

South Asia Consultation on Post-2015 Development Agenda: Focus on Migrants and Migration 24-25 April 2015, Dhaka, Bangladesh



Introduction

Migration in South Asia plays a rather critical role in alleviating poverty and unemployment in the region. Five SAARC countries namely, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are among the leading migrant workers sending countries in the region with the Middle East as the prominent destination. In the recent years, Malaysia has emerged as a substantive market for some South Asian countries particularly Bangladesh and Nepal. There are also small numbers now migrating to the Republic of Korea from these countries under the Employment Permit System introduced by the latter since 2006

The exodus from South Asia features temporary migration flows with fixed-term contracts; predominance of semi-skilled and low-skilled workers such as construction workers and female domestic workers. These workers face numerous problems with respect to protection in both origin and destination countries compared to skilled workers. A high incidence of South Asian workers in irregular status and in the Gulf and Malaysia have also been reported.

The share of female migration for low wage occupations such as domestic work is a growing phenomenon. In South Asia, Sri Lanka has recorded the highest number of female migrants or about 50% of its total migrants. Since women migrants are one of the most vulnerable groups, policy ambiguities concerning their migration have limited such movements from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Bangladesh had banned the migration of women as domestic workers at certain times while India now permits women only of 30 years and more to migrate for low skilled occupations. A sizeable number migrate to the Middle East, especially Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

Despite of the important role of migration on poverty reduction, the issue of labour migration has not gained traction within SAARC as a regional bloc. It was only in 2014 when SAARC governments recognized labour migration as an area for regional cooperation. The South Asia consultation aims to reinforce this message and ensure that SAARC countries support the integration of migrant workers and migration on the Post-2015 Development agenda and that this is translated in national development plans.

The consultation is part of a series of sub-regional consultations that MFA and its partner organisations- Global Coalition on Migration and MADE Network organise further capacitate

migrants CSOs in engaging and understanding the post-2015 debate which is essential for effective advocacy at all levels. This is also to lay the groundwork that would enable CSOs to continue the conversations in follow-up work at the GFMD in Istanbul and in preparation for the GFMD in Bangladesh in 2017. Specifically the consultation aimed to:

- Enhance migrants and migrant advocacy groups understanding of the broader discourse on Post-2015 development agenda
- Ensure that migrants and migration are integrated in the Post 2015 Agenda
- Come up with indicators to measure success of targets related to migrants and migration.
- Gain better understanding on the impact of post-2015 for migrants' rights advocacy in the region.

Background

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly will replace the expiring Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a new set of goals and targets: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are an ambitious attempt to tackle the root causes of poverty, deprivation, and inequality worldwide. The project aims to establish a policy framework with universal goals that will cover all countries and all people. UN member states will be expected to use the SDGs to frame their policy agendas for the next 15 years.

The eight MDGs (see Fig. 1) form a blueprint agreed to in 2000 by all governments and leading development institutions, signifying an effort to eradicate poverty in the poorest countries of the world. In Asia, the MDGs led to successful projects in a number of areas, including improved food security and nutrition, increased access to reproductive and maternal health services, and improved access to primary education, among other positive outcomes.²

Despite gains in some areas, poverty, inequality, and deprivation remain at crisis levels across Asia and globally. Notably, the MDGs failed to include consideration of migrants and the links between development, human rights, and migration—a significant omission, particularly in the Asian context, as the Asia and Pacific region is home to more than 30 million migrant workers,³ too many of whom endure the struggles of poverty and inequality daily.

At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012, governments and other stakeholders decided to establish an Open Working Group (OWG) of the United Nations General Assembly to organize a process to propose a new set of goals to replace the MDGs. In July 2014, the OWG presented 17 goals with 169 targets. Specific indicators to measure progress to accompany the goals and targets will also be developed. The task to developing framework for indicator was given to the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the discussion around the indicators has already started. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) which the Commission has endorsed on its meeting in March 2015, will be tasked with fully developing proposal for the indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level under the leadership of the national statistical offices.

Between January and July 2015, governments will continue to deliberate on the proposed goals and targets, determining how they will be implemented to determine progress. The discussion on the indicators will continue until 2016 and its first draft will be made available in July 2015.

The UN General Assembly will adopt the final goals and targets for the SDGs at the Special Summit on Sustainable Development in New York, 25-27 September 2015, hence, the need to act now and influence these deliberations to ensure the integration of migrants and migrant workers in the SDGs.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Where we are the moment

This session was designed to set the tone of the discussion on post-2015 development agenda. The discussion focused on the level of understanding of the participants on the issue and the current status of discussion at the international level. Mr. William Gois from Migrant Forum in Asia facilitated the session.

An interactive approach was utilized to gauge the knowledge and engagement of participants on the debate around the post-2015 development agenda. Participants were asked what activities they have organized around the Post-2015 development agenda and why they think they were able to do them.

The exercise revealed that there is a huge gap between what organisations do and what is required. The facilitator explained that the consultation wanted to bridge this gap by a process called “socialization” of the knowledge and to enable participants to understand and connect the experiences of the people on the ground and where CSOs, trade unions and experts operate. Advocates and the people they represent shared two different worlds and how often these two worlds should connect to bring a change process is something that participants need to reflect on. The facilitator also reminded participants to be more self-critical of the way they work in which most of it is around projects. The facilitator challenged the participants on how to translate that reality in a different way.

For the participants to have a better grasp of the post-2015 development agenda and how it relates to the MDGs, the facilitator briefly shared what the situation was when the world was entering into a new century. Accordingly, the UN thought of assessing what they have done in the last century and see how they can move forward. Prior to the Summit in 2000, there were a number of big world conferences that took place from the last decade of the last century such as the World Conference on Racism, Beijing plus 5, climate change, health, sustainable development. The UN they realised that there are huge issues that need to be dealt with.

Kofi Annan, the former Secretary of the UN, called for a Millennium Summit bringing together all the issues discussed in world conferences and the biggest issue that came out in that Summit was about poverty. The Summit looked at the issue of poverty from different perspectives e.g. poverty of women, hunger, it was a process of looking back and moving forward; an ambitious plan was drawn up which was focused on poverty- to reduce poverty by half over the next 15 years.

The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly but treatable disease, and expanding educational opportunities to all children, among other development imperatives. According to reports, the MDGs made progress in some important areas: income poverty, access to important sources of water, primary school enrollment and child mortality.¹

Mr. Gois emphasised that despite of what government reports say, for those of who work on the ground could tell that there is really not substantial change, poverty is still very much a part of people's lives; part of the lives of people like migrant workers. Poverty can come in any forms and not only at the economic level. There are other notions that describe today's poverty and these include constraints that women experience, oppression that women experience in terms of education and the kind of political life we have today also mirrors poverty. There are different forces or dimensions that CSOs need to account- cultural, economic, and political. Poverty cannot be viewed solely through economic lens. In the case of Bangladesh, climate change is a challenge that hinders development.

The discussant shared that the MDG goals were mostly directed to developing countries, hence, developed countries did not see a role on it. This is the gap that the SDGs would like to fill in- to ensure that all countries can be part of developing a new development framework where governments from both developing and developed countries will play an active role. If the MDGs focused largely on poverty, the SDGs envision a development framework where there is genuine global partnership among countries.

In preparing for the MDGs, there was not much process as compared to the SDG where a bigger process oriented approach was designed to inform the preparatory work in the development of the SDGs. This process calls for the involvement of multi-stakeholders UN process, intergovernmental sessions, and non-state actors among others. He also highlighted that the process of drafting the SDGs is coming to the last stages of its design. Some governments already said that they will not commit to some of the goals; this means not committing any resources.

The discussant also shared with the participants the key intergovernmental negotiations in 2015 that they need to monitor. He also shared other major discourses/meetings that contribute to the discussion on post-2015. These include the conference on climate change and financing for development which will take place in June and July in Bonn and Addis Ababa respectively. The meeting in Bonn on climate change is a preparation for the COP21 or Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris. COP21 will be a crucial conference, as it needs to achieve a new international agreement on the climate, applicable to all countries, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C.

Meanwhile the meeting in Addis Ababa is also equally important because it will talk about resources to finance the development agenda in the next 15 years. This early, governments are already starting to discuss resources and tools for monitoring. The High Level Panel is tasked to develop a monitoring mechanism. While it is not yet confirmed, it almost looks like countries will have to report to a body that on the progress of their implementation of the SDGs. There is

¹ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/>

an issue here because we are not sure if governments will have political commitment to implement the SDGs considering they will be monitored.

In September, all UN Member States will come together and adopt the new development goals which will be finalized in July this year. It is said that the OWG 17 proposed SDGs will not change anymore and therefore it will be too late to influence the document. Meanwhile, the targets may still change with possibility of merging some of the targets. The opportunity available for participants to engage with is in developing the indicators to monitor the targets. This early governments are already discussing how they will monitor the progress of the targets and goals. To do this, governments need to agree on global indicators; the discussion on this is already on-going and the first draft of the indicators will be made available in July and will continue until 2016.

What governments say on post-2015 and migration?

In this session, participants were asked if they are aware of any government document pertaining to post 2015. Among the countries represented in the consultation, participants from Bangladesh and Nepal shared that their governments came up with a document concerning post-2015 development agenda.

In the case of Bangladesh, the government has come up with a paper with 13 priority goals focusing both on economic and social development goals.

Nepal, on the other hand, through the UNDP report on its achievement of the MDGs, mentioned post-2015.

At the sub-regional level, the SAARC Kathmandu Declaration adopted in 2014, leaders reiterated their strong commitment to free South Asia from poverty, to review progress and revisit SAARC Plan of Action taking into the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Leaders also directed to initiate an Inter-Governmental process to appropriately contextualize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional level.

At the regional level, the Kathmandu Declaration for Sustainable Graduation of Asia Pacific LDCs adopted by LDCs countries on 18 December 2014 called for “*differential and preferential treatment for least developed countries*”. *This principle should be applied in the articulation of the post-2015 development agenda, outcome of the third UN Conference on Financing for Development, sustainable development goals... ”.*

Mr. Gois noted that poverty eradication remains to be high among the priorities of SA governments, however, the development benefits of migration have not be highlighted despite the fact that labour migration is a tool being used by these countries on poverty alleviation and therefore more work need to be done in this area.

He then shared IOM’s document highlighting governments’ statements on post-2015. Among the South Asian countries, it appears that Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka looked at as an important issue in the SDGs. Meanwhile, Bhutan sees migration from a population dynamics perspective.

Pakistan, on the other hand, talked about the larger development agenda in terms of addressing migration and takes an economic view of migration.

Mr. Gois reminded the participants to monitor what how much progress has been made at country level aside from making public statements. Participants need to know what their governments say about the post-2015 development agenda and it looks like each government will have to submit its own position paper.

Why migration matters in the Post-2015 Development Agenda: CSO Stockholm Agenda

As indicated above, migration was not part of the eight MDGs. While there were some organizations talking about climate change and displacement, for governments it was not a big issue for it to be included in the MDGs. Migration was not in the MDGs and possibly could have not been included in the SDGs discussion without the push from a handful governments like Switzerland, Mexico and Germany to some extent. In the Asian region, Bangladesh and the Philippines take a proactive role. There was also as support from the UN system like ILO, UN Women UNHCR and OHCHR and IOM.

Migration has become a big social issue in particularly in the context of development, when UN Member States came together for the 2nd High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2013 and adopted a Declaration calling relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system, other relevant intergovernmental, regional and sub-regional organisations to consider migration issues in their contributions to the preparatory process that will establish the post-2015 development agenda. The declaration also acknowledges the important role that migrants play as partners in the development of origin, transit and destination countries and recognise the need to improve public perceptions of migrants and migration.

There was a good CSOs push in the GFMD (albeit late) which gave birth to the Stockholm agenda which was a result of a series of consultations prior to Stockholm GFMD. The goals and targets take forward the 2nd HLD Declaration and the work of a range of post-2015 processes. The strategy of the global CSOs working on migration is not to go for a standalone goal because it is too political. A consensus was reached in Stockholm during the GFMD to call for something that is more realistic. As a result, some of the issues were taken up by the governments. With respect to the proposed SDGs, the strategy is to identify which of the 17 proposed SDGs that may be relevant to migration.

The Stockholm agenda which contains 9 goals called for the integration of migrants and migration and “to address not only the contributions that migrants make to development in countries of origin and destination, but also the possibilities for better policy planning and coherence that can make migration more genuinely a choice and not a necessity, and greater gain than drain.” CSOs made a case for migration by referring to Goal 8 of the MDGs which talks about global partnership.

Among the 9 goals, the facilitator highlighted goal 9 which talks about human security and human development. He explained that this goal is very important given the pressing situations of migrants in crisis situation and how governments respond to these crises situations and where

migration policies are designed to secure their respective borders. Goal 9 aims to change the discourse from national security to human security and that migration policies should take into account the root of the problem. Example of border policies which prioritize national security over human security are the Mexico-US borders- surveillance and EU's Frontex.

CSOs have actively advanced the Stockholm agenda during the OWG processes and with other regional and intergovernmental processes. Through the strong push from some governments and collective of migrants CSOs, the zero draft of the OWG presented in the UN General Assembly in 2014 made some references on migration. Migration did become a stand-alone goal in the zero draft of the OWG because it is considered highly political and the international community is not yet ready to make a commitment. While governments meet through the GFMD, the process remains to be non-binding and voluntary. Governments do not want to commit to something that touches upon sovereignty. They have to demonstrate that they are able to exercise its power over a sovereign jurisdiction. Migration remains to be a sensitive issue and it gets politicised despite that fact beginning in 2006, governments have been coming together through the GFMD. Calling for migration to be a stand- alone goal is unrealistic given the current trends or responses of some countries of destination to migrant workers. This can be illustrated on how EU respond to the Mediterranean issue and the case of refugees crossing the Australian borders.

The Australian government did not even allow asylum seekers to get into their shore and did the asylum process at sea and sent the people back to Vietnam. The government made a pronouncement that they are tired of dealing with the UN system.

What we want to see happening in terms of migration: South Asia Migration Specific Goals

Before proceeding with the discussion on the goals and targets relevant to migration, participants were divided into 4 groups to discuss one goal that they would like achieve on migration irrespective of the 17 SDGs. The outcome of this exercise is meant to contribute to the global CSO Stockholm agenda on migration from a South Asia perspective. These goals could be used by the partners as a blueprint that they can present to their governments and ensure that migration is included in the national development plan. The document will also be used by MFA as the basis for the next sub-regional consultation and will be refine in succeeding consultations. More importantly, participants can also help inform them in deciding what area to focus in terms of advocacy.

The facilitator also explained why it is important to come up with migration specific goals in the context of South Asia. He explained that while at the global level migration has become a bigger issue and often a subject for debate among governments, this is not the case in South Asia. In the sub-region, migration in particular labour migration is yet to gain traction among governments despite the fact that in the region there is an increasing number of migrant workers and that remittances continue to grow. A strong political agenda on migration has yet to materialise in the region. They have yet to recognise the role of migrants for the country as compared to the Philippines that recognised the role of migrants or migration for the country not only in terms of remittances. Moreso, labour migration is undoubtedly being used as a strategy for poverty reduction and addressing unemployment. Looking at the number of South Asian migrant

workers, it is important to look at how crucial migration and migrant workers are in the region. The challenge is how to build on that goal- to recognize the role of migrants in the region.

At the end of the exercise, each group was asked to present their outputs followed by a plenary discussion. From the presentations, four recurring themes came out:

- Safe migration
- Decent work in both countries of origin and destination
- Access to justice for all
- Effective accountable institutions at all levels- source and destination

Based from the four themes identified above, each group was asked to come up with goals which are related to the above themes and which are not addressed in the OWG 17 goals. Nine goals were drawn up out of this exercise. The participants then went through a process of discussion and elimination. Some were dropped and some were merged. At the end, four goals were identified:

Goal 1: Create more formal channels and better access to market and job opportunities: This goal is to ensure that migrant workers are able to have better access to job opportunities worldwide aside from traditional labour markets like Japan, GCC, Korea. With the changing demographics in some countries of destination ageing population in Europe, migrant workers should have access to job information available in this region. Because there access to information about formal channels, oftentimes, migrant workers from the region use dalals to obtain job opportunities abroad. This practice increases the risk of migrant workers to exploitation. If information about job opportunities abroad is accessible and if formalized, there are proper mechanisms are in place, migrant workers will not be lured by dalas or private recruitment agencies.

Goal 2: Promote regional multi-stakeholder dialogue and discussion on migration: This goal is very specific to the region particularly for SAARC taking the issue of migration. It gives visibility to the SAARC declaration. In the SA context, multi-stakeholder discussion is not very much observed as compared to Southeast Asia and East Asia. This is something that CSOs need to see how the process of discussion on migration in the region progresses.

Goal 3: Right to vote for migrant workers: In South Asia, only India has a policy on voting right of their nationals working abroad, however, this is only application for immigrants- those skilled and professionals. In the case of internal migrant workers, they could not vote in their place of work. If they work in another State, they have to come back to their hometown to exercise their right to vote. In the case of Bangladesh, the government agrees to have voting right for migrant works but the Ministry of Election is not ready yet nor they have the mechanisms available for migrant workers to be able to vote.

In Asia, only two countries have a policy on migrant workers absentee voting- Indonesia and Philippines. In the case of Indonesia, the current President won because of migrants

vote.

The Philippines, on the other hand, has already had two general elections where migrant workers are able to vote. The voters' turnout in the first election was quite high but the 2nd part it became less so the government and CSOs are looking at the reason why the voting turnout has gone down. One of the reasons is the machinery to ensure that migrants are able to vote, how do you get the ballots reach migrant workers; they are currently thinking of online voting.

Outside the region, Germany has a good postal voting mechanism, every German can cast his/her vote anywhere they are

The advocacy around migrants' right to vote is that in every one migrant vote, there is a family that migrants could influence on who to vote. Politicians realized that potential of winning through migrants' vote. Politicians began to reach out to migrant workers. The facilitator emphasized that CSOs in the region should seriously work on this goal as this has a potential for accelerating the response of the governments in terms of addressing the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers.

Goal 4: Coherent and effective governance of migration: While this goal is already part of the SDG, it was decided to re-emphasize this especially in the context of South Asia. This goal is also to address the issue less coordination and confusion about mandates of different ministries looking into the issue of migrant workers. There is no systematic way of handling migrants' issues. In India, the Ministry of Labour used to handle issues of migrant workers; external affairs, Indian overseas ministry, labor has limited power because they do not have mandate on external affairs.

In Nepal, it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that handles issues of migrant workers/foreign employment while the Ministry of Labour and Employment looks at internal migration (primary ministry). The two ministries interlink because the Ministry of Labour provides labour attaches; issue of full jurisdiction about migrant workers, in countries where there is a huge number of migrant workers but do not have labour attaches.

In Bangladesh, confusion about mandates of different ministries, e.g. expatriates, labour, foreign affairs; in the case of the gfmf, it was supposed to be the expatriates ministry but because it entails foreign delegations, the PM decided to give it to the foreign affairs.

In the case of the Philippines each attached agency looks at how their work links up to the issue of migration and looks at how they could contribute in understanding the issue of labour migration; they understand the multi-dimensional aspect of migration

In the EU Mediterranean crisis, at first only the foreign ministers are involved in the discussion but later on the interior ministries were brought in to look the situation in the Mediterranean sea and come up with a solution.

The above goals were under the premise of achieving safe migration for all South Asian migrant workers. Safe migration according to participants is a process that covers the entire migration process; an experience in which migrants rights are upheld based from UN standards and there is freedom from any forms of violence. The concept of safe migration comes about because the experience of the people in the room and experience of people who deals with migration has generally been that migration offers a lot of danger, unsafe full of dangers and vulnerable. These prominent dangers are observed prior to and even during return. There is an absence of rights and dignity in the experience of migrant workers both at home and in destination countries, a common denominator among the goals identified by the participants. The issue of recruitment and mobility of women is also a major concern. Rights and dignity are not the same thing, one may have rights but it does not mean that one has dignity. Building from the SAARC Declaration, participants could make a case to their governments to make sure that these goals are achieved.

What we want to see happening in terms of migration: Developing targets for South Asia Migration Specific Goals

The preceding session was followed by a session on drawing up targets for the four migration specific goals.

Goal 1: Opening up more formal channels for migration and better access to labour markets

Target 1.1 Elimination of outsourcing agencies. This target was debated at length due to different country experience. The target proposes the elimination of all outsourcing agencies whether they are bad or good. The target was proposed by Nepali groups in order to address the issue of outsourcing agencies which from their experience are not legitimate agencies that recruit migrant workers and take money from migrant workers but jobs are not available in destination countries which make migrant workers undocumented. It was noted that there is a huge problem about outsourcing agencies especially in the case of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. Outsourcing system is only advantageous for the employers but not for migrant workers because they do not benefit from the arrangement, they do not have any benefits from the companies where they work.

In order to assist participants in coming up with a consensus, the facilitator, initiated the discussion on different recruitment modalities- G2G agreement, private recruitment agencies, outsourcing and direct hiring. Recognising that there are also outsourcing companies that do ethical recruitment, participants reached a consensus to eliminate only those illegal and fraudulent but not necessarily eliminating the system. The final text agreed was “Elimination of illegal and fraudulent outsourcing agencies in countries of destination”.

Target 1.2 Conduct market research to improve access to labour market information for migrants in terms of availability of jobs: This target will enable migrant workers to be aware of the jobs available, where to access them and what skills need to be enhanced

Target 1.3 Promote skills upgrading programmes and diversification of skills for employment growth and development of migrant workers: This indicator was proposed as a way to empower and protect migrant workers. This indicator recognizes the vulnerability of migrant workers to discrimination, exploitation and abuse particularly those in low-skilled workers and those in informal employment. This is also one way to assist migrant workers in upgrading their career which in turn will help improve their economic situation.

Target 1.4 Forge bilateral agreements with countries of destination to ensure better access to market and job opportunities: This is to ensure information exchange where countries of origin and destination can learn from each particularly with respect to promoting the rights of migrant workers.

Goal 2: Promote regional multi-stakeholder dialogue and discussion on migration

Target 2.1 Create a multi-stakeholder migration committee by the government to promote dialogue amongst stakeholders: This target calls on governments to put up a mechanism where CSOs and TUs in South Asia will have an active role such as the involvement of CSOs in EU council, in ASEAN Summit, and in the Philippines where it introduced a dialogue for land-based and sea-based workers; call for consultations on a regular basis and/or when the need arise. CSOs are either invited to participate as participants or in designing the agenda for a stakeholder dialogue.

Target 2.2 Promote sharing of promising practices and learnings at the regional level

Goal 3: Right to vote for migrant workers

Target 3.1 Enact a law on absentee voting that would enable migrant workers to exercise their right to suffrage even away from home. One of the challenges CSOs encounter in making migration an agenda among politicians both in origin and destination countries is because migrant workers do not have voting right while working abroad. On the other hand, making migration a political agenda for politicians/policy makers in country of destination would also mean losing votes. .

Target 3.2 Voter registration of all migrant workers, at the embassy. This proposed target was discussed at length especially the issue of including immigrants and diasporas. Some participants argued that immigrants and diasporas should not be included because they are better protected than migrant workers. Allowing immigrants and diasporas to vote may lose the chance of migrant workers to vote. Some governments may not welcome this due to sensitivity towards foreign influence that immigrants and diasporas bring. On another note, diasporas contribute to the development of the source countries.

Given that there was no consensus reached whether to include immigrants and diasporas, it was agreed to table this discussion follow-up communications or consultations.

Target 3.3 Formulate voting mechanism and procedures. This target was included to ensure that mechanisms and procedures are in place to encourage migrant workers to exercise their right to vote.

Goal 4: Coherent and effective governance of migration

Target 4.1 Adopt and strengthen sound policies and effective legislation for foreign employment. This means to review what exists, what are the gaps and for governments to deliver and improve implementation of these policies.

Target 4.2 Simplify migration process and ensure a one door system that protects the rights of migrant workers. The protection of the rights of migrant workers was emphasized as in some cases there maybe simplified migration process but the protection element is missing.

Target 4.3 significantly increase human and financial resources to strengthen the Missions' capacity in dealing with migrant workers issues. This target is a result of two proposed targets that were merged together due to its common focus. This is based from the fact that many embassies or Missions of countries of origin operate without labour attaches. To have a good governance it is important to have labour officers in the Missions and the number of labour attaches should be commensurate t the average number of distressed migrant workers that the Missions receive.

The original target proposed also called for total independence of labour attaches in making decisions. It was, however, agreed not to call for this because even under international law, the role of the Missions is only for diplomatic relations. The highest representative of the country is the ambassador, so everything has to course through the Ambassador.

Target 4.4 Create a database with disaggregated data on migrant workers and on returning migrants. This is to ensure that governments have a database of migrant workers who leave the country and return the country. At the moment, only the data of those who leave is available and those who returned are not captured. This is will also be a useful tool for locating missing migrant workers

Target 4.5 Establish/introduce an online interactive portal facility for migrant workers

The next step: Developing indicators and monitoring the progress of targets and goals

This session meant to update participants with the status on the discussion on developing framework indicators and what is meant by indicators.

Mr. Gois shared that the work on the goals and targets will be finished by July while the indicators will continue until March 2016. The UN Statistics Commission is tasked to work on the indicators and they will have them ready by March 2016. Once the global indicators are available, it is expected that every country must submit its own indicators to show that they are able to contribute to the achievement of the targets and goals.

Some UN bodies and international organisations also came up with their respective goals, targets, indicators not as part of the SDGs but as part of development thinking.

For migrants groups, it is also an opportune time to engage in the process and ensure that governments also look at migration indicators. In South Asia, Bangladesh will surely push for this and will be included in the 2017 GFMD which the government of Bangladesh will host. In a sense it is a good political move to really push for migration indicators. The facilitator reminded participants to continue to monitor how their governments develop indicators as governments may have their own perspective on indicators.

To have a conceptual clarity on indicators, the facilitator first explained what is meant by indicators and how they relate to the goals and targets. He explained that the indicators are for the targets, the targets are for the goals. Targets are like milestones that would contribute to the attainment of the goals.

Indicators are very important for the monitoring and implementation of the goals and targets. Indicators are meant to measure the progress being made by the targets that would contribute to the achievement of the goals. Indicators tell whether one is making progress on the targets.

In the case of achieving safe migration, there should be clear targets or the things that need to be done to ensure that migrant workers migrate safely. The role of the indicators is to measure the progress of the targets set to achieve safe migration. They give an impression how much governments are able to reach the target. To further illustrate this in the case of SAARC, CSOs need to know how SAARC is going forward with its agenda on labour migration. Through the indicators, CSOs can demand more accountability from governments.

Following up on the above introduction, participants were asked to discuss possible indicators for the following targets:

- Target 10. C (on Goal 10)
- Target 16.2 (on Goal 16)
- Target 17.18

Only 3 targets were discussed due to time constraints. The facilitator used the indicators that were developed from the Bangladesh national consultation as examples.

Target 10.c By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.

To assist participants in developing indicators for this target, the facilitator explained how the following terminologies differ from each other - remittance charges, remittance fees and bank service charges.

He also shared that the World Bank has done a study on remittances particularly in reducing remittance cost. In the region, remittance cost is around 3% while in other regions it is a bit lesser. If the current remittance cost is 3% of the total remittance, participants could come up with an indicator which shows that the remittance goes down.

- *Formulate a strict and clear regulation on remittance transaction cost:* This indicator was proposed to address the issue of varying cost of remittances across the region. In discussing this indicator, some participants raised the issue of hundi. Hundi is an informal funds transfer system found among South Asian migrant workers in general and Bangladeshi migrant workers in particular in the major labour receiving countries of East and South-east Asia.

The 'hundi' is informal but highly organized and founded on social infrastructure comprised of social and symbolic ties. Existing literature tends to highlight formal remittance channels and is underwritten by either economic or security concerns.

Participants recommended the legalization of the hundi system which is at no cost to migrant workers/lesser cost as compared to big remittance companies as well as banks. The suggestion also received some apprehension from other participants due to the current talks about money laundering and funding for terrorism activities because there is no way to trace the sender and recipient. Moreover, government does not get any benefits from the remittance because it does not pass through the formal channels. Most likely this indicator will not be supportive by governments.

In Bangladesh, there is strong reservation about using government banks and therefore the hundi system should be supported especially if it helps reduce remittance cost. For domestic workers, the most accessible channel for them is hundi. In some cases, even if domestic workers have bank accounts, they could still not send money.

- *Central bank to set up rules for minimum remittance transaction charge:* Government can include the discussion when drafting the national budget, they can include reducing the remittance cost. In the case of Bangladesh, the government initiated a dialogue with the central bank to reduce remittance but the latter could not go far because of pressures from remittance companies.

Participants from Nepal asserted that if Central Bank is able to impose or set rate for local banks, they should also set the rate for remittance cost for remittance companies. It is a matter of political will and governments should push for this. Some expressed their

skepticism as to the feasibility of this given that the government does get any percentage from the remittance; it requires a government policy.

In response to the above it was explained that government does directly and indirectly get some percentage through taxes and spending. The foreign exchange also sustains the economy of the country and therefore governments need to work on reducing the remittance cost

- *Provision of incentives for private remittance companies and migrant worker themselves for using formal channels:* This indicator will encourage use of formal channels in remitting money. Incentives could be in the form of attractive exchange rate. At the moment, there is also an advocacy to increase competition by bringing more players coming to the field e.g. mobile money transfer
- *Countries of origin are able to negotiate with financial institutions to provide access to services for migrant workers:* In order to do the process should be relaxed and no additional burden for local banks that will reduce transaction cost should be imposed.
- *Establishment of online banking processes in countries of destination that would make it easier for migrant workers to transfer remittances.* This is to address the issue of lengthy process in sending remittances using local banks. Having an online banking process would save migrant workers from incurring high transaction cost.
- *Establish global partnership between local banks in countries of origin and destination for easy and fast remittance transaction:* This target is anticipated to have some limitations as countries of destination will have to determine how many foreign banks/branch in the COD should be opened

Target 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

Indicators set were focused on the Goal 16 which is “Promote peaceful & inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels” not necessarily on target 16.2.

To assist participants in developing indicators on Goal 16, participants were asked to focus on the inclusive societies and identify ways where migrant workers can feel that they are part of the community they are in and that they are respected and recognized.

- *Bilateral agreements include social insurance for all migrant workers particularly on health care and social security.* This indicator was proposed to address the issue of lack of social protection for migrant workers while in destination countries.
- *Countries of destination provide hostel facilities for health care and education of children of migrant workers.*

- *End of employer-tied employment and stringent action against illegal and fraudulent agents.* This is to address the widespread abuse committed against migrant workers in employer-tied employment which puts migrant workers in vulnerable situation as it restricts their movement and their right to change employer. Initially this indicator only called for the abolition of the Kafala system but since this system of employer-tied employer is also practiced in most countries of destination, participants agreed to use this term instead of Kafala system.
 - *Minimum labour standards and social security and equal treatment for migrant workers are observed in destination countries.* In reality, migrant workers do not enjoy minimum labour standards and experience serious decent work deficits. Protecting migrant workers and their full potential and development of migrant workers means ensuring that they enjoy the same labour rights at par with local workers.
 - *Internal migrant workers are able to access to government facilities, public distribution system and justice without any discrimination for cross-border migrant workers.* This indicator would like to reinforce the non-discrimination principle. Internal migrant workers moving within the country should be able to access government facilities, and public distribution system.
 - *Migrant workers are able to exercise their right to vote.* This is in support of the migration specific goal where only India has a voting right policy. However, this policy is flawed because it only recognizes the right to vote of high-skilled Non-Resident Indians. This indicator calls for the right of all migrant workers particularly low-skilled migrant workers to vote while working abroad.
 - *Provision of reintegration programmes for retunee (women) migrant workers.* This in reference to the call to have women specific reintegration programmes especially for domestic workers. In the sub-region there are reintegration programmes that focus primarily on the need of returnee women migrant workers.
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- *Easy, accessible and effective complaint handling mechanism set up by the government.* Throughout the migration cycle, migrant workers experience denial of their rights, exclusion from labour and social protections and lack of legal assistance. If they do exist, accessing justice, all too often becomes a distant aspiration due to lack of knowledge and complicated process. This indicator calls on governments to provide enabling policies and environment where migrant workers are able to access judicial remedy and credible grievance mechanisms. Information should be made available in languages that they understand.
 - *Measures are taken recognising the contributions of migrant workers in both countries of origin and destination.* This indicator seeks reinforce the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination. Participants affirmed the huge contribution of migrant workers particularly the low-skilled migrant workers to the development of countries of origin and destination. Low-skilled migrant workers should be treated equal with diasporas. This

indicator does not in any way call for preferential treatment for low-skilled migrant workers but only to recognize and respect what they contribute to the society in general.

- *Migrants should be allowed to join and form their unions.* Most countries of destination do not allow migrant workers to join and form their unions. Migrant workers should have the same rights to join and form trade unions and to bargain collectively as other workers.
- *Post-arrival information programmes are made available for migrant workers.* This indicator seeks to address the protection issue of migrant workers and to ensure that migrant workers are reminded of the culture and customs of the country where they will work. This will also assist migrant workers in integrating in themselves not only in their workplace but also in the society of the receiving country.
- *Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.* The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) was adopted by consensus during the 2001 World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) and is identified as a comprehensive, action-oriented document that proposes concrete measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Migrants were one of the groups identified as vulnerable to discrimination, xenophobia and racism. This indicator calls on governments to take measures to combat hostility to migrants, educate the public on the contributions of migrants, review of migration policies, promote cultural diversity and integration and monitoring and protecting the human rights and labour rights of migrant workers among others.
- *Establishment of a separate department in existing ministries focusing on sustainable return and reintegration of migrant workers.* This indicator was proposed to ensure that issues and concerns of migrant workers are responded in timely and effective manner and not only on ad hoc basis.
- *Appointment of a legal firm at the embassy that will handle cases of distressed migrant workers.* This is to ensure that distressed migrant workers are provided with appropriate legal assistance. The legal firm should be reputable and could make court representation on behalf of migrant workers.
- *Embassies of countries of origin take effective steps to liaise with international local organisations and expatriate communities in countries of destination to assist in minimising the issues of migrant workers.* This indicator calls on government to be proactive in reaching out to international local organisations and to tap expatriate communities that could assist them in addressing the issues of migrant workers.

Target 17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age,

race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

Goal 17 refers to the same unsuccessful Goal 8 of the MDGs. This goal calls for a real implementation of Goal 8 on global partnership. As CSOs working on migration, it is important that they are aware of what is not happening in terms partnership to improve global partnership on migration. There is a need for more capacity building and technical support needed from those who have the money.

To come up with good indicators on this goal, CSOs need to think of the issues that they have been advocating with destination countries to promote global partnership on the protection of the rights of migrant workers.

Due to time constraints, discussion on this particular target was done in plenary without small group discussions as compared to the 2 targets above.

Below were the indicators proposed:

- *Provision of trainings for skills upgrading and skills development of migrant workers.* This indicator requires technical support from countries of destination. Countries of destination always require workers with good skills and therefore they should also share their part in realizing this by providing technical assistance to countries of origin that deploy a sizeable number of migrant workers. If countries of destination demand for skilled labour they should share their part by providing the government with the necessary resources in setting up training facilities
- *Countries of origin and destination develop mutual recognition and standardisation of skills of migrant workers:* This is to ensure that there is no mismatch of skills which is the on-going trend. This indicator will enable migrant workers to make use of their potentials and skills.
- *Administration of need assessment and job matching of migrant workers.* This indicator will assist governments in making gradual transition from deploying low-skilled workers to high-skilled labour. This is also to ensure that migrant workers are able to improve their skills, scale up their work and receive decent wage.
- *Improved access to labour market:* If information about job opportunities abroad is accessible and if formalized, there are proper mechanisms are in place, migrant workers will not be lured by dalas or private recruitment agencies.
- *Countries of origin and destination undertake joint research on migration and development.* This is to establish more credibility on research findings when undertaken at the global level
- *Establishment of a platform on South-South collaboration:* This indicator needs to be further looked as the intention of the SDG is to enhance shared responsibility between

developing and developed countries. Using the term “regional mechanism” was suggested to address this issue. The text of this indicator will be further refined.

Moving Forward: Optimising Opportunities for engagement

This session was meant to familiarise participants with other spaces and opportunities where they could advance the issues discussed in the 2-day consultation. They were the following:

Relevant regional and global events

- International Labour Conference, June 2015 which focuses on the transition from the informal to the formal economy.
- Civil Society Asia Pacific Consultation on Post-2015 Development Agenda, May 2015, Bangkok. The meeting seeks to feed into the ESCAP meeting.
- Global Forum on Migration and Development, October 2015, Turkey. The discussion on the integration of migration on the post-2015 development agenda will be continued in Turkey. The government of Bangladesh
- UN General Assembly- September 2015, New York. The formal adoption of the new development framework will be adopted.
- South Asia Legislature Meeting, September 2015, Bangladesh. This programme aims to involve Members of Parliament from South Asia on the issue of labour migration. The meeting will bring together former and current MPs. The meeting supports the objective of the Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration in mainstreaming the issue of labour migration and work collaboratively with MPs. The Caucus was formally established in 2012 through a resolution of Asian MPs who convened in Phnom Penh. This is an on-going programme of MFA in collaboration with the FES.
- Asian Inter-Parliamentary Caucus on Labour Migration Assembly, November, Kuala Lumpur.
- Lawyers Beyond Borders (LBB) network, November 2015, Kuala Lumpur (MFA-LBB Regional Network)

Campaigns

Step It Up: Step It Up campaign is global campaign highlighting the 25th Anniversary of the adoption of the 1990 UN Migrant Workers Convention and to call governments to step up efforts to ratify the Convention. The campaign is spearheaded by MFA in partnership with the ILO and the OHCHR. The campaign also anticipates ratifications of South Asian countries. To date, only two South Asian countries have ratified the Convention- Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Information about the campaign is available at www.cmw25.org

Recruitment reform campaign. Recruitment reform campaign is global campaign consolidating the efforts of different groups across the globe working in reforming the recruitment industry. This is to address the escalating number of abuses and exploitations being experienced by migrant workers in the whole cycle of migration. A dedicated website (www.recruitmentreform.org) was put out to provide space for information exchange and debate

on key and pressing issues surrounding the recruitment process. CSOs and trade unions can participate in the forum by either contributing to the discussion or moderating the discussion.

Next Steps:

- MFA will clean the two documents- migration specific goals and the proposed indicators on SDG targets relevant to migration and will forward the same to the participants for review and further refinement. The migration specific goals will be used a reference document for the succeeding sub-regional consultations.
- MFA will keep the participants updated on any developments with regard to the post-2015 debate
- MFA will forward the updated post-2015 development paper
- RMMRU will organize a workshop for journalist on 7-9 July in Nepal
- COAST will translate the outcome document that will be adopted at the UNGA in September. Advocacy work will focus on ensuring to ensure that the SDGs are included in the national development plan of Bangladesh. They will also link up with other groups working/monitoring the SDGs debate. Explore possibility of organising joint programmes/activities with other groups
- INAFI will organize a roundtable discussion focusing on poverty reduction, gender and climate change & migration between May-June.
- SARTUC is currently working on proposing amendments on TU constitution to be able to include migrant workers in their organizing work. They also have an on-going project with the Solidarity Center in coming up with a database of recruiters- good and bad