

Diplomacy Training Program on Building Civil Society Capacity for Advocacy for Migrant Workers and Safe Migration

Third Module Report

Hotel Orchard Suites, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 3-6 May 2016



Executive Summary

In December 2014, the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) and Migrant Forum Asia (MFA), in partnership with WARBE Development Foundation (WARBE DF) and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) began a new capacity building program to work with civil society advocates in Bangladesh. The program is aimed at building the knowledge, skills and networking/cooperation among civil society advocates realising the human rights of Bangladesh's migrant workers¹.

The program brings together about 30 participants, drawn from key civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-government organisations (NGOs) and is designed around 5 modules of 3-4 days. The program includes assignments for participants between modules to help in the knowledge and skills building process. The program is made possible by funding from the Swiss Agency Development Cooperation (SDC).

The 1st module of the program was held in December 2014 and the 2nd module of this 5 module capacity building program was held on 1-4 March 2016. The 1st module identified key issues of concern, the course expectations of participants, and provided an introduction to international and domestic legal frameworks relevant to migrant workers.

The 2nd module focused on understanding how civil society organizations (CSOs) can engage with the UN's Human Rights Mechanisms - including the UN Human Rights Council (UPR), treaty bodies and special procedures and with International Labour Organization Processes. The module also explored how CSOs can strengthen engagement with inter-governmental processes specifically the Global Forum on Migration (GFMD), given that Bangladesh will be hosting the 2016 GFMD.

The 3rd module of the DTP was held on 3-6 May 2016. Following outreach to other organisations, including trade unions, and requests from participating organisations, Module 3 included some new participants. Module 3 had a focus on building knowledge and understanding of

- the situation for Bangladeshi migrant workers in countries of destination (Lebanon and Malaysia)
- the work of CSO and NGO advocates in Malaysia and Lebanon and how to have more effective relationships for case work and advocacy
- the need for (and building skills in) good, reliable case documentation including for evidence-based advocacy for migrants' rights.
- CSO advocacy in the Philippines and its influence on government policy and practice

¹ The objectives of the program are included in appendix 1.

The following report provides a description of the program content over the 4 day module.

There was a very practical focus in this module – and the sharing of perspectives and knowledge between advocates in Bangladesh and key countries of destination (Malaysia and Lebanon) was a highlight. The personal insights and connections made offer the possibility for more informed, effective and sustained advocacy – on individual cases and on policy change.

DTP and MFA would like to record their appreciation to their local partners WARBE and RMMRU and also to the trainers who gave up their time to share their knowledge and expertise and who made this module such a rich and valuable learning experience. In particular, DTP and MFA would like to thank Ms Ellene Sana from Centre for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) Philippines, Sumitha Shaanthinni from Bar Council Malaysia, and Noha Roukoss from Caritas Lebanon. DTP would also like to acknowledge the support provided to this project by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Opening Session

Participants were welcomed to Module 3 with opening remarks from Syed Saiful Haque, Chairman of WARBE, Patrick Earle, Executive Director of DTP, and Alexis Bautista from MFA.

Shabarinath Nair, Regional Advisor for Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) was invited also to make some opening remarks. He acknowledged the importance of local partners and CSOs in the advocacy for the rights of migrant workers. He highlighted that the training program has reached its 3rd module in 5 months – and he requested the participants to reflect back on what has changed and how it has helped them grow as an individual.

Shabrinath highlighted the importance of advocates taking the issues of migrant workers to the GFMD and regional processes like SAARC. He mentioned that the DTP trainings on network building and advocacy had helped Nepalese CSOs and NGOs to come together to make an impact in the ongoing ministerial SAARC level meeting in Kathmandu.

Patrick and Alexis then look forward to the agenda over the next four days and reminded participants of the following program objectives:

- Develop effective advocacy strategies that make change in the protection of migrants - *in Bangladesh and also in Countries of Destination. (CoDs).*
- Learn from other labour-sending countries. *It is possible that Bangladesh is better than some countries in some ways but it is also possible to learn from the practice of other countries in Asia with similar problems.*
- Learn what countries of destination are doing for migrant workers - *and what CSOs are doing to change the perspective of migrant workers, and to build respect for them in countries of destination*
- Developing alliances and networks and skills from countries of origin and countries of destination - *by sharing more about each other's work, and finding things they share in common. There may be particular issues that participants and facilitators may want to work together and hope that over the years, relationships would last long into the future.*

Recap of Module 2

In this session, the facilitator and participants reviewed the human rights mechanisms which include the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) with its 47 members, Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the nine

human rights Treaty Bodies (TB), Special Procedures (SPs) and Special Rapporteurs (SRs), Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). ILO Conventions relevant to migrant workers were also recapped such as ILO C97, C193, GR 86, GR 100, and GR 151.

Patrick reminded the participants of the *Human Rights Hamburger* – in which government is the *burger* and NGO advocacy can influence government from below, and the UN can influence the government from above. Smart NGO advocacy can engage with the UN system to try and get that pressure/influence from above.

Smart NGO advocacy involving the UN means considering engagement with the UPR, the human rights treaty bodies, the UN Human Rights Special Procedures – and the UN’s specialized agencies.

Through these UN processes, NGOs can seek to influence the situation for migrant workers not just their own country (Bangladesh), but also the countries of destination (Malaysia, Lebanon, Qatar etc).

Human Rights Treaty Bodies: These mechanisms supervise the human rights treaties that governments ratify. Only 48 states have ratified the CMW and none are countries of destination. However, all governments have ratified some human rights treaties and the International Bill of Rights is seen as normative international law and binding on all states. Migrants have all human rights like any other human being. In the previous module, participants reviewed the report that the government of Bangladesh had submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers (Treaty Body) – its first report after ratifying the Convention. Participants were tasked to work on a shadow/parallel report in time for the third module.

In the UPR process, all governments have their human rights records reviewed – with other governments making recommendations for improvement. Smart NGO advocacy can influence what recommendations are made in this process – to Bangladesh and to governments of destination countries. For example NGOs in the Philippines persuaded governments (including the Philippines government) to make recommendations to the government of Kuwait about the situation of migrant workers in Kuwait. At the beginning of the UPR process in 2008 there were no recommendations relating to migrant workers – but there are a lot now.

ILO Conventions: Like the human rights standards, there are core labour conventions that cover all workers and apply everywhere. The ILO is the first intergovernmental organization focusing on human rights. It was created after World War I and the Russian Revolution. Nations recognized that social and economic injustice was wrong and may lead to revolution. They saw the need to have an institution to bring together representatives of workers, governments, and business – and established a Tripartite governance structure. Tripartite Conventions require the engagement and consensus of governments, representatives of business/employers and organized labour (trade unions). Before adopting new standards, all three social partners have to agree; there are intense deliberations and debates. The reporting and accountability system is different from the human rights system – and CSOs have no participation rights – and must go through trade unions to have cases/complaints/voices heard.

Putting Migrants’ Rights on the Agenda: Perspectives of the Philippines, Lebanon, and Malaysia

Facilitators:

Ellene Sana, (Centre for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) – Philippines; Noha Roukoss (Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC) - Lebanon); Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna (Bar Council Migrants, Refugees and Immigration Affairs Committee, Malaysia)

Ellene Sana, CMA

An estimated 6000 Filipinos migrate (OFWs) for work every day – because of the lack of jobs in the Philippines. They are willing to endure a lot of hardships in going overseas. 10% of Filipinos are migrant workers. Since the 1980s, labour migration from the Philippines has become more feminized as women are going abroad, and women are more vulnerable to abuses. The social costs of migration are the invisible price the migrants have to pay in exchange for the remittances – including separation from children and other family members.

CSOs are opposed to labour migration as a development policy – and remind society that labour migration reflects the failure of government and development policy. But it is important to make sure that the people who do leave are protected – that they are still valued and included by society as Filipinos. That is why CSOs need to engage governments – to influence their policy and laws and their allocation of resources, to hold them accountable. CSOs in the Philippines advocate for protection for OFWs in the different migration stages. To be effective CSOs need to have credible evidence and documentation, and realistic and implementable recommendations.

Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna, Bar Council Migrants, Refugees and Immigration Affairs Committee, Malaysia

Malaysia is a major destination country for migrant workers (MWs) with an estimated 700,000 Bangladeshi MWs out of the 2.9 million documented MWs and 3 million undocumented MWs in Malaysia. Despite these numbers, Malaysia has no official comprehensive policy on MWs.

MWs in Malaysia work in 6 approved sectors construction, plantation, manufacturing, agriculture, service sector and domestic work, MWs are allowed to work for an initial of 3 years and a maximum of 10 years. Domestic workers do not have a maximum number of years of service. Bangladeshis coming through government-to-government (G2G) process work in the plantation sector. Family members are not allowed to accompany MWs to Malaysia. MWs are not allowed to marry a Malaysian national, although it still happens. If marriage does happen, then a MWs work permit is cancelled replacing it with a spousal visa that prohibits them to continue working in Malaysia.

Sumitha shared the procedure of the recruitment process in Malaysia: the employer will need to send a request to the government when recruiting migrant workers. There are times employers will get approval from the ministry of foreign affairs despite using an unregistered/illegal recruiter in the source country and employers will apply for visa with reference. MWs are issued calling visas by the Malaysian Embassy in the source country to enter Malaysia. After arriving in Malaysia, the employer/agent should be at the airport within 6 hours to fetch the workers. Otherwise, these workers will be held at the immigration detention at the airport and thereafter deported. The work permit is issued in Malaysia once the MW passes the medical test under FOMEMA in Malaysia.

There are mandatory medical check-ups for the preceding 2 years for employers to renew the work permits for MWs.

MWs also sometimes falsify their ages on identity documents. This may result in child labour. When detained, they are tried as adults rather than children as most MWs are not represented in court and do not know the court process.

Whipping and prison sentence is often meted out to MWs with or without documentation.

In Malaysia, migrant workers have an I-kard which is an identity card that is color-coded by the sectors the migrant workers are working in. Since passports are usually confiscated on arrival in Malaysia by the recruitment agency/employer this is how their identity is checked by police, authorities and others.

When MWs are employed in Kuala Lumpur, they cannot travel to another state without the approval of the employer. A lot of MWs are arrested because they do not have a letter from the employer. This system also makes it much more difficult for the MW to travel for leisure.

If a MW leaves an employer, this is treated as an absconding case – rather than breach of employment contract. Employers are required to notify immigration department. In such a case, the passport of the migrant worker should be surrendered, however, only a copy of the passport is required by the government. This creates a problem as the employer may be withholding the MWs passport when they shouldn't.

Often MWs do not know the name, address, and sometimes the company itself who hired them. Sumitha emphasized how vital it is for MWs to know their recruiters and their employers. This knowledge enables the NGOs/CSOs to decide the best course of action/advocacy, seek justice.

Sumitha also emphasized how important it is that a MW's contract should always be checked and should be in a language that the MW and an employer understand (in Jordan the contract is in 2 languages side-by-side in 2 columns on the same page).

Sumitha said it is also important for NGOs work with MWs to note what the recruiter has promised the MW i.e. the conditions, work hours, type of work, repatriation conditions, medical and housing facilities, as well as noting down information of the recruiter, the time, place, and date of when they are in contract.

Lastly, Sumitha shared how a migrant worker should join trade unions (TUs) if possible – as TUs can take action in times of need.

Noha Roukoss, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC), Lebanon

Noha explained the situation for MWs in Lebanon from 20 years ago until the present. She then described the work of Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC) in assisting the migrant workers in Lebanon.

With the numbers of MWs increasing rapidly, Lebanon took the Kafala system from the Gulf Countries as their approach to migration governance, as they did not have existing laws on migrant workers. In 1994, in response to rising numbers of MWs, especially domestic workers (MDWs), and MDWs experiencing abuse and needing shelter and emergency assistance, Caritas Lebanon established Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC).

Later CLMC began working with other activists and a consortium of organizations working on migration. Noha reflected that when NGOs and CSOs work together, they have more power. They realized it was important to come together on shared concerns and not to act alone. It is important to bring everyone to work together – and this gives strength to the advocacy.

Lebanon has ratified most human rights treaties, and many ILO, conventions. There is a government – but no President for the past 2 years. The treatment of MWs is not seen as a priority by government. The government only acts when the international community, with pressure from civil society, asks them to take action.

In 2016, CLMC and other organisations saw the need to reach out and work together with the representatives of migrant workers and advocates. CLMC has involved the media, the donors, and local NGOs. During International Labour Day this 2016, it was the MWs themselves who led action fighting for MW's labour rights. (<http://www.beirutsyndrome.com/articles/labor-day-2016/>)

Every year, CLMC provides training to law enforcement agencies – those trainings include an introduction on Human Trafficking, how to detect the victims of human trafficking and better

reception of the migrant domestic workers on the airport. Within these training also, they learn how to distribute the linguistic guides, booklets of rights and responsibilities and the contacts booklet. Those documents provide the MDW with language skills and prevent conflict based on language barriers. Today there is a better reception space at Beirut airport for this purpose.

Even as MWs have started to fight for their rights, it is still important for others to work with them for protection as well. Lebanese CSOs inform MWs of the services which can be provided especially if they need protection, need grievances settled, want to continue to work, or to go back home.

Civil society in Lebanon encourages to work together for the sake of migrants, and to work with migrants as they can be leaders and help fellow migrants who are at risk.

Open Forum with Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna, Noha Roukoss, and Ellene Sana

- **Malaysia - Detention of Bangladeshi Migrants**

There are 11 migration detention centers in Malaysia. Migrants who travel to Malaysia by boat are deemed irregular—immigrants—and they are charged and deported back. Some are still detained from 2014 when there were many boat arrivals. Repatriation depends on funds provided by the Embassy or families. Delays in release may occur if identification is not confirmed (loss of documents etc). Detainees are given a specific release date – but will only be released then if there is a flight booking/ticket provided. If this date is missed the detainee may have to wait months for another date of release. The Bar Council collaborates with organizations from countries of origin that need assistance in locating missing migrants who may be in a detention centre in Malaysia.

- **Malaysia - Complaints against Employers – Access to Justice/Remedy**

If a MW files a complaint against his/her employer and/or recruiter, his/her work permit will be unilaterally cancelled by the employer. S/he will then have to apply for a special pass for 100 Ringgit per month. During this time, they cannot work. This makes it difficult for a MW to remain in Malaysia and pursue a case against their employer.

- **Malaysia - Visa Fraud**

Sumitha explained it may be possible for unskilled workers being issued social visas. There was a time when such visas could be converted to work permits but no longer is the case. However, we still experience many MWs coming in with social visas or student visas with the promise from recruiters that they can convert the visas to work permits. These MWs often end up undocumented or detained when their 30 day visa expires. If caught with false documents the punishments are harsh.

- **Lebanon – Abuse of Migrant Domestic Workers and Access to Justice and Remedy**

Participants raised the psychological, physical, and sexual abuse cases experienced by MDWs in the Middle East and GCC countries. It is also difficult for those migrant domestic workers to ask for assistance, as they are not aware of their rights and their ability to file a complaint on the abuse they experienced. Contracts are in Arabic and not understood by the worker. Access to justice and compensation is difficult. Migrant domestic workers are excluded in Lebanon's labour laws. Mostly the abused/traumatized worker wants to return home as soon as possible.

Noha explained there is no government compensation scheme. If a migrant worker dies, the employer must inform the police and labour department. If a migrant worker dies in a detention center, by law, there must be an inquest into their death to determine the cause. In both cases, the

employer must cover costs for compensation, not the government. CLMC provides legal assistance and some may receive compensation. Employers may be liable for deaths or injury at work. The migrant domestic workers can go home and may still receive compensation if they give the power-of-attorney to CLMC to continue the case and get compensation.

Health insurance for migrant workers is very limited. It may cover personal injuries sustained on the job, it does not cover diseases including sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) that may have resulted from sexual abuse.

NGOs in Lebanon and Malaysia are advocating for the recognition of diseases in health insurance of migrant workers.

Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center and Malaysian Bar Council are among the organizations that can be contacted by migrant workers, members of their families, and advocates when assistance of migrant workers is needed.

Documentation for Advocacy: Migrants Rights Violation Reporting System

Alexis Bautista began with a discussion of the importance of advocacy for the promotion and protection of migrant workers' rights. Many migrants organizations deal with large numbers of cases, and their work revolves around individual cases, rather than advocating for policy change.

Organizations can lose themselves in their work on individual cases – and be overwhelmed in meeting the needs of these individuals. Yet the numbers of new cases can only be reduced through changes in policy and practice – and NGOs play a vital role in pressing for these changes.

If NGOs/CSOs only work on cases, they will not be changing the fundamental structures that make migrants vulnerable to abuses. If organizations do wish to engage in advocacy, however, they need evidence and data in order to influence government policy and practice. Collecting data can point to patterns of abuse that need to be addressed – if there are employers or recruitment agencies associated with abuses, if there are deaths in a particular country/industry/employer etc.

Specific and reliable evidence is fundamental to successful advocacy. Government officials' first response is to ask for specific evidence, and a successful advocate will need to draw on more than anecdotal evidence or distressing stories. An extensive database of well-documented cases can proved the evidence of the need for action and point to what changes need to be made.

Advocacy can change government thinking and conversations around policy issues, it can provide alternatives, and it can change specific policies – and ensure that changed policies are actually implemented.

Ellene Sana added that, in the case of the Philippines, advocacy by migrants' rights advocates created the push for what eventually became a regional re-thinking of arrangements between countries of origin and countries of destination.

In order to enable an evidence-based approach and with the increasing need for a common database for cases of violations of the rights of migrant workers, MFA developed the Migrants Rights Violation Reporting System (MRVRS). This has significantly improved the MFA network's method of recording cases and violations that correspond to the UN and ILO Conventions concerning the rights and dignity of migrant workers and members of their families.

There followed a practical session with technical training on using the MRVRS – on how to enter the relevant information and use the MRVRS system.

Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Lebanon

Noha shared what CLMC work areas are - safe cycle of migration, and pre-departure orientation trainings such as how to use appliances and tools in partnership with the NGOs in the Countries of Origin including Bangladesh (OKUP and Caritas Bangladesh). Caritas also assists on issues of passport confiscation, contract substitution, migrant workers' access to health care and benefits, and restricted mobility. They provide counseling inside and outside prisons, education for children of migrant workers, vocational trainings to help build their future, and there are hotlines available in case of emergencies. Information is available online and can be downloaded from the CLMC website (www.caritasmigrant.org.lb) in different languages of migrant workers to raise awareness on issues of trafficking, abuse, and HIV/AIDS not only for migrant workers and members of their families but also refugees, asylum seekers, and diaspora.

Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia

Sumitha first showed a video entitled, My Migrant Soul by Yasmin Kabir which tells the real-life and moving story of a man, Shahjahan Babu from Bangladesh and his migration journey to Malaysia.

Sumitha provided some background to the government-to-government (G2G) Agreement between Malaysia and Bangladesh to recruit Bangladeshi migrant workers.

In February 2016 the government of Malaysia announced that an agreement for 1.5 million Bangladesh MWs to come to Malaysia had been signed.

The plantation sector in Malaysia (Palm Oil) is heavily dependent on migrant workers. Traditionally many have come from Indonesia. The plantation sector associated with severe labour violations but documenting the cases has been difficult because of isolation, with plantations far from the city, making it harder for civil society to assist and investigate the welfare of migrant workers in those areas, due to the privatization of estates. Entering plantations to gather evidence, to speak to workers would be considered trespassing. Those who work in the plantation sector also live in the plantation. MWs in other sectors do not have proper housing. Often times, they live in deplorable states, tents and make-shift accommodations in nearby jungles or open land. There is no housing policy for migrant workers in Malaysia.

The G2G agreement between Bangladesh and Malaysia is a state-managed recruitment system excluding private agents. Prior to this, Bangladesh and

The G2G agreement aimed to reduce migration cost and reduce irregular migration. It requires both governments to handle the recruitment system, placement, trainings, and repatriation of migrant workers. In the agreement, Malaysia had a cap of 10,000 workers from Bangladesh. However, due to the wrong information disseminated in Bangladesh, it was misunderstood that Malaysia was looking for 1.5 million workers. As a result, 1.4 million Bangladeshis were registered in the database but only about 7,000 have started working since September 2015.

NGOs also highlighted the issue of governments' accountability to the 4.5 million undocumented migrant workers currently in Malaysia and the need for a further 1.5 million MWs from Bangladesh. The governments of Malaysia and Bangladesh still pushed through with the G2G agreement.

NGOs from both countries expressed their concern as the agreement does not use a rights-based approach for the migrant workers. She clarified that CSOs in Malaysia actually agree with the establishment of the G2G agreement but advocate that it should be transparent and must be rights-based. Further, discussions of this G2G agreement were disclosed to the public only when the

agreement was finalized, and there was no needs-based assessment conducted to substantiate the number of workers required under the G2G. .

Bar Council Malaysia and Migrant Workers:

Sumitha then explained how the Bar Council Malaysia, as the regulating body for lawyers in Peninsular Malaysia, assists migrant workers in Malaysia. They provide legal representation to migrant workers in Malaysia regardless if they documented or undocumented. The Bar Council also provides legal assistance to migrant workers who are victims of passport confiscation, contract substitution, arbitrary detention, and those seeking for compensation. They help cases of migrant workers who are detained and/or wish to be repatriated. They also communicate with the members of the migrant workers' families on the status of the case and what needs to be done on their part. The Bar Council also conducts trainings on immigration laws, labour laws and criminal laws for migrant workers. They also conduct consultations with labour attaches of the migrant workers' rights as well as engaging with members of the parliament (MPs) who also advocate for the rights of migrant workers. Sumitha encourages different organizations to engage with the existing complaint mechanisms from organizations such as International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW). Civil society is also encouraged to engage with the regional processes to not only work with governments of countries of origin on migration and migrants' issues but also with countries of destination.

Destination Country Advocacy – Group Work

Participants were divided into groups to explore and discuss how they could more effectively work with CSOs and advocates in countries of destination (Malaysia and Lebanon) on cases and on making changes to prevent abuses.

Malaysia

- Documentation of cases, analysis of data, and reporting - share report with Ambassador and respective ministry officials
- Identification of good practices and shared priorities for change
- Shared lobby initiatives – including advocacy with government to ensure appropriate resources are allocated for the wellbeing and protection of migrant workers
- Work with different CSOs in Malaysia, to document and refer cases

Lebanon

- CSOs in Lebanon and Bangladesh could work together to ensure that the Bangladesh embassy and labour ministry should know and thoroughly understand their role and responsibility to assist migrant workers when they face problems
- To work to increase the human and financial resources to assist migrant workers in distress
- The government should have a database of migrant workers leaving Bangladesh and those who have returned
- New initiatives focused on women migrant workers before leaving Lebanon and returning to Bangladesh

Towards Safe Migration – The Role of Labour Attaches

Facilitators: Kazi Abul Kalam and Dr. Chowdhury Abrar

This session focused on the role of labour attaches, the reality and challenges of labour attaches (LAs) and Bangladeshi missions in addressing issues of Bangladeshi migrant workers. The session included

a presentation from Mr. Kazi Abul Kalam, a senior official in the Ministry of Overseas Employment and Expatriate Welfare.

Key issues include: a lack of sufficient resources for missions, potentially conflicting objectives of missions (welfare of migrant workers and increasing the numbers), the recruitment process of LAs.

Every month, LAs are required to send recommendations and the overall situation on that particular country of destination back to Dhaka. There is also a provision for consulates and embassies to submit reports every year, but this does not always happen. It is also not clear what happens to this information and whether it is publicly available. The ratio of migrant workers to LAs places an impossible burden/workload on LAs.

LAs do not have sufficient resources to meet the needs for facilities/resources, repatriation, and legal assistance. How LAs provide services may also be subject to nepotism –rather than addressing those most in need. LAs do not have adequate training – they do not have a background of working on the issues of labour migration, and will not have received training on the rights of migrant workers and their families. The Ministry has begun to develop and introduce apps for mobiles which give migrant workers information on their rights and complaint mechanisms, and can hopefully be disseminated to migrant workers.

Ellene Sana, highlighted the way the Philippines government conducts pre-departure trainings in cooperation with civil society to provide inputs and information on experiencing dealing with specific problems related to labour. In the Philippines, different departments / ministries have created a joint manual of operations for the overseas Filipino workers. This includes the pre-departure trainings, welfare in country of destination, as well as social protection and social benefits for the migrant workers and members of their families. Ellene emphasized the need for government and civil society to work together collaboratively to address the rights of migrant workers. This may be a good practice for Bangladesh also.

Ways Forward

The final plenary reflected on how the lack of manpower in consulates and embassies is an issue given the ratio of labour attaches to migrant workers outside Bangladesh. CSOs therefore play a vital role in addressing this gap. Some of the key conclusions of this module were:

- The value and importance of good collaboration between CSOs in Bangladesh and countries of destination.
- The value of shadow/parallel reports for highlighting issues of concern and promoting recommendations for change
- The need for an evidence based approach in effective advocacy
- The need to engage government in a way that can build mutual respect and trust, and to explore avenues for collaboration, as well as holding them to account
- The need to take up the issue of resourcing, training and accountability of LAs and Missions

The module concluded with the completion of evaluation forms, and a final shared group reflection.

The feedback on the module was very positive. The trainers and resource people, and the interpreters who had worked so hard were thanked and acknowledged by the program partners.

It was agreed that Module, Module IV would be scheduled for August if that was possible.