance, worker displacement assistance, retraining, public service employment etc. PES provide services to both jobseekers and enterprises.¹

¹ <https://www.oitcenterfor.org/en/node/7431>

Figure 1: Classification of public employment services



Source: Baptista et al. (2016) and ILO (2016a).

PES can work as provider of regularly collected, comprehensive, and up-to-date labour market information. In this process, it could be a focal point for shaping the labour market policies and programmes. With services like timely information dissemination on occupations, training institutions, and self-employment opportunities, it can potentially attract a broad range of interested jobseekers. Moreover, other relevant stakeholders might also have a strong interest in this information. Improving the labour market information system and its functioning is directly related to the promotion of employment opportunities.

ALMPs comprise a group of policies aimed at increasing or improving the employment opportunities of unemployed or inactive persons to obtain or return to a job (Malo, 2018). The main aim of the ALMPs is to activate the labour force towards re-employment. There exists a significant difference between the developed and developing and emerging countries in terms of the classification of ALMPs. This is due to the presence of two distinct features in the developing and emerging countries: firstly, different characteristics of national and regional labour markets exist within developing countries, including higher informality; and secondly, lower and weaker administrative capacities limit the scope of existing programmes e.g., lack of unemployment benefits and inadequate programme implementation (Auer et al., 2008; Vodopivec, 2013; ILO, 2016a). Taking these issues into account, ILO proposed five main types of ALMPs in developing and emerging countries (Malo, 2018). The ALMPs can be classified as training, public works, employment subsidies, self-employment and micro-enterprise, and labour market services (Table 1).

Table 1: ALMPs, its classification, scope, and coverage

ALMPs classification	ILO definition	Scope and coverage
Training	Most common types of interventions and usually accompanied by other interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide workers with opportunities to acquire or improve on their skill portfolios • Might be accompanied by other active measures i.e., public works • Might include some type of income support
Public works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of poverty alleviation and community development measures • Provide social protection or income support against negative income shocks • Combined with other interventions, sometimes providing assistance beyond the end of the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to compensate for shortcomings in job creation in the private sector by providing employment opportunities on public work projects • Sometimes based on public-private collaboration • Closely related to poverty alleviation, frequently providing social and income protection during economic downturns • Gaining importance during the last two decades
Employment subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on group of workers with deep problems in labour market integration • Less used during economic recessions • Often conceived with a view to incentivising employers to hire beneficiaries of anti-poverty measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives to hire or maintain jobs by reducing labour costs • Hiring participants from conditional cash transfer programmes targeted to specific groups with poor labour market outcomes e.g., underemployment, informality etc. • Cash transfers subject to specific conditions for the beneficiaries, e.g., school attendance by their children, healthy habits etc.
Self-employment and micro-enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as important interventions promoting employment creation in both formal and informal sectors • Targeted to a wide group of workers • Sometimes combined with poverty alleviation programmes and other interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide necessary support to start an economic activity either as self-employed or through the development of new business opportunities • Policies comprise employment promotion in formal and informal economies • Often combined with business training, cash transfers or microcredits
Labour market services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited role due to the limitations to the public resources allocated to labour market services • Efforts partly rest on improving the efficiency of labour market services provided rather than creating new institutional frameworks or combining active with passive policies². 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions aimed to connect jobseekers and employers through a range of activities such as counselling, labour market intermediation and job assistance • Services can be provided by the public employment services, by private organisations or as part of other ALMPs • Geared at promoting the transition from informal to formal sector employment.

Source: Based on ILO (2016a) and Malo (2018).

² The passive labour market policies comprise policies that focus on income maintenance when workers are out of employment.

It needs to be pointed out that PES is closely associated with social protection but can exist in the absence of the latter (ILO, 2021a). For employment promotion, unemployment protection may not exist but when viewed from the perspectives of social protection, the elements like unemployment benefits and unemployment protection measures should be the core ingredients of social protection.³

Another important component of PES is unemployment benefit, which refers to cash benefits that are paid for a certain period of time to workers who have become jobless involuntarily (ILO, 2015). The benefits play a significant role not only in addressing the income security of the unemployed but also in supporting active re-employment activities. The provision of unemployment benefits (insurance-based) and other benefits by public employment services varies significantly from country to country. Since the pandemic hit, national public employment services have been working to mitigate the impact on the labour market. Measures such as unemployment benefits often combined with other cash transfers and enterprise support schemes, have played a central role in preserving jobs and skills, supporting employment in essential services and production, and protecting disadvantaged workers, particularly in the informal economy.

Managing migration in an effective way can create significant employment opportunities, especially in developing countries. Labour markets across the globe have been experiencing shifting geographical patterns of the labour force. This can be attributed to changing demographic structures (i.e., ageing of the labour force) resulting in a shortage of labours and skills, reduced competitiveness, population dependency, etc. in some parts of the world. On the other hand, some other parts of the world experience a growing working-age (aged 15-64) population. Migration of surplus workers can be an effective option in this regard. However, such movement of labour is not straightforward. Therefore, not every member of the working-age population is actively engaged in the labour market. Some have jobs, others are seeking jobs, yet others are discouraged, or not interested in labour market participation (ILO, 2020a). Public employment services (PES) tailored exclusively for the potential migrant workers can play an important role in skill upgradation of these workers to improve their job prospects. PES provide five types of labour migration services namely assistance to foreign workers already residing in the country, job offers abroad for potential migrant workers, assistance to migrant returnees, information and advice for finding jobs abroad, and assistance to foreign employers looking for migrant workers.

Job brokerage, job search support, counselling, and placement services, are regarded as integral components of employment services. Improved labour market matching policies aim at raising the probability, efficiency, and quality of labour market matching by supporting both jobseekers and employers. Moreover, the policies can play an intermediary and brokerage role to overcome information deficiencies among various stakeholders in the labour market (Lehmann & Kluve, 2010). Amongst a wide range of instruments, the main instruments of job matching policies are job search assistance, employer intermediation services, and counselling and monitoring (Table 2). Job search assistance helps unemployed workers to find a job through counselling and support services, access to and provision of information on the labour market situation and trends (Cazes et al., 2009; Kuddo, 2009). The employer intermediation services identify employers' needs and establish contacts with

³ Employment promotion includes employment services, vocational training, vocational guidance, and other labour market policies.

potential employees. Moreover, these services help bridge the gap between supply and demand in the labour market by promoting more efficient and better-quality matching of jobseekers and vacancies. They increase the probability of jobseekers finding employment through job-search assistance, counselling, advice, labour market information and job-matching (ILO, 2020b)⁴. These services are offered either traditionally by public employment services or by private agencies which prefer higher-skilled workers (Betcherman et al., 2004; Kluve, 2010). For instance, the job matching service is publicly provided in the Philippines through a web portal named Philjobnet (an automated job and applicant matching system) managed and administered by the Department of Local Employment. Often the participation in these measures is also a condition to continue qualifying for unemployment benefits or combined with sanctions, thereby part of the rights and obligations package (Kluve, 2010).

Table 2: Labour market matching: instruments, targeted workers and intended effects

Instruments	Targeted workers	Intended effects
Job search assistance	Outsiders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve job search efficiency • Increase inflow into employment
Employer intermediation services	Outsiders and insiders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve job search efficiency • Improve match quality • Increase inflow into employment
Counseling and monitoring	Outsiders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve job search efficiency • Increase inflow into employment

Source: Adapted from Brown & Koettl (2015).

Digital channels are playing an increasingly important role in helping workers to look for jobs, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. Countries that had computerised their worker support services prior to the pandemic and those with a clear digital transformation strategy have responded more effectively to the challenges posed by the COVID-19. They have been able to use remote delivery channels to ensure their services continued during the full or partial lockdowns. Additionally, they have used digital services to continue providing online registration, automated job-matching, and guidance chats and webinars (ILO, 2020b).

Effectiveness of PES

There has been a debate among policymakers whether PES and ALMPs can effectively increase employment as well as wages. Experimental evidence from different countries suggests that while some labour market programmes have a significant impact on employment, some others have no or limited effects. Empirical studies found that ALMPs have the potential of improving worker employability (Card et al., 2018; Escudero et al., 2019; Levy-Yeyati et al., 2019). Moreover, it is estimated that additional spending on ALMPs increases employment (Blanchard & Wolfers, 2000; Murtin & de Serres, 2014; Murtin & Robin, 2016). Moreover, the higher the effective ALMPs provision, the higher will be the job search efforts leading to a reduction in the unemployment rate (Pignatii & van Belle, 2018). Another study by Escudero (2018) found that ALMPs are more effective at the aggregate level and particularly for the low skilled workers. However, the results are subject to appropriate management and implementation of the programmes. Income support in the form of unemployment insurance or cash transfers plays an important role in supplementing the incomes of low-wage or unemployed individuals and thereby reduces financial hardship and gives workers time

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_753404.pdf

to find new employment (Banerjee et al., 2017; ILO, 2017). Integration of ALMPs and income support are more effective in improving the labour market perspectives of vulnerable workers than the same policies implemented in isolation (Escudero & Leipmann, 2020). Findings from the evaluation of a job intermediation and wage subsidy programme in Bolivia suggest that ALMPs might be an effective solution for improving access to quality jobs in the context of high informality (Novella & Valencia, 2019).

On the other hand, a World Bank study conducted in 2017 suggested that components of PES and ALMPs like vocational training, employment subsidies, and matching programmes have limited effect in increasing employment or wages (McKenzie, 2017). However, according to an ILO study, it is found that the design, targeting, and implementation of ALMPs are of paramount importance in ensuring their effectiveness (ILO, 2016a).

The ALMPs are closely related to UI, however, the relationship is found to be ambiguous in nature. For instance, Elmeskov et al. (1998) find an inverted U-shape relationship between the detrimental effects of UI and spending in ALMPs (i.e., with the negative effects of UI being the lowest in countries with an average amount of spending in ALMPs). Studies conducted by Bassanini and Duval (2006, 2009) found that the adverse impact of the generosity of UI is lower in countries that spend more on ALMPs. While examining the different components of ALMPs, it is found that spending on skill development training is more effective for countries with a more generous UI (Boone and van Ours, 2004). While other components of ALMPs like employment subsidies, public works, self-employment and micro-enterprise, and labour market services, do increase the probability of employment in the long-run, training programmes, however, are cost-effective for UI recipients. Evidence from Germany suggests that short-term training programmes such as courses in computer skills or administrative skills or training to become a taxi driver are cost-effective for the UI recipients (Osikominu, 2013).

Participating in ALMPs does not necessarily decrease the probability of benefit receipt in the long run despite all the programmes increasing the likelihood of being employed. In fact, the number of months of benefit receipt is actually higher for UI recipients who follow a programme as compared to non-participants. It is noted that sometimes, a UI recipient can participate in a maximum of one ALMPs during a single UI spell. Empirical evidence suggests that ALMPs for UI recipients do not lead to a significant decline in the probability to receive UI benefits (Lammers & Kok, 2021).

3. Labour market programmes in Bangladesh

Various labour market programmes are being provided in Bangladesh. It is generally perceived that the Ministry of Labour and Employment is primarily and officially responsible for operating labour market programmes and various employment services. However, in the case of Bangladesh, multiple ministries and departments along with the MoLE are involved in this process. In fact, the programmes appear to be implemented in a scattered and fragmented way. Moreover, this fragmentation acts as a hindrance to proper documentation of the labour market intervention schemes in the country. Available evidence indicates that most of the programmes are focused on imparting skill development training and workers' welfare and not on other employment services like unemployment benefits, job searching, placement services, counselling, etc. Recently, there has been an attempt to formulate the

first-ever national Jobs Strategy. From the available draft version of the strategy, it is evident that most of the policies focus on enhanced employment without giving adequate emphasis on employment services. A brief review of the currently available labour market programmes is discussed below.

Provision of labour market information system in Bangladesh

Collecting and disseminating proper labour market information by the relevant department/institution is essential to understand the recent labour market dynamics like information on jobs, labour market trends, skill development opportunities and other relevant issues. International experiences ranging from developing to developed countries suggest that labour-related departments/ministries provide such information on the labour market. However, in the context of Bangladesh, labour market information is not provided by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE). Rather, it comes from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) under the Planning Commission. The sole source of labour market information provided by the BBS comes through Labour Force Surveys (LFS) that are carried out sporadically with survey results coming out much later the period of the survey. There are other government databases that also offer some labour market information (Table 3). However, the data available in these sources are quite focused on the supply side only.

Table 3: Bangladesh government database systems potentially relevant to labour market information

Data holder	Available database system
a2i, *	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) database, National Job Portal
National Skills Portal (http://www.skillsportal.gov.bd/#/)	Skills training providers' registration, Industry Skills Council, Live job opportunities, etc.
Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)	National Census Database, Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)
Election Commission	National ID database
Department of Immigration & Passports, Ministry of Home Affairs	Passport database system
Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Ministry of Roads and Bridges	Driving license and other personal information
Bureau of Education Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), Ministry of Education	Education information
Department of Youth, Ministry of Youth and Sports	Skill training with personal profile of youth
National Skill Development Council, Ministry of Education	Household data including remittance
Supply Chain Management Portal, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Health workers database
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP) project database
Ministry of Social Welfare	Data on disabled people, including widows above the age of 18 who received allowances

Note: *Previously Access to Information, has now been renamed as "Aspire to Innovate" with the programme moving under the ICT Division under the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunication, and Information Technology.

Source: ILO (2018a) and others.

The information on the demand side of the labour market is extremely limited in Bangladesh. There are some recent initiatives on collecting, storing, and analysing the demand-side data. For instance, Aspire to Innovate (a2i) programme, ICT Division, the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunication, and Information Technology has set up an online platform (<http://skills.gov.bd/>) with the objectives of regular monitoring of various skills development programmes; assessing the demand for skilled manpower in different industries; and building bridges between skill development organisations and industries. However, apart from some skills development courses, the online portal until now does not provide much demand side data.

In another initiative, the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA), established in 2018, is developing a central and comprehensive database named 'National Skills Portal', which when fully operational is expected to help stakeholders concerned to analyse data to detect skills gaps. Currently being run on a trial basis, its flagship project, National Skills Portal (www.skillsportal.gov.bd), mainly provides registration services for skills training providers with no demand side information still being available.

In Bangladesh, the capacity for conducting large-scale official national surveys is mostly limited to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), which however takes considerable time completing and publishing survey data. Therefore, it is not clear how the NSDA initiative will generate the demand side data. There are occasional studies from other research organisations that provide some analysis of labour market trends including the demand for different types of skills. For instance, a 2017 Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) study projected the labour demand in the country to rise from 63.5 million in 2016 to 88.7 million in 2025 (SEIP, 2017). Similarly, an exercise on estimating labour demand at the aggregate level carried out as part of the 8th Five-Year Plan (8FYP), shows that approximately 1.62 million additional domestic jobs will be created during 2020–2025 (GED, 2020).⁵ The BIDS study also provided some projections for industry and skills specific demand for workers.⁶

While the data available in the LFS database is quite extensive (large sample size), it has several limitations. The survey is conducted at irregular intervals and survey data are published much after the period of survey implementation, making it not very relevant to deal with topical labour market issues. The LFS data provides information mostly at the aggregate level. Therefore, the unavailability of disaggregated micro-level data (e.g., enterprise or sector-specific data) creates an impediment in analysing and mapping out sectoral demand and workers' availability. Moreover, definitions and improper or inadequate classifications of different categories namely informal sector employment and absence of data on underemployment, worker productivity, productivity by sectors, child labour, capital formation, investment in different sectors, etc. make it difficult for the data to be used for empirical analyses into various important aspects of the labour market. In addition, the captured information is not sufficient to shed light on job vacancy numbers and expected job openings. Furthermore, it does not provide any insights into labour market dynamics notably future labour

⁵ As per the 8FYP, the crucial areas for additional jobs creation will be stimulating labour-intensive and export-oriented manufacturing-led growth, promoting agricultural diversification, infusing dynamism in CMSMEs, strengthening the modern services sector, encouraging ICT-based entrepreneurship and overseas employment (GED, 2020).

⁶ Labour demand projections in this study considered 10 sectors – readymade garment, construction, light Engineering, ICT, shipbuilding, leather goods, hospitality and tourism, health care (nursing and health technicians), and agro-processing.

market projections, demand for labour by skill types, and changes in wages by various categories of jobs and industries.

To addressing some of the challenges of the existing databases and to provide current information on the labour market, the BBS with support from the World Bank in 2015 initiated a project to establish and implement a labour market information system (LMIS). The immediate objectives of the LMIS included the introduction of new definitions and statistical framework of work, employment, and labour underutilisation adapted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statistics (ICLS) to the statistical system of Bangladesh, and to carry on quarterly labour force surveys (BBS, 2015). It also aimed to introduce relevant state-of-the-art software applications like Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) software, and apply advanced methods for gathering, processing, and analysing Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QFLS) data. The BBS launched an LMIS web portal to bring labour market information from diverse sources. This would be a commendable initiative potentially leading to support jobseekers, unemployed, employers and other stakeholders in the labour market. However, the LMIS exercise did not thrive. As the labour force surveys were the main sources of data for the LMIS, it never provided the latest and updated information. For instance, although LFS 2016–17 was published in January 2018, the LMIS website continued to report information from an earlier round of LFS (that is, LFS 2015–16). It also did not offer any data customisation option in the sense that data availability was limited to a few pre-selected labour market indicators only. Furthermore, the BBS could not continue with this quarterly labour force survey. Consequently, the LMIS initiative greatly failed, and the BBS removed the web portal from the public domain. Amongst others, inadequate institutional capacity and lack of skilled human resources are responsible for the LMIS initiative to face its demise so soon.

Current status of ALMPs in Bangladesh

The use of the concept of active labour market policies (ALMPs) in addressing labour market issues is relatively new in the context of Bangladesh. While the national Jobs Strategy and the 8th Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh (MoLE, 2019; GED, 2020) do recognise its importance, Bangladesh is yet to have any structured ALMPs to deal with various labour market issues coherently. However, several initiatives (which can be included under ALMPs as per discussion in section 2) are currently in place in a scattered way (Table 4).

Table 4: A summary of currently available ALMPs

Elements of ALMPs	Description and objectives	Bangladesh situation
Trainings	To provide workers with opportunities to acquire or improve on their skill portfolios	There are a number of training and up-skilling programmes through several public institutions including, among others, the Department of Youth Development, Bureau of Manpower, Education and Training (BMET), Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour and Employment, National Skill Development Authority, Access to Information (a2i), Bangladesh Computer Council, etc.
Public works	To provide employment opportunities on public works projects	Public work programmes within the social security programmes (SSPs) aim to address the seasonal job drought during the lean periods when agricultural activities are slow. The workfare options are mostly low-wage employment targeting the unskilled workers in labor-intensive projects such as construction and reconstruction of rural roads, pond excavation, repair or maintenance of rural infrastructure, waste disposal, etc.
Employment subsidies	Incentives to hire or maintain jobs by reducing labour costs	Currently, there is no employment subsidy or employment retention programmes. However, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, the government provided TK 5,000 crore loan as salary support to export-oriented industries under the programme “Special funds for export-oriented industries”
Self-employment and micro-enterprise creation	To provide the necessary support to start an economic activity, either as self-employed or through the development of new business opportunities	PKSF, a2i, provide some support both in terms skill development and financing.
Labour market services	Interventions aimed to connect jobseekers and employers, through a range of activities such as counselling, labour market intermediation and job-search assistance.	There are some services for employee’s welfare. But, job matching, brokerage, counseling etc. are not part of public employment services in Bangladesh. BBS introduced the LMIS portal, with very few information. Later, it removed the portal from the public domain.

Source: Author’s compilation from various sources.

Generally, like the practices in comparator countries, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and the Department of Labour (DoL) implement ALMPs and provide employability improvement support services. In the context of Bangladesh, both the MoLE and DoL are providing such services at a limited scale.

The broad objective of the MoLE is to alleviate poverty through the creation of employment opportunities for the poor, unemployed, and unskilled labour force of the country. The major functions performed by the MoLE are (i) promoting training aimed at up-skilling workers, (ii) facilitating improved labour relations, including at the workplace level, in order to achieve enhanced productivity, (iii) undertaking labour research, including the compilation of labour statistics, and (iv) promoting the welfare of workers through formulating and implementing labour laws, setting labour wages etc. (ILO, 2020c). Currently, the MoLE is providing TVET facilities for different target groups with different age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds through public and private training institutes (Table 5). Moreover, it is attempting to set the minimum age for domestic work at 14 years while children under 18 years of age cannot be engaged in domestic work without permission from their

parents. With a view to eliminating hazardous child labour, the ministry is undertaking technical training programmes for 1 lac child labour for four months along with informal education. The Minimum Wages Board under the MoLE is in charge to determine the minimum wage for private sector workers every five years. In 2020-21, it has re-determined the minimum wages sectors like construction and wood, security services, tea garden, rice mill, privately owned road transportation, leather goods and footwear factory. The re-determination of minimum wages of eleven other sectors are currently under consideration. Moreover, the MoLE is providing cash assistance, scholarships to certain workers and their families. The Labour Welfare Foundation under the MoLE is providing financial assistance to support workers who are injured and disabled due to workplace accidents as well as sick. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it provided huge financial support to workers to ensure timely wage and allowance payment of labours and cease the layoffs. Particularly, the MoLE in coordination with DoL launched social security services (e.g., BDT 3000 per worker family per month) to workers who became unemployed in export-oriented RMG, leather goods, and footwear due to the COVID-19.

The main function of the DoL is to continuously facilitate effective labour management relations, collective bargaining and negotiations, and ensure the prompt and efficient settlement of labour disputes in the industrial sectors of Bangladesh (ILO, 2020). Major functions of the DoL include (i) providing a conciliation mechanism to deal with labour disputes including strikes and lockouts to ensure industrial peace in the interest of increased productivity, (ii) registration and regulation of trade unions and collective bargaining, (iii) providing support to elections and the functioning of participation committees, (iv) managing and prosecuting complaints related to anti-trade union discrimination and unfair labour practices. Currently, the DoL is imparting TVET facilities targeting different age groups having different socioeconomic characteristics. Moreover, it is facilitating short-term skill development training programmes for 1 to 5 days. However, these skills enhancement training are provided in a scattered way and often does not match with the skills demanded in the industry. The DoL is implementing programmes for enhancing ICT knowledge among the representatives of labours and female workers through establishing labour welfare centres in different regions. With an aim to increase consciousness on health, family planning, and entertainment, the DoL is making arrangements for health services both outdoor and by telemedicine (Table 5).

Table 5: Labour market programmes provided by the MoLE and its different departments

Programme	Ministry/ Department	Target group	Description
Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)	MoLE and DoL	Primary school completers, school leavers, out of school children, youth, job seekers, as well as women and socially and economically disadvantaged people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both formal and informal training programmes are provided Formal training is provided through educational, vocational, and technical training institutes Informal training is imparted through job training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship training TVET training programmes are provided by the public institutes, private training institutes, and some NGOs.
Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy	MoLE	Domestic workers including the children under-age 18	Sets the minimum age for domestic work at 14 years and children under 18 years of age must require parental permission to engage in domestic work. However, the policy is under consideration and yet to implement.
Eliminating Harzardous Child Labour (4 th Phase)	MoLE	Child Labours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking measures to facilitate training programmes for child labours along with informal education who works in different sectors Arranging technical training for 1 lac child labour working in hazardous sectors for 4 months

Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in the Bangladesh Ready-Made Garments Industry	MoLE	RMG owners & workers	Dispute settlements through dialogues and developing relationship between owners and workers in a transparent, acceptable, and dependable manner
Establishment of Labour Welfare Centre & Hostel for Workers in Port area, Narayanganj & Kalurghat, Chattogram	DoL	Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating low cost, hygienic, and safe housing for female workers Ensuring advanced labour welfare issues for workers and their family members Facilitating timely training programmes, workshops, and seminars to augment their rights through welfare centres Taking programmes for enhancing ICT knowledge among the representatives of labours and female workers
Services on Health, Family Planning, Entertainment, and Skill Development Training	DoL	Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing services on health, family planning, entertainment, and skill development on different trades through 32 labour welfare centres Health services are provided both in outdoor and by telemedicine Facilitating skill development training for 1 day or 5 days
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at Workplace	DIFE under MoLE	Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of gender equality and women empowerment Reduction of sexual harassment at workplaces Increase consciousness among workers on sexual & reproductive health, HIV/AIDS
Establishment of National Occupational Health and Safety related Research and Training Institute		Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring safety at workplaces & increasing productivity Facilitating training for workers, supervisors, and trainers Taking measures to advance workers' occupational health & safety
Labour Inspection Management Application (LIMA)		Workers, & employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitalised labour inspection management system aiming to improve the collection, storage, and analysis of labour inspection data, benefiting workers and employers in all industrial sectors Ensuring welfare, safety and health of valuable human resources working in various sectors Creating a safe and healthy work culture and improving the quality of wage earners through enforcing labour laws of the country Providing information and advice to employers and workers concerning the most effective means of complying with legal provisions Facilitating policy, planning, measures, and directions adopted to enhance occupational safety and health for all workers by appropriate working conditions and environment
Strengthening and developing the capacity of Department of Factory Inspection		DoFI, workers, & Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating training for DFI's officers & employees, factory owners, workers, & trade union representatives following the Bangladesh Labour Law, 2006 and Bangladesh Labour Regulations, 2015 Ensuring safety at workplaces and increasing productivity Providing knowledge on occupational accidents and disease among factory workers Arranging training for the safety committee members
Strengthening Workers' Access to Pertinent Nutrition Opportunities		Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness among RMG workers on malnutrition through digital distant approach Reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases through improving access to nutritious foods Providing enough energy to raise workers' productivity
Establishing a Multipurpose Labour Welfare Complex to strengthen labour welfare and skill development activities expansion for workers in hill tracts (Rangamati)	DoL	Tribal workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the social welfare of the workers and their family members, professional skill development, and ensuring labour rights at the workplace and other services in the hill tract districts Providing free medical services to all formal and informal labours through establishing a Labour Welfare Centre Facilitating training for tribal women to develop professional skills and produce tribal dresses efficiently Transforming the family members of tribal workers through imparting training in different trades
Strengthening the Department of Labour	DoL	DoL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking measures to establish labour rights and develop human resources through ensuring trainings for labours as per the going labour law

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening the training programmes to deliver the services i.e., health care, nutrition knowledge, family planning & establishing labour rights to all the formal and informal workers as well as their family members Strengthening and expanding the activities related to labour rights, dispute settlements, running cases in the labour court etc. Empowering female workers and raising productivity Disseminating knowledge about ICT facilities among the female workers and representatives from worker groups
Arbitration service delivery	Labour Appellate Tribunal, DoL, MoLE	Workers and factory owners	Facilitating arbitration facilities to settle industry related disputes through 10 labour courts
Determining Minimum Wages in Different Private Sectors in every five years	Minimum Wages Board under MoLE	Private sector workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-determining the minimum wages of private sector workers in every five years based on inflation, market prices, standard of living, national and international economic situations etc. Minimum wages re-determined in construction & wood, security services, Tea garden, rice mill, privately owned road transportation, leather goods & footwear factory in 2020-21 Re-determination of minimum wages in 11 sectors namely privately owned jute mills, printing press, iron foundry & engineering workshops, soft crushing, ayurved factory, oil mills & vegetable products, match industry, shrimp, fishing trawler, jute press & belling, and sawmills is under process.
Ensuring socio-economic development of workers and their families	Central Fund under MoLE	Workers of 100% export-oriented firms/sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring socio-economic development of workers and their families through financial assistance Ensuring the medical facilities and expenditure Providing scholarships for the meritorious children of the workers Providing financial assistance to worker's family who died due to workplace accident or normal death
Providing financial assistance	Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation under MoLE	Injured, sick, and disable workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour Welfare Foundation Fund was established as per the Bangladesh Labour Foundation Law 2006, section 14 to ensure financial support Ensuring financial support to workers who are injured and disabled due to workplace accidents as well as sick Factory or company owner would pay 5% of the previous year's net profit in a ratio of 80:10:10 in participation fund, welfare fund, and Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Fund respectively
Measures taken during the COVID-19	MOLE, DoL, DIFE	Workers & factory owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiating a toll-free helpline to report any labour related complain Providing health and safety measures and protocols Taking measures to ensure timely wage and allowance payment of labours and halt the layoffs Provided monetary support to workers of BGMEA & BKMEA enlisted factories for COVID-19 related deaths, medical services, and educational support to the child of workers Financial support to 3 closed factories Launching social security services (BDT 3000 per worker family for three months) to workers who became unemployed in export-oriented RMG, leather goods & footwear due to the COVID-19
Third Programmatic Jobs Development Policy Credit	GoB with support from World Bank, Ministry of Commerce, MoLE	Unemployed, youths, women, vulnerable employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting GoB's goals of addressing critical jobs challenges <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reforms to improve quality of jobs Reforms to make labour markets more inclusive, in particular, for women, youth, and migrants Reforms to help promote female labour force participation, increase the market relevance skills and supporting their adaptation to the future changing world of work, and make migration safer and more productive Addressing the COVID-19 crisis and building back better <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the effort by the GoB to help firms continue paying their workers' wages Supporting the informal micro-entrepreneur in recovering from the shock Strengthening of the GoB's ability to respond to future crisis and increase resilience for the poor and vulnerable Supporting the returnee migrant workers Making the skills development sector more labour market relevant Strengthening labour regulations for improved working conditions Promoting quality day care to enable more women to join the labour force

Source: Author's compilation from various sources.

However, in the context of Bangladesh, apart from the MoLE and the DoL, some other ministries and/departments also provide various labour market interventions. These ministries and departments are namely the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), Aspire to Innovate (a2i) of the ICT division. Various industry organisations are also implementing several skills development programmes in various trades. While some of the ALMPs and employment support services are very generic in nature, others are specific to target groups (i.e., gender, disadvantaged, youth, migrants, qwami madrasah youths etc.).

General training programmes (technical and vocational education and training)

The major public providers of TVET are the Department of Technical Education under the Ministry of Education; the Bureau of Manpower, Education and Training (BMET) under the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment; and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. In total, some 24 ministries and 20 agencies provide various types of skills training and non-formal education programmes (see Annex 1). Besides, there are other public and private training institutes along with several NGOs that are either directly or indirectly involved in the TVET sector. Nearly 500,000 students are enrolled in formal TVET programmes. Private providers account for almost 95 per cent of all TVET institutions and around 75 per cent of all enrolments. The government provides subsidies called monthly payment orders (MPOs) to about 1,600 accredited private training institutions.⁷ However, this enrolment number is far from being adequate for a country like Bangladesh. Also, the job placement rate is low among the students who completed the TVET courses.

ALMPs and employment support services targeting (unemployed) youths

Currently, training facilities are provided to the educated unemployed youth with an aim to create temporary career opportunities under the National Service Programme (NSP). The Department of Youth Development (DYD) under the Ministry of Youth and Sports is responsible to impart these training programmes for skill development, technical training (formal), special training programmes, informal training programmes, and credit service schemes. There are numerous training courses offered through 64 district offices and Upazila youth training centres across the country (Annex 2).⁸ Youths can apply to enrol in training courses such as domestic animal and poultry rearing, fish cultivation, modern office management, basic computer and ICT, graphics design, electronics, refrigeration and air conditioning, electrical and house wiring, freelancing, tourist guide, mobile service and repair, front desk management, cattle rearing, fish farming, agricultural training, small and cottage industry, dressmaking and boutique, beautification (for females only) etc. The duration of these training programmes is usually 1-6 months long.

Interested candidates can apply through their own Upazila Youth Offices. Applicants are selected through written examination and interviews. Upon selection, applicants undergo a three-month-long

⁷ The ILO Bangladesh is currently implementing a project called Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP) with support from the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE), under the Technical and Madrasah Education Division (TMED). This project has initiated PPPs in five TVET institutes: The Graphic Arts Institute in Dhaka as well as four Technical Schools and Colleges in Barishal, Narayanganj, Panchagarh, and Rangpur districts. These PPP initiatives provide free meals, and transport and training allowances to the participants (DTE & ILO, 2019).

⁸ A list of trainings provided can be found here: <http://www.dyd.gov.bd/site/page/cf3ac2af-12cc-431f-9c12-a1ee3b75d294/>

training on ten modules. Then applicants are attached to various public and private workplaces on a temporary basis.⁹ As per the Ministry of Youth and Sports data, more than 55,000 youths received training under this initiative (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2020). One could argue that this number is very low compared to the number of youths entering the labour market. Data limitation makes it difficult to ascertain how many of these youths actually received training pertinent to skills required in the labour market.

Some training programmes are informal in nature at the Upazila level and do not require any application or course fee. These courses are offered for 7–21 days and require at least 40 unemployed youths to form a batch. A total of 42 courses in different trades are offered based on the local demand in upazila level through 498 upazilas including 10 metropolitan thanas. Some of the training courses are offered in such areas as cattle rearing, fish farming, agricultural training, small and cottage industry, dressmaking and boutique, etc. More than 3,12,000 youths have received training offered through various officers and training centres under the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2020). These trainings are managed through Upazila (sub-district) Youth Offices.

The Department of Youth Development has rolled out two credit service schemes for the youth population namely, i) self-employment programme (individual loan) ii) family-based employment programme (group loan) (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2020). Table 6 provides a summary of these schemes. Under the self-employment programme (individual loan), youths (18-35 years) who receive training from the Department of Youth Development can take loans from Tk 40,000 to Tk 1,00,000 (\$470 to \$1,176) to set up their own self-employment projects. The loans can be repaid through monthly instalments across a span of 2-3 years in easy terms. The applicant receives training in any trade from the DYD. This programme is now being conducted in every district of Bangladesh.

Table 6: Credit service schemes offered by the Department of Youth Development

	Self-employment programme	Family-based employment programme
Type of loan provided	Individual loan	Group loan
Eligibility of applicants	Youths (18-35 years) who receive training from the Department of Youth Development	Unemployed population groups (aged 18-45 years) Groups should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> own less than Tk 2,00,000 (\$2,352) in asset, have an annual income of less than Tk 50,000 (\$588) and own an arable land of less than one acre
Amount of loan provided	40,000–1,00,000 taka (\$470– \$1,176)	Each member of the group receives Tk 12,000 (approximately \$141) loan in first step. Based on their success, they can avail two more loans of Tk 16,000 (\$188) and Tk 20,000 (\$235), respectively.
Repayment period	Monthly instalments across a span of 2-3 years in easy terms.	50 weekly instalments

Source: Author’s presentation based on Ministry of Youth and Sports data.

The family-based employment programme (group loan) aims at supporting the unemployed population groups (aged 18-45 years) at the grass-roots level by involving them in traditional

⁹ A trainee receives a daily allowance of Tk 100 (US\$ 1.17) while every engaged trainee in a temporary career after their training gets Tk 200 (US\$ 2.34) as working allowances.

occupations or small business ventures. At first, a five-member group is formed comprising family members/close relatives/neighbours. Then, such 7-10 groups are clustered together as one centre to provide the loans. To be eligible for these group loan facilities, families of such groups should own less than Tk 2,00,000 (\$2,352) in assets, have an annual income of less than Tk 50,000 (\$588) and own an arable land of less than one acre. Concerned Upazila officers evaluate the eligibility of such groups and then facilitate the credit support. The group members work as guarantors for one another. Groups are obligated to sign a bond using non-judicial stamp papers worth Tk 300 (\$3.5). Upon approval, each member of the group receives Tk 12,000 (approximately \$141) loan in the first step. Based on their success, they can avail two more loans of Tk 16,000 (\$188) and Tk 20,000 (\$235), respectively. The loans thus obtained are repaid in 50 weekly instalments. This programme is now being operated at 310 Upazilas across the country. Due to limited data availability, it is hard to ascertain the number of beneficiaries who get employed upon receiving these abovementioned two credit support schemes.

The *Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth* initiative aims to equip 250,000 youth with advanced digital skills. This will be done through training organised by 2,500 government-owned Sheikh Russel Digital Labs. In addition, some schemes provide allowances to youth organisations and organize career fairs for youth groups (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2020).

The a2i programme also has a skill development programme named skill development through apprenticeship and skills for employment programme on readymade garment for the unemployed youths. Both formal and informal training are provided (see Annex 1). The a2i has developed a National Apprenticeship Management System with an aim to provide a one-stop service for providing better services to youths. Moreover, it has also launched a 2-month skill development programme to create mid-level managers and knitting or woven machine operators with support from the Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) of the finance division and BGMEA.

ALMPs and employment support services targeting disadvantaged groups

Various departments/ministries are providing skill development training for the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. One such department is the a2i offering various services to prepare the youth especially the disadvantaged youth for the job market under two major initiatives titled 'Skills for Decent Employment (SDE) and Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth'.¹⁰ The main aim of this initiative is to mainstream qwami madrasah youths in the job market through reconstructing their mindset of qwami madrasah and imparting training. Under the Skills for decent employment programme, youths are now being trained with meaningful skills most demanded by the market. This initiative is promoting skill development through apprenticeship, stipend and employment programmes, and training of imams (religious teachers) and qawmi madrasah (privately run Islamic schools) youth.¹¹ This initiative has helped more than 38,500 migrant workers, 3,000-woman entrepreneurs, 27,000 apprentices and an estimated 300,000 qawmi madrasah youths.

Moreover, males and females aged over 15 from ethnic minority and disadvantaged groups are being provided with market-responsive inclusive training ranging from the basic level to high-level managerial level and training to develop entrepreneurship under the Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) (Annex 1). Furthermore, the DoL is establishing a multipurpose labour

¹⁰ See <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/partner/97#action-and-impact> for details.

¹¹ Details on the Skills for Decent Employment initiative can be viewed from: <https://a2i.gov.bd/skills/>.

welfare complex to strengthen the labour welfare and skill development activities expansion for the workers in the Rangamati Hill Tracts for the tribal workers. The complex will be imparting training on different trades and developing professional skills. The MoLE is attempting to set the minimum age for domestic work at 14 years under the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy scheme. Moreover, children 18 years of age must require parental permission to engage in domestic work. However, the policy is under consideration and yet to implement.

Management of unemployment benefits

Currently, there is no such provision of providing unemployment benefits to the workers. However, recognising its importance, the unemployment benefits in the form of the National Social Insurance Scheme (NSIS) is envisioned in the National Social Security Strategy (2015). The NSIS included four types of insurance schemes for the working age population – maternity, sickness, workplace injury and unemployment. At present, the discussions on exploring the possibilities and potential modalities to initiate the NSIS are underway as various previous deadlines for making progress on the initiative could not be met.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the MoLE, DoL, and DIFE were working closely to ensure timely wages and allowance payment to labourers in a timely manner and took the initiative to discourage layoffs. Moreover, initiatives were taken to provide monetary support to the workers of BGMEA and BKMEA enlisted factories for the COVID-19 related deaths, medical services, and educational support to the child of workers. Moreover, financial support was given to workers of 3 closed factories. A social security service (BDT 3000 per worker family for three months) was launched for workers who became unemployed in export-oriented RMG, leather goods, and footwear due to the COVID-19.¹²

The Department of Factory and Establishment Inspection (DIFE) under the MoLE is working to enforce unemployment protection measures. Under the initiative of the Labour Inspection Management Application (LIMA), the DIFE aims to protect the legal rights of both the employee and the employer. The LIMA is a digitalised labour inspection management system aiming to improve the collection, storage, and analysis of labour inspection data, benefiting workers and employers in all industrial sectors. Some functions of the DIFE include ensuring welfare, safety and health of valuable human resources working in various sectors, creating a safe and healthy work culture and improving the quality of wage earners through enforcing labour laws of the country, providing information and advice to employers and workers concerning the most effective means of complying with legal provisions, and facilitating policy, planning, measures, and directions adopted to enhance occupational safety and health for all workers by appropriate working conditions and environment.

Management of labour migration in Bangladesh

One of the most important labour market interventions involves facilitating migrant workers' employment opportunities and supporting certain skill development programmes. This is largely due to the fact that Bangladeshi migrant workers mainly belong to the low and semi-skilled categories with their average earnings being lower than those of their counterparts from countries like India, Sri Lanka,

¹² <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/jobless-garment-leather-workers-get-tk3000-cash-support-3-months-142990>

and the Philippines. According to SIR (2016), only about 12% of migrants took some form of training prior to departure. Given the scenario, the BMET is facilitating training programmes on skill development, TVET, short-term (irregular) skill development courses, vocational courses in different trades, apprenticeship training, language training etc. These training programmes are being imparted through 37 Technical Training Centres (TTCs), 1 Bangladesh Institute of Marine Technology (BMIT), and 3 Apprenticeship Training Offices. Trainings are provided on 45 major trades by BMET (for instance, steel fabrication, welding & fabrication, automotive, electrical, building construction, refrigeration & air conditioning, electronics, plumbing & pipe fitting, industrial garments, computer (software & hardware), and architectural drafting with AutoCAD etc.).

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) is the central authority for governing the overseas migration process and expatriate workers' welfare. Established in 2001, the MEWOE bears the responsibility for formulating policies, enacting laws, rules and regulations, and monitoring development programmes. Under MEWOE, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) and Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL) work as the two most important government wings facilitating overall recruitment processes. BMET has adopted objective-based strategic planning and implemented policies for the skill enhancement programmes. It also issues a license to foreign labour recruiters and regulates them. An Inter-Ministerial Vigilance Task Force has been established with the representation from relevant ministries to monitor migration processes at various stages. There are more than 1,100 foreign labour recruiters working in Bangladesh under the supervision of BMET. It functions through 42 District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMO). A key objective of these training centres and marine technologies is to produce skilled human resources for local and foreign employment. Besides, BMET and BOESL, the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) work to extend welfare services for aspirant migrant workers, deceased migrant workers and their families, sick migrant workers, services for migrants abroad and services for their families in the country. Services of WEWB include pre-departure briefing, financial assistance and grants, death compensation, scholarship for the children of migrant workers, legal assistance, awareness campaigning and welfare desk at the airport. However, WEWB is not directly involved in the current recruitment process. (Razzaque et al., 2018).

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) is close working for ensuring the welfare aspects of migrant workers. Currently, BAIRA is attempting to introduce two insurance schemes for the workers before their departure and for their left-behind families to ensure financial security. Moreover, it is going to set up a bank to ensure quick and easy monetary transaction service, and an information technology institute to cater for the need of the country and the overseas employers. Besides, it is planning to establish a modern medical testing centre to ensure proper medical check-ups of the migrant workers.

Job brokerage, job search support, counselling, and placement services

Assistance to jobseekers in their search for jobs and to employers in their search for the right jobseeker is mostly unavailable in Bangladesh. This searching and matching process is popularly known as employment exchange. In a country like Bangladesh where the formal sector accounts for a smaller percentage of total employment, the effectiveness of employment exchange is rather limited. Moreover, career counselling and placement services are virtually non-existent. However, some

private providers are attempting to provide such services on a limited scale through online portals. However, their services are disproportionately related to urban centred formal white-collar jobs.

Employment through public work (workfare scheme)

The workfare schemes comprise a significant component of social security programmes (SSPs) aiming to address the seasonal job drought during the lean periods when agricultural activities are slow. The workfare options are low-wage employment targeting the unskilled workers in labour-intensive projects such as construction and reconstruction of rural roads, pond excavation, repair or maintenance of rural infrastructure, waste disposal, etc. In the aftermath of the crisis, expanding these workfare programmes further could be an effective safety net for the poorest and most vulnerable population groups. It must be pointed out that workfare sites can be crowded. Thus, if physical distancing is required, operating these programmes will be difficult although there may be scope for Covid-sensitive projects. The basic idea here is that when the infection from the virus is a major health risk, a transfer programme (such as the universal income support mechanism discussed earlier) is a more preferred option for supporting the people who usually participate in workfare projects. When the pandemic has subsided, workfare programmes need to be expanded as a major safety net scheme to protect the poor and vulnerable from poverty and hunger, as economic recovery and the associated employment generation can be slow.

All the four largest workfare programmes i.e., Test Relief (TR) Cash, Food for Work (FFW), Work for Money (WFM), and Employment Generation Programme for the Poor (EGPP) must be strengthened so that these schemes can target expanded areas with greater beneficiary coverages.¹³ The duration of the usual programme operation period, e.g., going beyond the lean seasons, should be increased along with a rise in the remuneration offered. As currently there is no large-scale workfare scheme for the urban poor, it will be an extremely important intervention to develop suitable programmes. Based on the experience of traditional rural workfare programmes, adaptation and innovations will be required to serve the urban poor, many of whom were employed in the informal sector and lost their livelihood opportunities. The potential beneficiaries could work in urban infrastructure development and maintenance, cleaning and repairing the public property, roadside plantation, etc.

Skill development initiatives within the social security programmes

Within Bangladesh's certain social security programmes, there also exist some training components. These schemes include technical and vocational training along with some allowances. In the 2019-20 budget, a total of Tk 33.7 billion or 4.3 per cent of the social security budget – was earmarked for as many as 16 skill development and training-based SSPs, including the most important ones as mentioned in Annex 3.¹⁴ These programmes combine short-term income support with some basic

¹³ The beneficiaries of TR Cash, FFW, and WFM get to work in cycles in a year and receive 8 kg of rice or wheat or cash equivalent for working 7 hours a day for specific project activities and standardised volumes of work. The Food for Work (FFW) beneficiaries get food for their works while Work for Money (WFM), and Test Relief (TR) Cash beneficiaries get cash equivalent. On the other hand, the EGPP provides short-term employment to the hardcore poor in lean seasons over two cycles (March to April and October to December) for 80 days. The beneficiaries get a daily wage of TK 200 for 7 hours of work, of which TK 25 per day is saved in a bank account which can be withdrawn in the next financial year.

¹⁴ These include, amongst others, National Services, Joyeeta Foundation, Women's Skill-based Training for Livelihood, Skills for Employment Investment Programme and Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO)

training to enhance future employability in the job market as well as helping the recipients with self-employment. Most important of these schemes are: the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme providing livelihood support to 142.5 lakh (0.142 million) beneficiaries under its two different schemes: Income Generating Vulnerable Group Development (IGVGD) providing monthly food ration of 30 kg of wheat/rice or 25 kg of fortified flour and Food Security Vulnerable Group Development (FSVGD) providing monthly cash support of Tk.100 along with 15 kg flour. Under these schemes, participants are provided with training on income-generating activities like entrepreneurship skills for 63 hours; life-skills training for 63.5 hours, various trade courses and savings opportunities, according to the implementation guidelines of the programme (Kabir et al., 2020).

The Skill and Employment Programme in Bangladesh is another scheme that aims to reduce poverty through better training and job opportunities for the poor. It seeks to ensure employment to 65,000 poor people, including women and other disadvantaged population groups, upon completion of training through its partnership with private training service providers and industry-based training initiatives. Training is provided on readymade garment and construction-related jobs. Skill-based training programmes tailored specifically for the women are provided under the Income Generating Activities (IGA) for women at the upazila level. Up to 12 months long training is provided on various trades like beautification, block and batik, and sewing and embroidery.

The National Services programme, on the other hand, offers three-month training to unemployed youths aged 24-35 years with minimum educational attainment of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) level (Kabir et al., 2020). The trainees are then provided with temporary jobs for two years at various local government departments and institutions. Training is provided on 10 different modules, mostly focused on skill-enhancing technical supports. The target groups are provided with BDT 100 per day as training allowance and BDT 200 per day as service allowance during employment. Given the huge unemployment problem among the youth, this kind of training and internship-like interventions will be helpful as Covid-19 exerts further pressure on an already weak employment situation.¹⁵ However, the current opportunities are grossly inadequate. Furthermore, the quality of these initiatives along with their impact on the job prospects is not clear.

The provision of ALMPs in the national Jobs strategy

As mentioned earlier, a national jobs strategy is currently under discussion in the country (Box 1). This strategic document envisions the importance of ALMPs which is suggested as one of the three broad pillars of the strategy. Interventions under ALMPs aim at boosting the growth of jobs and labour market functioning. The broad areas of such interventions are (i) entrepreneurship development and self-employment; (ii) wage employment programmes; (iii) training and retraining – with attention to market demand, changes in the economic structure; and (iv) matching of workers with jobs. Moreover, it will include an array of cross-cutting issues like gender (programmes with a focus on women), age (programmes with a focus on the youth), environment (programmes taking into account the impact on the environment – using the concept of green jobs), disability (persons with disability will receive

¹⁵ Bangladesh has one of the highest proportions of the youth (27.4%) not in employment, education or training (NEET). According to one estimate, the youth unemployment rate in Bangladesh has almost doubled over the past seven years or so (ILO, 2018b).

special consideration in various programmes). There are some issues concerning the national jobs strategy requiring attention. Firstly, most policies and interventions are targeted towards creating more jobs while the issue of unemployment protection has not been given adequate attention; secondly, there is no clear guidance about how the public employment services will be designed; thirdly, it does not include any roadmap with concrete guidelines to implement the suggested strategies; fourthly, there is no such provision for periodical monitoring, reviewing, and evaluation of the programmes; finally, implementation is a major challenge for Bangladesh in any areas of development strategies and, in this respect, the capacity of the concerned ministries and/or departments have been given due attention.

Box 1: Major programmes considered under the national jobs strategy

- **An entrepreneurship development programme for supporting self-employment:** ‘Be your employer’ (BYE) programme combining credit for micro and small enterprises with training in entrepreneurship, market exploration and accounting, ICT-based services etc.
- **A programme for creating wage-employment for the unskilled:** A national employment guarantee programme using labour-based approaches in infrastructure construction
- **A national youth employment programme:** This programme with several components – firstly, for young people with low and medium levels of education and skills (in infrastructure maintenance, care work, etc.) and secondly, for the youth in the NEET category.
- **A women’s employment programme:** This programme will include – firstly, policy interventions i.e., revisiting the quota in the government service and considering a possible increase, advocacy for attitudinal changes, better implementation of provisions for maternity leave, and making workplaces more women-friendly; and secondly, programmes for institutionalising expansion of stipend programmes, childcare, safe public transport, targeted skill development programmes etc.
- **Programmes to support career guidance, job search and job matching:** This programme will include – firstly, public employment service through the establishment of job centres to facilitate information flow and matching of jobs with jobseekers; secondly, a programme for career guidance and counselling (involving educational institutions and employers’ organisation); and thirdly, policy for internship and apprenticeship (including fiscal incentives).

Source: MoLE (2019).

4. An assessment of the institutional capacity of the existing implementing agencies of employment services and labour market programmes

The ongoing labour market programmes in Bangladesh are provided within a complex institutional landscape involving different ministries and departments. The effectiveness of these programmes greatly depends on the adequacy of institutional capacity within the implementing agencies. However, these institutions often lack administrative capacity, financial resources, manpower with necessary skills, and adequate institutional infrastructure. Besides the programmes are implemented in a scattered/fragmented way without an effective coordination amongst the relevant departments. A fragmented approach leads to duplication or similar programmes being adopted by different agencies, failure to consider the broad picture of overall labour market challenges, and limited collaboration and cooperation among the institutions involved thereby making it more difficult to make the system accountable for results. This lack of capacity and coordination along with extremely limited resources available for programme implementation is likely to result in less-than-optimal outcomes for labour market programmes in Bangladesh.

Lack of timely and need-based labour market information

Lack of regular collection, analysis, and dissemination of information about the labour market make it extremely challenging to generate updated, real-time and informed policies. This can lead to inefficient labour market interventions resulting in a misallocation of resources. The discontinued flow of information affect labour market participation decisions and contributes to skill mismatches (leading to inefficient resource allocation). Also, irregular flow of information might raise the labour market participation costs both for employers and employees.¹⁶

The use of labour market information requires the infrastructure for collection, analyses, dissemination of data as well as trained and experienced analysts who can work with them. Capacity building is an integral part of generating real-time labour market information on a regular basis. Such capacity building should include improvement to the statistical infrastructure, training of analysts, and other staff in the relevant institutions, and building the trust of respondents and data users through data protection regulations. Because activities related to labour market information are often developed within the framework of donor-funded projects with the assistance of international agencies in the transition and developing countries including Bangladesh, sustainability of those projects remains an issue of uncertainty (Rihova, 2016).

Currently, a lack of proper data auditing is prevalent in Bangladesh. It should usually involve a comparative analysis of diverse and scattered data sources available to different stakeholders. The findings from the analyses should suggest which data sources are available for monitoring the labour market trends and anticipating the future demand for labour and skill-types and which should be the most appropriate and feasible labour market interventions for generating favourable outcomes.

Lack of capacity and inadequate institutional structures

Over the past few decades, the context in which the institutions like the MoLE and DoL operate across the global economies has changed fundamentally. This issue has placed increased pressure on the governments to review their roles and operational models as maintaining a well-functioned labour market has been recognised as a critical factor for improved competitiveness and growth performance of economies as well as for strengthened unemployment protection measures. In Bangladesh, both the MoLE and DoL suffer from grossly insufficient resources to design and implement meaningful labour market programmes considering the size of the labour force. The lack of human resources and inadequate institutional facilities under which MoLE and DoL operate also makes it difficult to provide effective labour market support and services.

Amongst others, inadequate manpower is considered as a key barrier in building the capacity of the MoLE and DoL. It seriously undermines the quality of their services and impedes increased access to the services provided. DoL has commenced a process of upgradation that will include an expansion of

¹⁶ Labour market participation costs include search costs like expenses related to gathering information on job vacancies, procedural costs of preparing and processing applications, and time costs associated with looking for job opportunities. Here, procedural costs of application include – collecting and printing required documents including the application form, time costs of application include – time required to fill up application forms, gather documents, and submit the application form (Razzaque et al., 2018).

its geographical coverage by opening new offices (ILO, 2020c). It was hoped that the expansion would align with the national needs and the labour market demands. However, this initiative has been stalled by lack of trained officials. A shortage of adequate funding and approvals to ensure fulfilling staffing gaps exacerbate the situation. Moreover, there is also evidence of low recruitment of staff both from the internal and external sources.

Lack of capacity of the MoLE and DoL potentially leads to weak enforcement of labour laws. Amongst others, there is an absence of compulsory court-sponsored Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system (ILO, 2020c). Therefore, an increased backlog of labour disputes is highly prevalent in the country. Currently, there is no consideration given to extending the legal aid scheme. Moreover, the labour judiciary lacks adequate capacity. The simultaneous presence of these two issues acts as hindrances to enhanced access to justice.

As discussed earlier, the labour market programmes are scattered and are not documented effectively. Along with these, programme evaluation exercises are weak and thus there are only limited improvements based on the lessons learnt. Monitoring of the programmes, e.g., skill development training programmes are weak and, in many cases, non-existent. The quality of the training is widely considered as not satisfactory. Under the existing circumstances, it is extremely difficult to assess the effectiveness of the programmes and find out the weakness. As a result, evidence-based and informed decision making while designing new labour market policies is almost impossible.

Limited capacity for skill development training programmes

At present, several skill developments, TVET, and other related training programmes are in place, albeit in a fragmented fashion. These training programmes are provided by different public and private entities with each having different priorities, approaches, and target groups. However, the most striking feature of these training providers is the lack of coordination which often results in duplication of the training programmes. Besides, it is difficult to determine whether the existing training programmes are adequate to cater for the needs of the changing labour markets. The percentage of the workforce that has taken training is low overall, with about 2 per cent of the workforce reporting receiving some training in the past 12 months (World Bank, 2017). Considering the accessibility to such training programmes, there exist discrepancies in terms of socio-economic conditions, age, education level, etc. For instance, access to skill development is limited for individuals from lower-income households, younger youth (age 15-24), and less-educated workers regardless of their desire for training opportunities (World Bank, 2017). This situation is particularly true for the disadvantaged and vulnerable population as well. The Ministry of Education (MoE) approves only a 5 per cent admission quota for persons with disabilities in TVET institutions.¹⁷ Besides, training opportunities seem to be more concentrated on better educated urban males.

The quality of the training programmes has remained an issue of concern. One key reason for the poor quality of training is the lack of trained teachers. Evidently, many teaching positions (almost 50%) are vacant particularly in the public training institutes (Khan, 2019; Islam, n.d.). This situation is exacerbated by low output of the TVET teacher training institute, absence of quality teaching and

¹⁷ https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_395789/lang--en/index.htm

learning outcomes resulting from inadequate provision of modern learning facilities, inadequate financing to maintain facilities, use of old-fashioned equipment and consumables and training materials for training, and industry-driven curriculum updating not adequately adaptive due to the centralised control and management (Khan, 2019). Besides, lack of managerial capacities amongst the providers is another key issue affecting the quality of the training programmes. Inadequate practical technical skills and knowledge often undermine the quality of the training programmes. For instance, an overemphasis on theoretical knowledge at the expense of technical skills is seen as a cause for serious lapses in technical competencies which hinders the effective application of new and existing technologies (World Bank, 2018a).

Lack of a competency-based qualification framework is also responsible for the poor quality of training programmes. Currently, there is no national skills qualification framework to assess and evaluate the quality of the training programmes. There is only one nationally recognised system named 'Skills Quality Assurance System' in the country which is also accepted by the BTEB (ILO, 2016b). About 60 per cent of the instructors use this qualification system including private providers and industry trading organisations. Absence of government systems to delegate powers, particularly to public training institutions, to generate earnings, hire trainers and resource persons with industry experience, offer market-responsive flexible courses, and enter into partnerships with employers and enterprises to make training relevant and place graduates in jobs has been taking a toll on the development of desirable technical skills in Bangladesh.

Currently, there is no effective monitoring and evaluation system of the training programmes in the country resulting in poor quality training outcomes. Currently, there are about 13,163 training institutions in the country as per the estimates of the TVET Institute Census (BBS, 2015). About 87 per cent of these institutes are in the private sector. Implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system can greatly improve the quality of the training programmes provided by these private institutes (NSDA, 2020). Moreover, the absence of a monitoring system might lead the providers not to impart market-driven practical skills even if there are opportunities for practical skills training are in place within the curricula (World Bank, 2018a).

There exist no regular and systematic research reports on the TVET sector (Khan, 2019). It is of immense importance to periodically review the pros and cons of the TVET sector, as skill development training programmes need to respond to the dynamic and ever-changing requirements of the rapidly transforming economic structure. Moreover, the absence of proper research reports leaves the training providers with no systematic records of job placements and a poor understanding of the current and future labour market needs. Lack of capacity of the training providers to collect and generate accurate and credible skills data is also an issue of concern. Therefore, the revision of TVET courses, developing market-responsive curricula and the expansion of TVET access has been a daunting task in Bangladesh.

Proper implementation of the TVET governing acts and legislative and policy frameworks including the institutional capacities of these agencies are amongst the key challenges.¹⁸ Recently, technical training related issues are being handled by a relatively new public body, the Technical and Madrasah

¹⁸ The TVET governing legislative and policy framework includes National Skills Development Policy 2011, National Education Policy 2010, NSDA Act 2018, BTEB Act 2018, NFE Act 2014, Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, and The Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016.

Education Department (TMED) with the Ministry of Education. However, it has been understaffed and lacked the capacity related to results-based planning and monitoring, reporting and financial management. It is to be noted that the NSDP 2011 was due to be reviewed and updated in 2017 but has not taken place yet.

With the establishment of the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) under the NSDA Act 2018, Bangladesh aims to bring in a major change in the skills development ecosystem. Absence of effective coordination among skill development training providers, competency-based training delivery mechanisms, and unified standards, curriculum and certification systems result in skills mismatch in the labour market. With a view to addressing the stated issues, the NSDA has formulated a draft 'National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) 2020', which will focus on demand-driven, flexible and responsible trainings, nationally recognised qualifications with international standards, competency-based trainings and assessments, industry and private sector linkages, flexible institutional management, promotion of workplace learning, recognition of prior learning and employment support services promotion (Box 1). Skills development will be a shared responsibility among the NSDA, various ministries/divisions/departments delivering skills trainings, different public and private sector training providers, industry skills councils (ISCs), trade bodies, and employers' organisation like Bangladesh Employers' Federation, and employees' associations.¹⁹ Amongst the actors, ISCs and industry association can play a leading role in undertaking surveys i.e., national or industry-wide skills survey on a regular basis following the NSDA prescribed guidelines (World Bank, 2018). However, the ISCs and other relevant stakeholders are yet to be fully functional (Khan, 2019). As mentioned earlier, skills development training programmes are provided unevenly and in a fragmented manner. This is where the NSDP 2020 should provide a special focus on strengthening the coordination among relevant actors imparting skills development trainings. A key role that the NSDA has to play as an effective institutional framework to oversee the coordination and good governance within and among the training providers while improving the quality of trainings offered.

Box 2: Vision, Mission, and Objectives of NSDP 2020

Vision

A demand-driven skilled workforce will be built for the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

Mission

People's employability and competitiveness in the national and international labour markets will be increased for better earnings taking into account the importance of adaptability to the technologically changing world of work.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To establish demand-driven, flexible, and responsive training provisions
- To deliver skills training and to assure quality through a framework of qualifications
- To establish a unified skills certification system
- To improve coordination of skills development training
- To strengthen industry-institute linkage for demand-driven skills development and job placement
- To implement mutual recognition agreement (MRA) for skills development and job placement
- To introduce Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism for formal recognition of skills
- To establish a skills data system
- To operate an efficient monitoring and evaluation system

Source: NSDA (2020).

¹⁹ Relevant stakeholders share their responsibility in designing and delivering skills, re-skilling, upskilling, training and apprenticeship.

The NTVQF forms the basis of consistent, industry-wide training and skills recognition that can address employer needs for quality products and worker needs for appropriate pay based on skills. Although the NTVQF has been approved by the government, the implementation of the NTVQF is slow and the limited awareness of the employers regarding the Bangladesh NTVQF acts as a hindrance. Very recently, the Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework (BNQF) has been endorsed which is viewed as one of the most significant instruments of reforming and managing the qualifications systems in the country (ILO, 2021b).²⁰

Weak enforcement of labour laws coupled with inadequate institutional capacity

Weak enforcement of various provisions of labour laws coupled with judicial backlog has been a salient feature of labour market dispute settlement in Bangladesh. A large number of industrial disputes and judicial cases that deal with non-compliance of labour issues have been lodged since the inception of the Labour Court which came to fruition through the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006. The majority of the labour cases are lodged from the apparel sector and are related to disputes regarding layoffs, dismissals, retrenchment, non-payment and delayed payment of wages and other benefits, compensation for workplace accidents and violation of trade union rights (The Dhaka Tribune, 2019). Reports by national dailies suggest that there were at least 1,900 labour cases pending with seven labour courts across the country, while more than 900 cases were waiting for settlement for more than five years (The Business Standard, 2020; The New Age, 2020). This persistent judicial backlog can be attributed to the shortage of judges (a longstanding challenge to accelerate judicial activities) and lengthy judicial procedures to resolve a case. The presence of lenient penalty and punitive actions seems encouraging for violating the provisions of the Labour Act. For instance, an employer can get carried away with only BDT 5,000 (less than \$60) for non-compliance with the order of the Labour Court. Therefore, the existing system is not adequate to protect workers' rights.

A weak monitoring system to oversee the implementation of various provisions Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 (amended in 2018) and Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015 in the factories, shops, and establishments is also prevalent. This can be attributed to the limited capacity of the responsible department (the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments-DIFE under the Ministry of Labour and Employment). The human resources and infrastructure of the DIFE are limited compared to the actual number of factories, shops, and establishments are in business. As per the Labour Inspection Report (2020-21), a total of 481 posts are filled out of 993 sanctioned posts (around 48%) for the DIFE (DIFE, 2021). While inspecting the factories and establishments, The DIFE can file cases against factory owners or management authorities for violating the provisions of labour laws and regulations. However, the settlement rate of the cases is relatively low. In the FY2020-21, only 490 cases have been settled out of 1,421 filed cases (slightly over 34%) (DIFE, 2021). In Bangladesh, millions of factories and establishments operate in the informal sector where implementation of

²⁰ The BNQF is expected to uphold the life-long learning by opening up access, targeting investments, and recognising prior learning. Moreover, it will match qualifications with knowledge, skills, and competencies, and increase employability by better relating qualifications to occupational needs.

labour laws and regulations is virtually absent. Therefore, it is challenging for the DIFE to monitor those factories and establishments given the current capacity of the DIFE.

Inadequate institutional capacity for managing migration

The labour migration landscape has been changing continuously. Increased labour mobility to take advantage of productive and remunerative jobs can generate significant gains for a labour surplus country like Bangladesh. However, adroit management and facilitation of labour flows are needed to materialise the potential gains of migration for the sending country, migrants, and receiving country (Holzman & Pouget, 2010). However, the policies and institutions have not kept pace with the need and the management of the entire migration process is often of concern.

The skills gap has always been an issue facing Bangladesh. Most of the migrants do not receive proper skill enhancement training prior to their migration. According to the Survey on the Investment from Remittance (SIR) 2016, approximately 12 per cent migrants took some training before their departure (Razzaque et al., 2018). This happens despite expanding the number of technical training centres (TTCs) and increased investment in training programmes. The reason behind this perplexing finding is attributed to two issues: firstly, the skills taught in the TTCs are not matched with the employers' demand as well as future skill requirements and secondly, the training provided by the TTCs are of poor quality (World Bank, 2018a). Moreover, lack of coordination with the Ministry of Education while designing the training curriculum and manual also explains why Bangladeshi migrants remain at the low end of the skill distribution. As a result, job types are undiversified and migrants are often ended up with employment in unskilled occupations (i.e., construction works for males and domestic works for females). Currently, there is no transnational certification scheme in the country which can signal skills across borders. Moreover, the certifications from the TTCs are not widely accepted or regarded as a strong signal of skill (World Bank, 2018a).

The flaws and loopholes in the migrants' recruitment processes and monitoring is a representation of the weak and inadequate institutional capacity of the entire migration management mechanism. Some instances of such issues: charging migrants with excessive services costs, document fraud, extracting bribes from migrants, overstating migrant qualifications to extract higher fees, and additional rents extracted by the perpetuation of the middlemen (dalal) system (World Bank, 2018b). Lack of proper information about migration processes and concentration of labour recruiters in the urban Dhaka city make it difficult for migrants from distant locations to get directly involved and migrated through formal official channel.²¹ According to SIR (2016) report, about 14 per cent migrant workers followed informal unofficial channels for migrating abroad. Against this backdrop, the dalals or sub-agents emerge to bridge the gap between recruiting agencies and migrants.

Lack of capacity in government institutions is considered as a bottleneck in managing labour outmigration. For instance, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) works to create overseas employment opportunities and to address problems experienced by expatriates and thereby ensuring their welfare. However, the ministry suffers from severe resource shortages, human resources and inadequate infrastructure eventually undermining its capacity to

²¹ According to IOM (2010), more than 35 per cent of migrant workers collected information on overseas opportunities from friends or family members. A staggering 45 per cent relied on intermediaries for obtaining overseas employment information. It is noted that illegal intermediaries are those who do not have licences from BMET but are involved in overseas migration.

provide some of its key functions (World Bank, 2018b). Since migration is seen as a multidisciplinary issue and touches on the mandates of many different ministries like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Employment, etc., the MEWOE appears lacking strong connections and cooperation with these ministries. The BMET is the executing agency of the MEWOE in respect to processing labour migration. Amongst several functions BMET performs, one is to conduct market research on various issues of labour migration with support from the ILO, however, there is no systematic permanent mechanism for conducting the research to date (World Bank, 2018b). This can be due to very constrained monetary and personnel resources. In recent years, the MEWOE and BMET have diversified support services geographically through establishing District Employment Manpower Offices (DEMOs) to be more accessible to potential migrants.²² However, DEMOs lack technical staff and community outreach staff in order to accomplish their objective of connecting workers with overseas employment.

Lack of institutionalisation of informal migration channels namely dalals or sub-agents results in very high migration costs. According to the World Bank's Knowledge Network on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), Bangladesh has the highest migration costs in the world (World Bank, 2017). The presence of irregularities and hidden charges also contribute to such high migration costs despite having fixed charges for services assigned by the BMET (Barkat et al., 2014). Workers' lack of education, limited understanding of the processes involved, and inability to find the necessary information compel them to turn to unauthorised parties or dalals being victims of the latter's extortive practices (Razzaque et al., 2018). In fact, inadequate dissemination of information has been identified as a major cause of high migration costs (Barkat et al., 2014). Migration opportunities are considered lucrative options and dalals exploit the aspirant migrants often demanding more money than officially needed. Thus, the presence of dalals increases the cost of migration by several folds. Without bringing the network of informal dalals under formal regulations, it is unlikely to enforce legal provisions effectively.

Some other issues pertaining to the migration from Bangladesh is the higher concentration of migration destinations in some key oil-rich countries. Overreliance on a few labour markets leaves Bangladeshi workers vulnerable to market fluctuations in recipient countries, which limits the potential for migration to increase incomes (World Bank, 2018b). Labour migration is mostly happened based on the Memorandum of Understandings (MoU's) and Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs). However, currently, there is no assessment of the country's existing MoU's and BLAs which is essential to further diversify access to foreign labour markets. Another important is the lack of support services for migrant workers abroad. The labour attaches are primarily responsible for providing support in the destination countries. However, they lack the capacity to perform even the baseline functions included in its existing mandate such as site visits to check conditions in the potential foreign employer (World Bank, 2018b).

Absence of a well-designed framework for ALMPs

Lack of institutional capacity for better linkage between supply and demand sides of skills poses challenges towards designing a more adaptive skills development system. Seamless linkages are

²² Currently, there are 42 DEMOs and the direction is towards establishing DEMOs in every district of Bangladesh (World Bank, 2018b).

essential to design timely and needs-based ALMPs. Moreover, it will ensure the industries get the skilled manpower they need to make out of the business environment and the latest productivity-enhancing technologies. However, all these issues are largely dependent on the availability of the proper labour market information. As discussed, the unavailability of labour market information is an inherent problem in Bangladesh. Therefore, the scope for evidence-based planning for ALMPs and to inform training institutions and trainees about employment prospects in key occupations is indeed limited.

The creation of new and continuously upgrading the existing technologies have been making skills demands unpredictable and thereby creating challenges for the labour market. It is likely that automation and artificial intelligence-driven technologies will impact the jobs if not accompanied by the acquisition of relevant skills. Bangladesh industries are undergoing transformation and evolution toward complete digitisation and intelligent production processes to ensure high efficiency. It is in this context the ALMPs should include the emerging skill needs in the face of Industry 4.0 (Lee, 2020; Khan, 2019). Moreover, the AMPLs need to be revised in a timely manner based on the disaggregated sector-specific information and forecasting future skills demand in the labour market. While revising, the ICT skills need to be in place to fully exploit the growth potential of new technologies and job opportunities in the surging ICT industry.

Lack of some crucial life skills gaps exists among the Bangladeshi workers which significantly undermines their adaptability to cope up with and strive in the fast-changing technologies and business requirements (Khan, 2019). These skills are commonly known as higher-order cognitive and non-cognitive (soft skills) like critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, communication, work ethics, and teamwork (World Bank, 2018a). The level of cognitive and soft skills among Bangladeshi workers are very poor largely due to their poor foundational skills – literacy and numeracy (often considered as the basis for high-level cognitive and other job-relevant technical skills) (World Bank, 2018a). Moreover, there is a lack of a comprehensive package of services combining these skills tailored to the need of different target groups.

While mapping existing labour market programmes in Bangladesh (see Annex 1), it is evident that the scope for green skills and their promotion is very limited. The country has been ranked high in the risk of being affected by extreme weather events. In this case, adaptation and mitigation measures to meet the climate change includes energy-saving production methods and green factories, installation and maintenance of solar home systems, biogas, waste management and recycling, effluent treatment plants, eco-tourism, organic production practices, and other emerging areas. Therefore, the labour market is anticipated to experience an increased demand for green skills.

Lack of institutional capacity for the job search mechanism

Inadequacy of institutional capacity for job search mechanism alternatively known as employment exchange (assistance to jobseekers in their search for jobs and to employers in their search for the right jobseeker) is largely absent in Bangladesh (MoLE, 2019). Unlike the presence of job centres which provide job search mechanism services in other countries, informal mechanisms and newspaper advertisements constitute the major means of job search in the country. Lack of proper and timely labour market information also affects the job search mechanism by providing biased information on jobs and related other opportunities. Prospective jobseekers' poor job search skills and educational

institutes and training centres' limited job placement capacity tend to have unrealistic expectations about their job prospects and skill requirements. This creates unnecessarily large frictions and mismatches in the job market (World Bank, 2018a). Moreover, there is no provision for career guidance and counselling services for prospective jobseekers which are considered helpful for choosing future career options in Bangladesh (ILO, 2019).

However, some private agencies and/or organisations are providing job searching and matching and career guidance services through online portals with a limited capacity. Some of the leading such portals are Bdjobs.com, Chakri.com, Job.com.bd, bdjobs today, Prothom Alo jobs etc.²³ However, these providers mostly work with white-collar jobs which are disproportionately concentrated in the urban formal sector. Other jobs in the formal sector, and the informal sector, which constitutes more than 85 per cent of the country's all employment is excluded from their services. Finally, services provided through online portals might not be that much helpful immediately for the potential workers in the rural areas. Although the internet penetration is gradually increasing, using online information to improve labour market prospects is far from commonplace in most rural and semi-urban settings in Bangladesh.

5. Conclusion

Strengthening the protection measures for the workers is largely dependent on bolstering the existing labour market programmes and introducing well-developed and well-functioning PES and ALMPs. Several PES and ALMPs are currently being provided in Bangladesh rather in sporadic, scattered and uncoordinated manners. Besides, the relevant ministries and departments critically lack capacities for the effective delivery of those programmes. Resource constraints—both financial and human—are also important factors in the limited services currently being offered. There is no comprehensive review not only on the existing PES and ALMPs but also on the institutional capacity in managing the interventions available. The national jobs strategy which is currently under discussion has considered ALMPs as one of its three broad pillars. However, there is no detailed discussion and action plan about which institutions will be responsible for providing ALMPs, their institutional capacity assessment, and how they will implement the policies and interventions.

A review of the existing labour market programmes undertaken here suggests that there are several PES and ALMPs being provided by different ministries and/departments including the MoLE and DoL and private agencies and providers in Bangladesh. However, most of the interventions are fragmented in nature and not well-entrenched in a systematic framework. Moreover, lack of coordination among the ministries and departments leads to duplication of the interventions and does not help obtain the overall labour market challenges to make the programmes more effective given the availability of very limited resources.

From the review of the skill development training programmes and TVET, it is found that training programmes are not effectively tailored for the target groups based on the skill requirement for the emerging jobs. Furthermore, job placement even after being trained is limited. There is no periodical and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the skill development and TVET programmes running in

²³ <http://freejobpostingwebsites.blogspot.com/2018/11/top-15-job-sites-in-bangladesh.html>

the country. Inadequate institutional capacity is also responsible for not having extensive needs assessment on skills demand.

One important issue with the Bangladesh labour market is the lack of adequate labour market information on a regular basis. The currently available information is mostly focused on some aggregated and macro-level indicators, not on sector-specific disaggregated issues. Distortions in labour market participation decisions, skill mismatches, and ultimately inefficient labour market outcomes cannot be effectively addressed by the current level of and irregular information generation and dissemination practices. Moreover, a lack of strong and committed ownership by the relevant authorities, making the data generation process dependent on donor assistance, act as a barrier in developing a decentralised system underpinning the shared approach and disseminating labour market information for the targeted users.²⁴ Furthermore, there is also inadequate capacity in terms of statistical infrastructure, trained human resources, and building trust of respondents and data users through data protection regulations.

In the context of Bangladesh, there critically lacks a timely and market-driven ALMPs framework. ALMPs act as a catalyst in an efficient labour market by imparting need-based skill development training and facilitating job search mechanisms. Moreover, there is an acute shortage of both high-level cognitive skills and soft skills amongst the workers creating impediments for designing ALMPs. Also, from the preceding discussion, it is evident that information insufficiency and lack of institutional capacity are considered hindrances towards formulating evidence-based provisions for ALMPs.

The job searching mechanism is virtually non-existent amongst the available labour market programmes in Bangladesh. This mechanism is largely dominated by different informal channels and newspapers. However, small scale job searching services are provided by private providers through online portals. But the service is only concentrated to formal white-collar jobs in the major urban areas. Hence, there is a grave lack of institutional capacity to provide job searching and matching mechanism.

Finally, it is clear that the existing labour market programmes (PES and ALMPs) are highly inadequate and cannot cater for the needs in the labour market due to lack of institutional capacity. These programmes are unlikely to fully strengthen and compound the unemployment protection measures. Therefore, introducing a well-devised framework for PES and ALMPs coupled with institutional capacity building should be a major policy priority within the national development policy. Such a framework will not only support the workers to avail jobs and other support services but also develop a shock-absorbent labour market.

²⁴ The relevant government authority generally refers to a concerned labour employment under a relevant ministry in collaboration with other ministries, institutes, agencies, and private sectors.

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Annex

Annex 1: Mapping of the existing employment services and labour market programmes in Bangladesh

Programme	Ministry/Department	Target group	Description
Formal Training Programme for skill development	Department of Youth Development (DYD), Ministry of Youth and Sports	Youth population with educational qualification (HSC pass)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training courses are offered in 64 district offices and youth training centres on different trades with 1–6 months duration and residence facilities • Livestock, poultry rearing, fish farming, agriculture, and their primary care related training • Modern office management and computer applications
Technical Training (Formal) for skill development		Youth population with educational qualification (8 th grade – HSC pass)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 months long training courses are provided in 64 district offices on various trades with residence facilities • Courses include basic computer & ICT applications, professional graphics design, electronics, refrigeration & air conditioning, electrical & house wiring
Special Training Programmes for Skill Development		Youth population with educational qualification (8 th grade – HSC pass)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 months training programmes on various trades in special districts including 8 divisional districts with no residence facilities • Courses encompass basic training on freelancing, tourist guide, mobile servicing & repairing, front desk management, and beautification (women)
Informal Training Programmes for Skill Development		Unemployed population aged 18-35 with at least primary education (5 th grade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42 courses in different trades are offered based on the local demand in Upazila level (498 Upazilas including 10 metropolitan thanas) • Course duration varies from course to course (7-21 days) • Courses include trainings pertaining to agriculture, small & cottage industries, tailoring & making dresses, block & batik printing, goat rearing, fish farming, dairy farm, poultry farming at family level
Credit Service Schemes		(i) Youths aged 18–35 years (ii) Unemployed population aged 18–35 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual loan up to BDT 40,000–1,00,000 (\$470–\$1,176) for youth who receive training from DYD • Group loan for family-based employment programme. Each member of the group can avail BDT 12,000 (\$141) in the first phase. Each of them can also avail two more loans based on the prior success of BDT 16,000 (\$188) and BDT 20,000 (\$235) respectively.
Workers’ Reintegration and Rehabilitation Programme	Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment	Returnee Migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded by Wage Earners’ Welfare Board. The aim of the programme is two-fold: (i) capacity building & orientation (ii) fund supply to create employments for the returnee migrants and engage them in the mainstream economic activities. • As per Workers’ Reintegration and Rehabilitation Loan Act 2020, loan will be provided in cash credit form to invest in fish farming, poultry farm (chicken & duck), livestock rearing, Block-Batik Printing, Small & Cottage Industry, grocery shop, clothing & Tailoring business, computer/photocopy/phone-fax shop, autorickshaw/rickshaw/van, beauty parlour etc. to be self-employed/entrepreneur
Toll Free Helpline (16357)	Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour and Employment	Workers	Workers can report their claims on wage payment, layoffs, working hours, holidays, maternity welfare etc. to the relevant authorities.
Skill development training programmes	Bureau of Manpower, Education and Training (BMET)	Migrant workers	→ Imparting trainings through 37 Technical Training Centers (TTCs), 1 Bangladesh institute of Marine Technology (BIMT), and Apprenticeship Training Offices (3)
Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)			→ 45 major trades of training provided by institutions under BMET (for instance, steel fabrication, welding & fabrication, automotive, electrical, building construction, refrigeration & air conditioning, electronics, plumbing & pipe fitting, industrial garments, computer (software & hardware), and architectural drafting with AutoCAD etc.)
Short-term (irregular) skill development courses			

<p>2 years SSC vocational (regular) course in different basic engineering trades</p> <p>4 years diploma in Marine Engineering & Shipbuilding Engineering</p> <p>Apprenticeship Training (within industry)</p> <p>Course on House Keeping</p> <p>Imparting training on Languages (i.e., Korean, English, Japanese, Arabic)</p> <p>Trainings imparting through Public-Private Programme (PPP)</p> <p>e-Learning Platform for Migrant Workers</p>			<p>→ House Keeping course is conducted for female workers for overseas employment with the curricula prepared by International Organization for Migration (IOM)</p> <p>→ Training programmes under PPP are:</p> <p>(i) Training of Monga affected people with BGMEA</p> <p>(ii) Joint-Venture program with BKMEA</p> <p>(iii) PPP with western Marine Shipyard</p> <p>(iv) Training for people of Monga areas with PKSF</p> <p>(v) Program with BRAC</p> <p>(vi) Training with Apex Adelchi Footwear</p> <p>(vii) Training for Solar technician with Grameen Shokti</p> <p>(viii) BMET-UCEP joint venture for Catering Institute at Sylhet</p>
<p>Pre-Vocational Skill Training Programme under Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC)</p>	<p>Directorate of Primary Education, Ministry of Primary & Mass Education</p>	<p>Adolescent and Youth workers aged 15-18 who completed grade 3 or 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-12 months long market-relevant Pre-Vocational Skill Training are provided by Save the Children (SC) followed by placement in decent jobs through self or wage employment. • Trainings are provided in trades namely electrical & household wiring, motorcycle repairing & maintenance, mobile phone servicing, electronics technology, beautification, electrical house wiring & solar system, petrol & diesel engine mechanics, tailoring & garments machine operation, and hand embroidery
<p>Technical Education Facilities</p>	<p>Children Welfare Trust, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education</p>	<p>Poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalised children (0-5th grade)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation of child labours • Facilitation of technical education for professional development • Technical trainings are imparting through 9 technical training centres
<p>Third Programmatic Jobs Development Policy Credit</p>	<p>GoB with support from World Bank, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Labour and Employment</p>	<p>Unemployed, youths, women, vulnerable employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting GoB's goals of addressing critical jobs challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) Structural reforms to remove constraints to investment and trade (v) Reforms to improve quality of jobs (vi) Reforms to make labour markets more inclusive, in particular, for women, youth, and migrants (vii) Reforms to help promote female labour force participation, increase the market relevance skills and supporting their adaptation to the future changing world of work, and make migration safer and more productive • Addressing the COVID-19 crisis and building back better <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) Supporting the effort by the GoB to help firm continue paying their workers' wages (v) Supporting the informal micro-entrepreneur in recovering from the shock (vi) Strengthening of the GoB's ability to respond to future crisis and increase resilience for the poor and vulnerable • Supporting the returnee migrant workers • Improving capacity to attract and manage FDI and domestic investment needed to support export-oriented job creation • Making the skills development sector more labour market relevant • Strengthening labour regulations for improved working conditions • Promoting quality daycare to enable more women to join the labour force
<p>Human Capital Development Programme</p>	<p>MoPME and MoE Directorate of Primary Education, National</p>	<p>Pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education (grades 6-8) and students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting a comprehensive and integrated programme covering primary education and TVET institution strengthening

for Bangladesh 2021 (HCDP 21)	Curriculum and Textbook Board, National Academy for Primary Education, Primary Teacher Training Institutes, Bureau of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Department of Technical Education, Bangladesh Technical Education Board, Vocational Teachers Training Institute, Technical Teachers Training Institute	from non-formal education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the government in the implementation of its development policies aiming at a better educated, trained, and qualified human capital as envisioned in its national strategic plans • Ensuring effective delivery of TVET services through targeted technical assistance that will provide capacity building, policy advice and evidence-based research • 3 priority sectors – Education, Development aid, and Skill development • Enhancing quality, relevance, and efficiency of primary education and TVET • Ensuring access and equity
Stimulus packages geared towards workers	GoB	Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special funds for export-oriented industries to pay for salaries and allowances (BDT 50 billion) • Support for the destitute export oriented RMG and leather sector workers (BDT 15 billion) • Employment generation activities (through Palli Sanchay Bank, Karmasangthan Bank, Probashi Kalyan Bank, Ansar and VDP Bank, and PKSf) (BDT 32 billion) • Direct cash assistance for informal sector workers (BDT 7.6 billion)
Livelihood Restoration Loan (LRL)	PKSF with support from Financial Institutions Division, Ministry of Finance	Five pandemic-hit groups e.g., agriculture and related small entrepreneurs, small & cottage industry-related entrepreneurs, trained youth, unemployed youth, and returning migrant workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aiming to revive the economics activities of the poor people affected by the COVID-19 including through this specialised and flexible loan programme • Generating self-employment and rejuvenating economic activities in the rural areas
Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)	Ministry of Labour and Employment Department of Labour, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Ministry of Communication, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, & Cooperatives, Ministry of	Primary school completers, school leavers, out of school children, youth, job seekers, as well as women and socially and economically disadvantaged people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both formal and informal training programmes are provided • Formal training is provided through educational, vocational, and technical training institutes • Informal training is imparted through job training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship training • TVET training programmes are provided by the public institutes, private training institutes, and some NGOs.

	Textile and Jute, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Science, Technology, and Information & Communication Technology, Ministry of Shipping, Ministry of Forest and Environment, Directorate of Technical Education, BMET, Bangladesh Technical Education Board, Department of Women Affairs, Department of Social Affairs, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Youth Development, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Bangladesh Industrial and Technical Assistance Centre, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, Bangladesh Railway, Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, Department of Shipping, Department of Textile, Bangladesh Computer Council, Directorate of Health, Bangladesh Nursing Council		
Skill development for migrant workers	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA)	Migrant workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring supply of quality manpower at a minimum cost within the time schedule given by the employers • Introducing two insurance schemes for the workers before their departure and for their left behind families to ensure financial security of migrant workers • Going to set up a bank to ensure quick and easy monetary transaction service to the migrating workers • Going to launch a sophisticated and highly technical and vocational training including information technology (IT) to cater the need of the country and the overseas employers

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting up a modern medical testing centre to ensure proper medical check-up of the migrant workers Arranging short term foreign language course and briefing session
Design training manual and course curriculum	National Skill Development Authority	Trainees and training institutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspecting and accrediting the training institutes Designing course curriculum and training manual Assessing the trainees' competency level and certify them
Establish 'Digital Skills' under LICT project	Information and Communication Technology Division		Online training platform imparting training various ICT skills for employment in digital skill. For example, Job Ready – a soft skill course for employment
Skill Development through Apprenticeship	Access to Information (a2i) Programme	Unemployed youths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It covers sectors like Agro-food, Furniture, Tourism & Hospitality, Construction, Leather & Footwear etc. The important trades include wood machine operation, lacquer polishing, carpentry, food & beverage services, chef, baking, food processing, housekeeping, plumbing, tiles fitting, footwear production etc. in the formal sector while electrical house wiring, welding, glass & mirror fitting, mobile servicing, motorcycle mending, tailoring & dress making, etc. in the informal sector. The a2i has developed a National Apprenticeship Management System with an aim to provide one-stop service for providing better services to all relevant stakeholders like youths, industries, BMET, BTEB, and DIFE of the programme.
Skills development through stipend		Higher secondary students	The a2i in collaboration with Higher Secondary Stipend Project (HHSP) of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) has taken an initiative to integrate skills development programme with the stipend of higher secondary students. The objectives of the programme are: (i) providing entrepreneurial skills development for the higher secondary students alongside stipend (ii) creating earning scopes for the higher secondary students alongside their education (iii) increasing the enrollment of female students in higher secondary education (iv) reducing drop out in higher secondary education. The trades of training include refrigeration & air conditioning, electronics, embroidery & Nokshi Kantha, beautification, motor mechanic, graphics design & multimedia, tour guide, photography, sweet making, mobile servicing, block boutique & screen printing etc.
Skills for employment programme on RMG		Unemployed youths	The a2i with the support of Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) of the Finance Division and BGMEA has developed and launched 2 two-month skill development programmes to create mid-level managers and knitting or woven machine operators.
Skill development for Qwami madrasa youths		Qwami madrasa youths	The main objective of the programme is to mainstream qwami madrasa youths in the job market through reconstructing the mindset of qwami madrasa and imparting formal and informal trainings on income generating necessary skills. The training programmes include a number of trades i.e., electrical house wiring, aminship (land survey), mobile servicing, graphic designing, tailoring, block-boutique, nokshikatha, agriculture, pisciculture, horticulture, driving, and afforestation.
Special skill development programmes (apprenticeship)	National Intelligence for Skills, Employment, and Entrepreneurship (NISE3)	Youths, migrant workers, and all types of unemployed persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprenticeship training for formal sectors on cooking, food & beverage service, housekeeping, reception, leather goods machine operator, footwear machine operator, carpentry, and lacquer polishing while for informal sectors on electrical house wiring, fowelding, glass & mirror fitting, carpenter, furniture designing, painting & furnishing & polishing, mobile servicing, motorcycle mechanic, tiles fitting, steel furniture making, tailoring & dress making, bakery, packaging, waiter, reception, room servicing, and cooking. Developing manpower for industries located within the economic zones Skill development for migrant workers: Imparting trainings on trades like construction, manufacturing, plantation, and different types of services sectors. Future demand for skills: Training programmes on machine learning (AI), data analysis (big data), robotics, internet of things (IoT), block chain, augmented reality, virtual reality, and 3D printing & design. Integrating skills with general education: 6-month long training on electrical and graphics designing Creating entrepreneurs through skill development: Training for 360 hours on different trades
Skill development programmes for the manufacturing sector			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill development for agro-food sector: Training programs on baking, sweet making, food packaging, and food processing & quality control

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development for light engineering sector: For male – welding, electrical & refrigeration & air conditioner. • For female – light machineries, electronics, electrical maintenance, AutoCAD, refrigeration & air conditioner, household appliance, carpentry, and plastic processing • Skill development for tourism and hospitality sector: Cooking, food & beverage service, housekeeping, reception, leather goods machine operator, and footwear machine operator • Skill development for leather and footwear sector: Machine operations (footwear), supervisor & machine operations (leather goods), machine operations (tannery), apparel screen printing, and Lathe machine maintenance • Skill development for construction sector: Plumbing, electrical installation & maintenance, machinery, rod binding, and building paints & tiles works • Skill development for furniture sector: Carpentry, lacquer polishing, wood curving, wood workers’ machine operation, upholstery works, steel cutting & design, painting & coating, steel,
Skill development programmes for disadvantaged groups	Programmes for disadvantaged groups	Qwami madrasha students, imams, muezzins, and marginal women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development for qwami madrasha students: Electrical house wiring, aminship, mobile servicing, tailoring, fish farming, livestock rearing, graphics design, nakshi kantha, block-batik, making bags & caps • Skills development for imams and muezzins: Agriculture & forestry, livestock rearing, fishing, plantation, and basic computer training & electrical house wiring • Skills development for marginal women: Basic training on internet, photoshop, graphics design, and web design • Imam batayon: Driving cum automechanics, refrigeration & air conditioning, tailoring, sewing nakshi kantha, block, batik, & printing, graphics design & multimedia, aminship, mobile servicing, general electronics, travel tourism & ticketing, plumber & pipefitter, electrical house wiring, fish farming, mushroom cultivation, and livestock rearing • Skills development for the beneficiary of ‘One House, One Firm’: Poultry, goat rearing, livestock vaccination, turkey rearing, nursery management, fish farming, and vegetable cultivation etc.
Skills for employment investment programme (SEIP)	Finance Division, Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Industries, Bangladesh Bank, PKSF and Industry Associations ²⁵ , Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BTRC) under the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, BMET, DTE, TTTI, BITAC, SREDA, DYD	Male and female aged over 15, ethnic minority and disadvantaged groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking measures to develop skilling and upskilling a large number of working age people • Increasing employment in priority sectors through creating manpower with improved skills • Delivering market responsive inclusive skill trainings • Strengthening the institutions and quality of the training programmes • Ensuring effective programme management and governance system • Imparting skill training to develop entrepreneurs • Training programmes ranging from the basic level to the high-level managerial development catering the need of the industry • Establishment of National Skill Development Authority (NSDA) which acts as an in-charge and coordinator of skill development programmes sporadically implemented by 23 ministries/divisions. • Establishing online training management system (TMS) to track the trained and job placed graduates for 6 months • Currently supporting 10 priority sectors (RMG & textile, construction, information technology, light engineering, leather & footwear, ship building, tourism & hospitality management, agro processing, transport (motor driving), nursing & care giving) partnering with 13 industry associations • Training programmes are offered on various trades²⁶

²⁵ BGMEA, BKMEA, BTMA, LFMEAB, BACI, BEIOA, BASIS, BACCO, AEOSIB, BAPA, REHAB etc.

²⁶ Training courses include aluminum fabrication & installation, apparel merchandising, auto mechanics, baking technology, basic & advance customer service (mastering customer service), basic techniques of Dyeing & Printing, basic techniques of weaving, basic techniques of Yarn manufacturing, basic techniques in weaving, basic woven structure, blow room basics & operation, bricklaying (city and guilds), business accounting, business management, CAD-CAM design & programming, CAD (2D & 3D), computer aided design in textile & garments, dress making &

Technical training programmes	Bangladesh Computer Council	Unemployed youths and people	<p>Short courses with duration 2 days to 23 weeks include Office application & Unicode Bangladesh under WID (only for woman), Digital Marketing, Graphics Design & Multimedia (animation, audio & video editing, photo editing), Hardware maintenance & troubleshooting, Advanced office applications specialized on Excel and Access, Certified web development specialist, Cyber security essentials, E-government applications, Java programming, Software estimation & product definition, Training programme on Python, Development on Woman and ICT Frontier Initiative, 3D modelling and animation, Training Program on Software Testing, Big data analysis , Training programme on Information security and privacy</p> <p>Long courses with duration 12 months include Post Graduate Diploma in Information and Communication Technology, Diploma in Information and Communication Technology, Professional Diploma in Game Development, Professional Diploma in Web Applications & Development (.Net Framework), Professional Diploma in Web Applications & Development (Laravel Framework), Professional Diploma in IT Administrator (Server & Network)</p>
Professional Training Programmes for Nursing and Midwifery	Bangladesh Nursing and Midwifery Council		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different professional training programmes with duration from 6 months to 3 years • Courses include Diploma in nursing science and midwifery, Diploma in midwifery, BSc in nursing, Post BSc in nursing/public health, Master of Science in nursing, Diploma in pediatric nursing, Diploma in cardiac nursing, Diploma in renal nursing, Family welfare visitor, Junior midwifery, Community paramedic, and Community based skill birth attendants
Skill development training programmes	SME foundation	Potential entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artificial jewelry for SME entrepreneur - Block and batik print - Diversified leather goods production
Technical skill development training programmes	Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Center (BITAC)	Unemployed workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular training programmes: 2-14 weeks training on machine shop, welding, foundry practice & pattern making, automobile maintenance, programmable logic controller etc. • Customised training programmes: 1-14 weeks training on heat treatment, electroplating, mechanical drafting, CNC lathe operations & practice, CNC milling & practice, steel milling induction furnace operation & practice, quality control & product testing of industrial spare parts, plastic technology etc. • Training programmes under SEPA: 12 weeks training on light machineries, electronics, electrical maintenance, AutoCAD, Garments' machineries maintenance, welding, refrigeration & air conditioning, household appliance maintenance, carpentry, plastic processing
Skill development training programmes under NTVQF	Bangladesh Technical Education Board	Unemployed youths and people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programmes are provided in sectors namely agro-food processing, ceramic, construction, furniture, ICT, leather & leather goods, light engineering, pharmaceuticals, RMGs, tourism & hospitality, and transport equipment. • Trades of training include Baking, food processing & quality control, poultry & meat processing, rice processing, decoration & printing, plumbing, electrical installation & maintenance, wood working machine operation, lacquer polishing, carpentry, IT support technician, web design, search engine optimisation freelancing etc.

tailoring, certificate course on quality control management in RMG, CNC machine operation, compliance & social welfare, cookery (city & guilds), customer support & services, cutting machine operation, fabric optimisation & cutting technology, digital marketing, electrical installation & maintenance, electrical & navigation equipment installation, electrical (city & guilds), electronics, fashion garments, finance & accounting outsourcing, fire safety & compliance, fire safety management & risk assessment, food & beverage production & service, food processing, garments management, quality control for construction, spinning, dyeing & printing, & food processing, quality assurance & textile testing, refrigeration & fabrication, server administration & cloud management, operator training for woven & knit machine, supply chain management, tactics for commercial activities, graduate diploma in leather & footwear management, graphic design, heavy vehicle driving, policy analysis, IT support service, sales, & freelancing, lasting & assembling operation, ship machinery installation, market analysis & export promotion, master craftsmanship, mechanical agriculture farming, medical scribing, mid-level management (RMG), mobile application development, mobile phone servicing, outsourcing (ICT), packaging technician, ship painting, ship piping, plumbing, production management, professional customer service, project management, tiles & marble works, beautification & entrepreneurship development, web design, weaving technology etc.

BKMEA-SEIP project	BKMEA	Potential entrants in the RMG sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management training programme for new entrants • Skill training program (operator training) for new entrants • Up-skilling training programme
Skill development and upskilling training courses	BGMEA	Potential entrants in the RMG sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New entrants' operator courses: Operator training for woven sewing machine, knit sewing machine, manual sweater machine, and computerized sweater machine • New entrants' mid-level courses: Apparel merchandising, CAD in textile & garments, garment quality system, industrial engineering & lean manufacturing, production planning & management, and textile testing for assuring quality • Upskill courses: Garment quality system, industrial engineering manufacturing system, and production planning & management
TVET, skill development, employment, & enterprise development	UCEP Bangladesh	Disadvantaged children and adolescent	<p>TVET and Skill Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offers an integrated approach to equip learner with required technical and employability skill for efficient productivity and effective management of work in jobs • based on life-long-learning approach, it provides training on formal skills training, informal apprenticeship based on industry demand, entrepreneurial skills training for business development and vocational programme for grade 8 completers <p>Decent employment and enterprise development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • career guidance to potential trainees of the skills training programme • career counselling to the youth to decide their career with information related to skills • job placement support

Source: Author's compilation from various sources.

Annex 2: Workfare programmes in Bangladesh

Name of Programme	Implementing ministry/Division	Target group	Programme description	Beneficiary (lakh)			
				2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Food for Work (FFW)	MoDMR	Landless and unemployed people in the rural areas	To create food-wage employment during the slack season, mostly in construction and maintenance of rural roads, river embankments, and irrigation channels. Wage payments are made in kind (that is, in wheat) rather than in cash	10.75	10	0	2
Work for Money (WFM)	MoDMR	Landless and unemployed people	To create wage employment during the slack season,	15.18	12.50	3.5	3.5

			mostly in construction and maintenance of rural roads, river embankments, and irrigation channels. Wage payments are made in cash to improve the life of extreme poor due to natural disasters or any crisis.				
Test Relief (TR) Cash	MoDMR	Landless and unemployed people in the rural areas		19.06	20.40	3.69	3.69
Employment Generation Programme for the Poor	MoDMR	Poor people and unskilled workers	Cash-based workfare program targeted to the rural extreme poor that provides a hitherto unavailable element of employment guarantee during lean season over two cycles for 80 days. First cycle starts from the month of October to December and 2nd cycle starts from the month of March to April.	8.27	26.50	19.18	19.18
Haor Infrastructure and livelihood Development	LGD	Poor rural people; smallholder farming households with less than 2.5 acres of land; small fishing households; women from poor households; and small traders and intermediaries in local markets	To reduce poverty in five districts of the Haor basin: Netrakona, Habiganj, Brahmanbaria, Kishorganj and Sunamganj. To improve road infrastructure, build local capacity and expand access to natural resources, technology and markets. Increasing fish yields and aquatic biodiversity, enhancing the productivity of smallholder farms and reducing their vulnerability to adverse weather conditions.	0.16	0.39	0.07	0.007
Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Improvement	Ministry of Local Government, Rural	the population in the catchment areas (small and marginal farmers,	To improve livelihoods in the rural coastal districts,	0.34	0.27	-	-

	Development, and Cooperatives	small traders and micro-entrepreneurs, landless people and poor women)	vulnerable to climate variability and change.				
Flood Management and Livelihood Improvement Project in Haor Area	Ministry of water Resources (MoWR)	Poor population in haor areas		-	10.18	0.12	0.13

Source and note: Author's compilation and presentation using data from the SSPS project office. '-' indicates unavailability of the information.

Annex 3: SSPs related to skill development and training

Name of Programme	Implementing ministry/Division	Target group	Programme description	Beneficiary (lakh)			
				2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)	Ministry of Women & Children Affairs	Poor and vulnerable	participants are provided with training on life-skills, various trade courses and savings opportunities	139.81	10.40	10.4	10.4
National Services	Ministry of Youth & Sports	Unemployed youths in the age group of 24-35 years, who have successfully completed Higher Secondary level education (H.S.C) or above	To improve temporary employment to the unemployed youths passing H.S.C and above through their involvement in nation building activities.	1.49	1.07	0.75	0.13
Joyeeta Foundation	Ministry of Women & Children Affairs	Women entrepreneurs	To support women entrepreneurs. It provides a low interest loan to women entrepreneurs	0.1	0.10	0.01	0.01
Women's Skill Based Training For Livelihood	Ministry of Women & Children Affairs	Women	Livelihood improvement and income generation programmes	0	0.00	0.26	0.26
Urban Based Marginal Women Development (Urban Based Women Development Project Phase-2_2017-18)	Ministry of Women & Children Affairs	Unban women	Training and livelihood support for urban marginal women	0.53	0.48	0.11	0.11
Integrated Rural Employment Support Project for the Poor Women	BRDB	Poor and helpless women	To reduce poverty of the poor as well as helpless women and empower them social economically	-	-	-	-
Employment of Ultra Poor in Northern Areas	Rural development & Co-operative Division	Poor women in northern Bangladesh	Provides training on several income generating activities	0.07	0.10	1.38	0.89
Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO)	Local Government Division (LGD), MoLGRD&C	Extreme poor rural women	To improve empowerment and entrepreneurship of the vulnerable women	0	0	-	-

Income Generating Activities for Women at Upazila Level	Ministry of Women & Children Affairs	Poor and vulnerable women	Provides training on several income generating activities	0.3	0.36	-	-
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Source: Author's presentation using data from the SSPS project office.