



# Diaspora engagement mapping BANGLADESH

## Facts & figures

### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections  
for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>



### Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **5.07%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **22,168**

Voting from abroad:  
Online



### Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from [UNDESA \(2024\)](#) and remittances from the [World Bank \(2023\)](#).

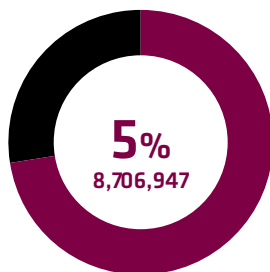
### Emigration



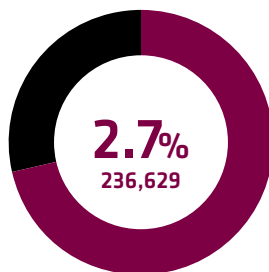
% of emigrants in  
total population



% of which  
in the EU



♂ 72.6%  
♀ 27.4%



♂ 71.6%  
♀ 28.4%

### Top countries of destination



Saudi Arabia	2,362,680
India	2,293,959
United Arab Emirates	1,024,949
Oman	737,087
Kuwait	406,077

1 <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3ae6b51f10.pdf>  
<http://www.ourtimebd.com/beta/2019/01/15/the-legality-of-dual-citizenship-in-bangladesh/>  
2 <https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/overseas-voter-registration-begins>

## Overview of policy and legislative framework



- 2013** ● **Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (OEMA)**<sup>3</sup> facilitates foreign employment and ensures a safe migration governance system. As part of the Act: (1) all workers migrating from Bangladesh, including domestic workers, are recognised as workers and are guaranteed basic labour rights; (2) they have the right to legal remedy; (3) they can access labour courts, mobile courts, and other courts; and (4) the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) and labour attachés in destination countries are recognised as key rights custodians.
- 2016** ● **Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy (EWOEP)**<sup>4</sup> complements the OEMA 2013 by offering a more comprehensive policy framework for safe labour migration. Its priority areas include: protection of the rights of migrants and their families; welfare support for migrant workers; gender-specific labour migration; integrating labour migration with national development; and migration governance. The government will work in consultation with various stakeholders, including prospective migrants, trade unions, recruiting agencies, employers and international organisations.
- 2016** ⇓  
**2020** ● **Seventh Five Year Plan**<sup>5</sup> has a separate section called 'Migration for Development' which focuses on areas of economic growth and equity, skills and overseas labour market development and protection, human development and migration and enabling frameworks for migration and development through South-South cooperation.
- 2018** ● **Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) Act**<sup>6</sup> provides a legal framework for improved welfare services for migrant women and male workers. The governing body of the WEWB<sup>7</sup> includes relevant ministries and two delegates from recruitment agencies as well as migrant workers, including women.
- 2018** ● **Bangladesh National Strategy and Action Plan on Migration and Development**<sup>8</sup>  
This plan focuses on eight priority areas: recruitment process and related financial costs; social costs; skills development; social protection and rights; irregular migration and human trafficking; remittances; diaspora engagement; and climate migration.
- 2020** ● **Bangladesh Migration Governance Framework**<sup>9</sup> In 2020, the government of Bangladesh developed a national Migration Governance Framework with the support of IOM. This framework includes diaspora as a crucial part of Bangladesh's international migration approach. The framework extensively shares the activity plans on diaspora's investment, knowledge and skills and their protection during crises abroad.
- 2023** ● **National Diaspora Policy 2023 (draft)**<sup>10</sup> outlines a comprehensive framework aimed at harnessing the financial, intellectual and social diaspora potential through improved institutional coordination and dedicated mechanisms. Key aspects include fostering inclusive, respectful engagement through a whole-of-government approach; mobilising cultural, human, and economic capital; facilitating both physical and virtual return; and improving access to rights such as dual citizenship and voting. The policy builds on international commitments, including the 2022 Global Diaspora Summit and IMRF pledges.

3 <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/169/Act.pdf>

4 [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/annual\\_migration\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/annual_migration_report_2017.pdf). [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d\\_f0d6\\_41ea\\_aca9\\_6afb61228825/G-2\\_08\\_65\\_Expatriate%27s\\_English.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d_f0d6_41ea_aca9_6afb61228825/G-2_08_65_Expatriate%27s_English.pdf)

5 [https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/sites/unicef.org.bangladesh/files/2018-10/7th\\_FYP\\_18\\_02\\_2016.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/sites/unicef.org.bangladesh/files/2018-10/7th_FYP_18_02_2016.pdf)

6 [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/annual\\_migration\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/annual_migration_report_2017.pdf). <http://www.wewb.gov.bd/>

7 <http://www.wewb.gov.bd/site/page/41931875-0d57-42f1-a51c-b9f8a1a4c3dd/>

8 <http://www.mainstreamingmigration.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/bangladesh-brogramme-brochure.pdf>

9 <https://publications.iom.int/books/bangladesh-migration-governance-framework>

10 <https://www.baira.org.bd/dir/notice-view/national-diaspora-policy-2023>

## Trends

Successive governments of Bangladesh have gradually realised the importance of its migrant communities. The most decisive step in this respect was in creating a separate ministry, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), in 2001 to efficiently manage the migration sector. Banks have also begun to provide financial incentives to the diaspora and migrants. They provide loans to migrant workers and minimise income tax for diaspora who invest through these banks. They also provide tax rebates on diaspora investments.

In 2022, the government has increased cash incentive on remittance to 2.5% from 2% to encourage migrants to use proper channels to send money home. The government's decision to propose this incentive came as the remittance flow to the country has been falling sharply for some months as the expatriates continue to prefer informal channels for sending their money. According to data from Bangladesh Bank, expatriate Bangladeshis sent \$1.55 billion in November 2022, down 25% year-on-year. This was the lowest remittance earnings since June 2020.<sup>11</sup>



## Achievements

National efforts have so far focused on creating an enabling environment for migrants and built trust through an increased attention to labour migrants' rights. The government has shown a strong commitment to develop a migration system that complies with global human rights norms, including by regulating the role of recruitment agents.

## Obstacles:



- **Formal channels:** Bangladesh does not have a specific institution that targets diaspora engagement so formal and structured support from the government (including the embassies) could be further strengthened to channel such engagement. There is also no regular and comprehensive system to tap into diaspora support for development initiatives in areas such as technology, skills transfer and tourism.
- **Remittances:** most remittances are informally transferred to individual households due to concerns of corruption, red tape, political instability, high money transfer fees and a feeling of not knowing how to help.<sup>12</sup>
- **Diaspora fragmentation:** Bangladesh's diaspora comprises several distinct groups, including pre-1995 migrants, second-generation youth, and emerging high-skilled professionals - each with unique needs, identities, and capacities for engagement. The absence of tailored approaches limits the country's ability to fully leverage the diaspora's diverse contributions.
- **Return:** There is a gap in framing policies on returning migrants, this undermines reintegration programmes. Low-skilled migrants often come back with higher skills than are in demand domestically. However, the absence of a database hinders employers from hiring appropriately skilled workers.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/nrb/migration/remittance/news/cash-incentive-remittance-increased-25-kamal-2930091>

<sup>12</sup> 'Diaspora-driven development: how to turn wealth to health in Bangladesh', The Guardian, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/feb/05/bangladesh-diaspora-development-health-wealth>



## Spotlight: effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



### INVESTMENT

#### Wage Earners' Development Bond (WEDB), 1981

The central bank of Bangladesh has taken the initiative to attract the investments of overseas wage earners and diaspora members. Bonds can be purchased without opening a foreign currency account by submitting the copy of the wage earners' passport and through the exchange companies of Bangladeshi banks working abroad.

### INVESTMENT

#### US Dollar Investment Bond (USDIB) and US Dollar Premium Bond (USDPB), 2002

The Government introduced these bonds to facilitate investment in foreign currency by non-resident Bangladeshis.

### REMITTANCES

#### Dhaka Stock Exchange Ltd, NRB Bank, Probashi Kalyan Bank (PKB)

The stock exchange provides incentives for Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) such as a 10% quota in all Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) reserved for NRBs, individual income tax assessment similar to resident Bangladeshis and a 10% tax rebate on security investment. The NRB Bank incentivises NRBs to invest in Bangladesh through remittances directly credited to a savings account which can be used to invest in WEDB; attractive interest rates; WEDB principal amount repatriated to the NRB's residing country; and USDPB entirely tax waived and principal amount repatriated to residing country in US Dollar.<sup>13</sup> The state-run PKB provides collateral free loans to workers going abroad, returnees, facilitate remittances and encourage investment.

### HUMANITARIAN AID

#### Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC), 2018

The EU-ICMPD MICIC programme in Bangladesh initiated cooperation between diaspora communities in Italy and Malaysia, the embassies in both host countries and the Bangladeshi central authorities (MFA and MEWOE) to engage diaspora in crisis preparedness and response effort. MICIC also held a workshop in December 2019 in Dhaka to validate the country's new Migration Crisis Operational Framework, as well as crisis preparedness and response plans for countries hosting large numbers of migrants from Bangladesh.<sup>14</sup>

### NETWORKING

#### #BacharLorai (Baa-Char-Law-Rye) 2020

A coordination platform which sprang out of the Covid-19 pandemic to bring together expats, citizens and grassroots organizations working on complex policy challenges in Bangladesh.

Initially a hashtag meaning "fight for survival", it was transformed into a coordination platform to coordinate different actors. In 2020 the coordination efforts mobilised funds to distribute food supplies as well as acquiring medical equipment. This helped provide relief to tens of thousands of people in Bangladesh. The platform continued as Resource Coordination Network Bangladesh connecting grassroots organizations and subject matter experts who help identify bottlenecks, promote knowledge sharing and provide support for new initiatives.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nrbbankbd.com/forms-downloads/#interest-rates>

<sup>14</sup> <https://micicinitiative.iom.int/events/bangladesh-strengthening-crisis-assistance-nationals-abroad>



## Diaspora 4 Climate Action 2023-2024

Funded by IOM Development Fund, the initiative fosters collaboration between the diaspora communities and national governments to strengthen climate-change responses. This model positions the Bangladeshi diaspora not just as financial supporters, but as active partners and “Climate Champions” integral to the country’s environmental resilience strategy.

CLIMATE

## Bangladeshi Global Diaspora Council (BDGDC)

BDGDC is a dedicated advisory and consultative body designed to deepen engagement between Bangladesh and its diaspora worldwide. It includes youth leadership camps and civic training to foster engagement, entrepreneurship support through skills development and business incubation, particularly for women and youth, and volunteer initiatives focused on digital literacy and community development. Additionally, it promotes social integration through cultural and educational activities that encourage inclusion and cohesion within diverse diaspora communities.

PARTNERSHIPS

## Annex:

# List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### **International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Dhaka**

IOM has partnered with the Government of Bangladesh since the mid-1990s and has provided continuous support to the government in its migration management efforts. The IOM regional office has partnered with the government on several initiatives, including publication of an annual migration report.

#### **International Labour Organisation (ILO) Dhaka**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) works with the Bangladeshi government, workers and employers' organisations to promote decent and productive employment opportunities for women and men in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been an active member state of the ILO since 1972 and has ratified 35 ILO Conventions including seven fundamental conventions.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

#### **Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE)**

The ministry was established in 2001 to ensure the overall welfare and equal opportunities for expatriate Bangladeshi citizens to explore new labour markets, to create a skilled labour force through training according to the demands of the market, to reduce unemployment through foreign employment and to increase remittance inflow. MoEWOE is the focal ministry for labour migration policies and programme implementation and it performs these functions in cooperation with other government institutions.

- At sub-ministerial level

#### **Bangladesh Bank**

The Bangladesh Bank is the central bank and apex regulatory body for the country's monetary and financial system. It formulates and implements monetary and credit policies, regulates and supervises banks and non-bank financial institutions, manages international reserves, prevents money laundering and implements the foreign exchange regulation act<sup>15</sup>. The bank was involved in the setting up of the Wage Earners' Development Bond, which was one of the first diaspora engagement initiatives established in Bangladesh.

#### **Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)**

BMET was established in 1976 by the Government of Bangladesh as a department under the then Ministry of Manpower Development and Social Welfare. It is now under the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) serving as its main executive arm. It is responsible for monitoring private recruitment agencies as well as facilitating the process of recruitment and migration of Bangladeshis for overseas employment.

<sup>15</sup> Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947 <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-218.html>

## **Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA)**

BAIRA is one of the largest trade bodies in Bangladesh affiliated with the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), the apex body on trade & industry. It was established in 1984 to cater to the needs of the licensed recruiting agencies who are engaging Bangladeshi migrant workers. Currently BAIRA has about 1,000 government approved recruiting agents as its members.

## **Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL)**

BOESL, which is a government agency under MoEWOE, is involved in recruiting Bangladeshis for overseas employment. BOESL operates the Employment Permit System with the Republic of Korea. It also manages recruitment schemes for Jordan and Japan.

## **NRB Bank**

NRB Bank commenced banking operations in 2013, with a vision to be the leading dedicated financial institution for Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) to invest in Bangladesh and for Bangladeshi individuals and corporates to access international markets. It has a wide variety of products and services such as retail banking, SME banking and NRB Banking. As of 2019, it has 42 branches, 43 ATM booths and 165 agent outlets across the country.

## **Probashi Kalyan Bank**

The bank was set up in 2010 to disburse loans to Bangladeshi migrant workers. To date, the bank has given loans to 35,400 migrant workers. It has 63 branches and aims to have a presence in every district in Bangladesh.

## **Diaspora organisations in Europe**

### **Associazione Shabuz Bangla** 2015 Italy

This is an organisation in Italy, which aims at helping Bangladeshi migrants. It celebrates Bangladeshi national days, such as Mother Language Day and Bangla New Year. It also has its own cricket team.

Read more about diaspora organisations  
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora  
organisation](#)"



### **All European Bangladesh Associations (AEBA)** 2012 France

- ☒ Development activities
- ☒ Integration activities

It is a non-political organization for Bangladeshis living in 30 different European countries. It works for providing voluntary assistance to Bangladeshis that need protection in Europe, raise social awareness on Bangladeshi culture and assists the professional development of Bangladeshi people in Europe.

### **Bangladeshi Community in France** 2012

- ☒ Integration activities

Through social media networks, supports cultural awareness on Bangladeshi heritage and Bengali culture. Among the Bangladeshi community it also shares cultural awareness on French values and laws.

## **Bangladesh Diaspora and Development: BASUG 2005 The Netherlands**

- ✓ Development activities
- ✓ Integration activities

is a Dutch Chamber of Commerce registered diaspora organization that primarily focuses on Bangladeshi diaspora professionals in the Netherlands and UK and secondarily focuses on diaspora in other European countries. It aims to empower marginal women and children. It also builds strategic partnership and alliances with European based development agencies and other diaspora organizations for its social works.

## **Bangla Mirror Group 2002 UK**

The Bangla Mirror is a British English-language weekly newspaper for British Bangladeshis. It aims to give a voice to more than 500,000 British Bangladeshis with a view to strengthening the community's sense of its own identity.

## **Bangladesh Caterers Association (BBCA) 2015 UK**

- ✓ Development activities

The association represents British-Bangladeshi restaurateurs and is one of the important business associations in the UK. Catering has become the flagship business of British Bangladeshis in the UK and British Bangladeshis manage almost 12,000 restaurants with a yearly turnover of nearly £3 billion and about 100,000 employees. The association plays an active role in providing assistance during disasters in Bangladesh and has undertaken initiatives to support development work in Bangladesh.

## **Bangladesh Medical Society in the UK 2013 UK**

This volunteer organisation is made up of Bangladeshi medical doctors and medical students working and living in the UK. Its aim is to promote and serve the interests of the British Bangladeshi doctors' community.

## **Brick Lane Housing and Community Trust 1987 UK**

- ✓ Development activities

The trust assists residents and claimants living and working in Tower Hamlets (London) of Bangladeshi origin on education, housing, employment, human rights and community development. It also liaises and works with UK government agencies and NGOs in education, housing, cultural heritage, development and to assist people in need of health care and social services in Bangladesh.

## **British Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BBCCI) 1991 UK**

- ✓ Development activities

BBCCI was founded by a group of Bangladeshi businessmen who wanted to promote trade and investment opportunities and cooperation between the UK and Bangladesh. The chamber offers a wide range of services to both Bangladeshi and British companies already involved in - or planning to become part of - the long-standing bilateral trading relationship. These services include the provision of business information and research, seminars and workshops, cultural advice and networking opportunities.



## Confederation of Bangladeshi Organisation 1985

### ☑ Integration activities

It is an affiliated organization with company charity status in the UK. It has several community development initiatives including programmes on the awareness of migrants' rights, social works on education, health and wellbeing, services for women and family members and cultural programmes for Bangladeshi origin people in the UK.

## Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council (GSC) 1993 UK

### ☑ Development activities

GSC is a national voluntary organisation working for the welfare of Sylheti people living in Britain and Bangladesh. Sylhetis constitute 95% of the Bangladeshis living in Britain and GSC is Britain's largest Bangladeshi organisation. Since its inception, it has provided leadership in nation-wide programmes ranging from campaigns for voting rights, to racial discrimination. The council has 12 regional committees in England and Ireland, with four branch offices in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

## Isle of Dogs Bangladeshi Association & Culture Center 1990

### ☑ Integration activities

It primarily focuses on helping and supporting the Bangladeshi community in the UK with the information, training and services related with migrants' rights, language, job skills and cultural celebrations. It also aims to assist students, research projects or any organization that aims to work for the development of the Bangladeshi community.

## Westminster Bangladeshi Association 2003

### ☑ Integration activities

With the broader framework of multiculturalism, this organization aims to promote Bangladeshi culture and heritage in Europe through networking and partnership with different stakeholders.

## Connect Bangladesh

Founded with the vision of harnessing the potential of the Bangladeshi diaspora beyond financial remittances, this initiative aims to empower expatriate Bangladeshis to contribute meaningfully to their homeland using their education, skills, and global perspectives. Through advocacy, collaboration, and community building, it works to amplify diaspora voices and protect their rights while fostering impactful engagement with Bangladesh's development."

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