প্রত্যাশা • PROTTASHA
Improved Sustainable Reintegration of Bangladeshi Returnee Migrants

IMPROVED SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF BANGLADESHI RETURNEE MIGRANTS (PROTTASHA II)

# MONTHLY FLASH UPDATE

**FEBRUARY 2026**




*Participants Engaged in the Data and Programme Quality session at the Workshop on Digitalization and Monitoring*

## Output and Target

**1.1** Enhanced access to tailored arrival assistance for returnee migrants in need (particularly women, children and returnees in vulnerable situations).

- Immediate Assistance at the airport: **10,000**

**1.2** Enhanced access to sustainable and gender sensitive reintegration services (social, psychosocial and economic) for Bangladeshi returnees in need and their families.

- Psychosocial Counselling: **2,700**
- Financial Assistance: **7,700**
- Career Counselling: **7,700**
- Entrepreneurship Development Training: **5,600**
- Referral Support: **3,500**
- Market-oriented Skills Training: **2,100**

**1.3** Enhanced capacity of women returnee migrants to claim their rights and seize economic opportunities.

- Women Entrepreneurship Development: **150**

**1.4** Improved understanding of migrants on safe and legal migration, the perils of irregular migration and migrant smuggling, and sustainable reintegration.

- Community People Reach: **1,000,000**
- Social & Mass Media Reach: **2,500,000**

## OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To contribute to sustainable reintegration of Bangladeshi migrant returnees and to safe migration.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

Improve sustainable reintegration of Bangladeshi returnees and their families in their communities in a gender sensitive manner.

## OVERVIEW

Duration
**June 2023 — May 2027**

Funded by
**The European Union (EU)**
Co-financed and Implemented by
**BRAC**

**Support Centres**

MRSCs (Migration and Reintegration Support Centres)
**15**

Upazila (Sub-district) offices
**75**

BMWCs (BRAC Migration Welfare Centre)

1. Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka
2. Osmani International Airport, Sylhet
3. Shah Amanat International Airport, Chattogram

**Click** or **Scan** the QR Code to Find Prottasha II Webpage

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BRAC

# ACHIEVEMENT SO FAR

## UPTO FEBRUARY 2026

### IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE

| February | Total | W 203 |
|---|---|---|
| 120 | 6,090 | M 5,887 |

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

| February | Total | W 1,153 |
|---|---|---|
| 276 | 3,969 | M 2,816 |

### AWARENESS & SENSITIZATION

| February | Total | W 3,959,930 |
|---|---|---|
| 1,069,363 | 19,204,923 | M 15,244,993 |

## PSYCHOSOCIAL REINTEGRATION

### Enrollment Counselling

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 51 | T | 1924 |
| 01 | W | 515 |
| 50 | M | 1,409 |

### Completed Counselling

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 62 | T | 1,579 |
| 07 | W | 518 |
| 55 | M | 1,061 |

### Medical Treatment

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 06 | T | 115 |
| 00 | W | 39 |
| 06 | M | 76 |

### Psychiatric/Trauma Treatment

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 02 | T | 10 |
| 00 | W | 01 |
| 02 | M | 09 |

## ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION

### Career Counselling

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 413 | T | 6,437 |
| 01 | W | 1,592 |
| 412 | M | 4,845 |

### Market Oriented Skill Training

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 48 | T | 1,225 |
| 00 | W | 467 |
| 48 | M | 758 |

### Entrepreneurship Development & Financial Literacy Training

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 00 | T | 3,639 |
| 00 | W | 839 |
| 00 | M | 2,800 |

### Financial Assistance

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 276 | T | 3,969 |
| 05 | W | 1,153 |
| 271 | M | 2,816 |

## SOCIAL REINTEGRATION & AWARENESS

### Courtyard Meeting

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 1,180 | EVENTS | 42,191 |
| Participants | | |
| 16,058 | T | 574,450 |
| 12,359 | W | 390,845 |
| 3,699 | M | 183,605 |

### Video Show

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 02 | EVENTS | 1,259 |
| Participants | | |
| 99 | T | 120,608 |
| 05 | W | 9,789 |
| 94 | M | 110,819 |

### Social Media

| FEBRUARY | | TO DATE |
|---|---|---|
| Views | | |
| 1,053,058 | T | 18,401,279 |
| 425,071 | W | 3,519,970 |
| 627,987 | M | 14,881,309 |

## TOTAL PRIMARY SELECTION

| Region of Return | EU | Transit* | GCC & Others |
|---|---|---|---|
| T | 1,281 | 1,437 | 5,077 |
| W | 15 | 9 | 1,830 |
| M | 1,266 | 1,428 | 3,247 |

## TOTAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCES

| Region of Return | EU | Transit* | GCC & Others |
|---|---|---|---|
| T | 792 | 524 | 2,653 |
| W | 8 | 4 | 1,141 |
| M | 784 | 520 | 1,512 |

** Libiya and Türkiye are considered as Transit Countries*

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# 188 LIBYA, 68 EU RETURNEES LAUNCH BUSINESSES THROUGH PROTTASHA II PROJECT IN FEBRUARY 2026

Mahbubur Rahman, born on 15 July 1988 in Jamalganj, Sunamganj, grew up without his father, who had gone abroad when Mahbubur was two. For 12 years, his mother raised three sons in poverty, unaware that much of the money sent by his father was misappropriated.

Facing pressure to drop out and work, Mahbubur continued his education independently, later moving for college while working in a garment factory. Despite passing HSC, financial strain forced him to leave studies and start small businesses in Dhaka. In 2022, he migrated through an informal broker to Italy, paying BDT 2.5 million, only to be stranded in Libya, exploited, and ultimately returned home destitute. Rejected by family and isolated, he rebuilt his life through mobile repair training and support from Prottasha II project.

In February 2026 alone, a total of 68 EU returnees (67 men and 1 woman) were supported under the EU-funded project. Additionally, 188 returnees came from Libya (all men), reflecting the continued vulnerability of Bangladeshi migrants along the Libya route.

These figures demonstrate that Prottasha II project is strategically responding to mixed migration trends, particularly irregular and high-risk routes linked to Libya and onward movement to EU destinations. The programme ensures that returnees receive structured reintegration services.

The table below presents number of returnees from different EU countries and Libiya in February 2026 and cumulatively to date.

## TABLE: COUNTRY-WISE SEGREGATION OF RETURNEES FROM EUMS AND TRANSIT COUNTRIES

| COUNTRIES OF RETURN | February 2026 | | | To Date | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Women | Men | Total | Women | Men | Total |
| LIBYA | 0 | 188 | 188 | 3 | 514 | 517 |
| CYPRUS | 0 | 42 | 42 | 4 | 318 | 322 |
| MALTA | 0 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 154 | 154 |
| ROMANIA | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 128 | 129 |
| ITALY | 0 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 80 | 82 |
| FRANCE | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 28 | 28 |
| GREECE | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 34 | 34 |
| CROATIA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 11 |
| GERMANY | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 11 | 11 |
| PORTUGAL | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| POLAND | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| BULGARIA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| SWEDEN | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| CZECH REPUBLIC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| AUSTRIA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| SPAIN | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| NETHERLANDS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| LATVIA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| DENMARK | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **TOTAL FROM EU** | **1** | **67** | **68** | **8** | **784** | **792** |

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# PROTTASHA II BOOSTS DIGITAL PROFIENCY OF FIELD LEVEL STAFF FOR MIGRATION MIS AND “DESHE PROBASHE” APP




*The inauguration session is underway at the Refresher Training on Digitalization and Monitoring*

The Prottasha II project has enhanced the technical competencies of its field-level staff to streamline the tracking and sustainable reintegration of returnee migrants through an intensive digitisation and monitoring workshop.

The two-day training, held on 25-26 February in Gazipur, focused on the operational technicalities of the Migration MIS platform and the “Deshe Probashe” app.

The initiative, part of the EU-funded Prottasha II project, implemented by BRAC, aimed to transition field operations from paper-based documentation to a robust digital ecosystem.

Central to the training were hands-on sessions on the technical workflows of the “Deshe Probashe” app, which serves as a primary data entry and monitoring tool.

Participants practised real-time digital registration and identification, returnee profiling, and the automated submission of meeting and workshop forms.

Technical sessions also addressed data standardisation, providing detailed reviews of mandatory form sections. This included the precise categorisation of returnees and the uniform documentation of migration journeys, both vital for maintaining data integrity across Prottasha II’s working areas.

The training successfully tackled existing technical challenges, such as system malfunctions in profiling forms and inconsistencies in returnee classification. To mitigate these issues, the programme committed to basic Excel training for field staff and established a protocol for prompt IT reporting.

As a result of the technical immersion, the digital proficiency of the 94 participants surged, with post-training assessment scores increasing from 54% to 83%.

Moving forward, the BRAC Migration Programme intends to leverage the feedback from this workshop to further refine the Migration MIS platform’s software architecture and enhance field-level digital tracking methodologies.



*Participants Engaged in Group Work During the Workshop*

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The Journey of Shahidul Dhali

## FROM A LIBYAN 'GAME GHAR' TO A LIFE RECLAIMED

For Md Shahidul Dhali of Madaripur, the dream of an Italian coastline was supposed to be the answer to his family's crushing debt. Instead, that dream dissolved into a thirteen-month nightmare of captivity, violence, and a homecoming marked by the silent scars of trauma.

In 2023, driven by the hope of supporting his seven-member household, Shahidul borrowed BDT 10.5 lakh (€ 7,387) from relatives and NGOs to fund his migration. His journey took him through the UAE and Egypt, eventually landing him in Libya. But the promised path to Europe ended abruptly when his passport was confiscated, and he was thrown into a notorious migrant "Game Ghar".

For over a year, Shahidul endured the unthinkable. He faced severe food deprivation, repeated arrests, and three agonising months in the hands of a mafia group. While he was subjected to brutal physical abuse, his family back home was forced into a different kind of desperation.

To pay the nearly BDT 15 lakh (€ 10,552) ransom demanded by his captors, they sold their ancestral land and jewellery, leaving them financially destitute and broken.

When Shahidul finally touched down in Bangladesh on 6 September 2024, via IOM, he brought no income back, only the heavy, invisible burden of a shattered mind.

The violence he survived followed him home in recurring nightmares, panic attacks, and an emotional irritability that made a "normal" life feel like an impossible reach.

Recognised as highly vulnerable, Shahidul was enrolled in structured trauma counselling under the Prottasha II project.

Through these psychosocial counselling sessions, the man who had been silenced by the trauma of Libya began to find his voice again.

The counselling provided a bridge back to his family and community, helping him regain the emotional stability needed to face a future still clouded by debt. Shahidul's story is a reflection of a larger, often silent crisis.

Like Shahidul, Prottasha II has provided psychosocial counselling to 1,873 individuals since its inception. Among them, some 1,517 returnees like Shahidul have successfully completed their sessions and moved toward reintegration.

For those with even deeper wounds, the project has referred eight individuals for advanced trauma care and provided medical assistance to 110 others.

The recovery of Shahidul Dhali is a testament to the fact that for returnee migrants, healing is not a luxury, it is a prerequisite for survival.

It underscores that while the scars of migration are deep, timely psychosocial support can transform a night of sleeplessness into a journey toward a dignified and hopeful future.



*Md Shahidul Dhali During a Home Visit*

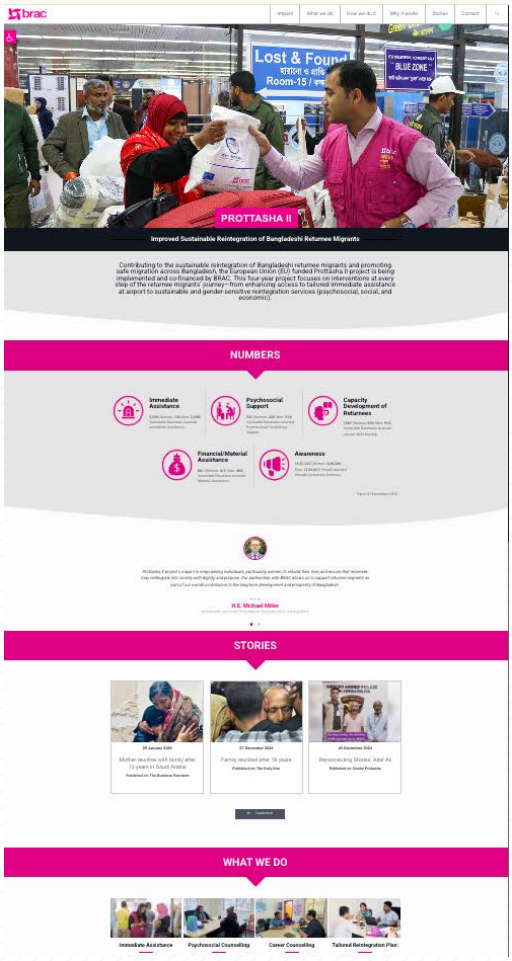
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## PROTTASHA II WEBPAGE

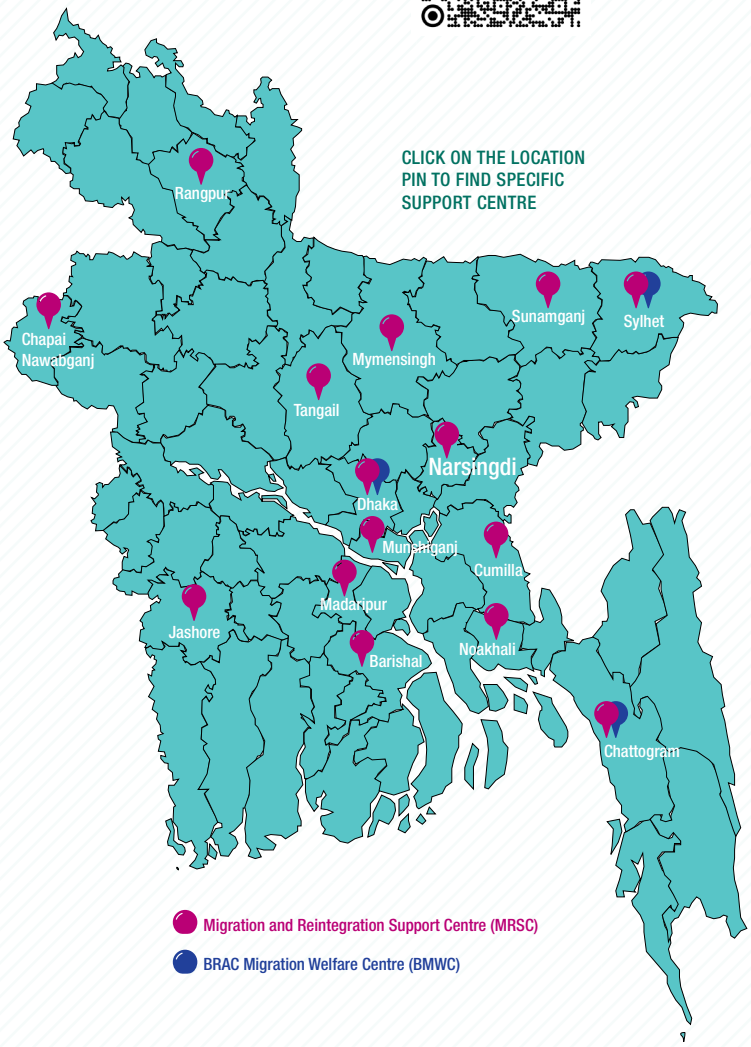
https://explore.brac.net/program/prottasha-ii/




## LOCATIONS OF SUPPORT CENTRES

CLICK OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND ALL SUPPORT CENTRES

CLICK ON THE LOCATION PIN TO FIND SPECIFIC SUPPORT CENTRE







বর্ষায় হাওরে ঘুরতে গেলেও নিরাপদ আর বড় নৌকা খোঁজে মানুষ। তাহলে ভূমধ্যসাগরের মতো বিশাল সমুদ্র পাড়ি দেওয়া কি প্লাস্টিক-রাবারের ছোট নৌকায় সম্ভব? দালালের মিষ্টি মিষ্টি কথার প্রলোভনে ভুল পথ বেছে নেবেন না। সঠিক তথ্য জানুন, সঠিক সিদ্ধান্ত নিন। যোগাযোগ করুন আপনার বাড়ির কাছের এমআরএসসিতে। #Prottasha_2 #Prottasha_II #ThinkBeforeYouGo #SafeMigration #EUinBangladesh #BRACMigration

662.8K 2.3K 9 43 236

Basic information

| Reach | Completion rate | Average view time | Profile views |
|---|---|---|---|
| 534,373 | 5.4% | 8.54s | 625 |

## MOST VIEWED SOCIAL MEDIA (TIKTOK) CONTENT IN FEBRUARY 2026

CLICK HERE TO FIND THE CONTENT

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Frontex-European Union Reintegration Programme

# FROM MIGRATION FAILURE TO REINTEGRATION SUCCESS

Robiul Hossain (pseudonym), a 25-year-old from Daganbhuiyan Upazila in Feni District, grew up in a modest family of four. As the only son, he felt a deep responsibility toward his parents and younger sister. After completing his Secondary School Certificate (SSC), financial struggles forced him to discontinue his education. Seeing migration as a path to support his family, Robiul believed that working abroad could improve their living conditions and provide long-term stability. On 22 December 2020, he left Bangladesh, traveling through Dhaka and Turkey before reaching Cyprus, arranged by a middleman promising employment.

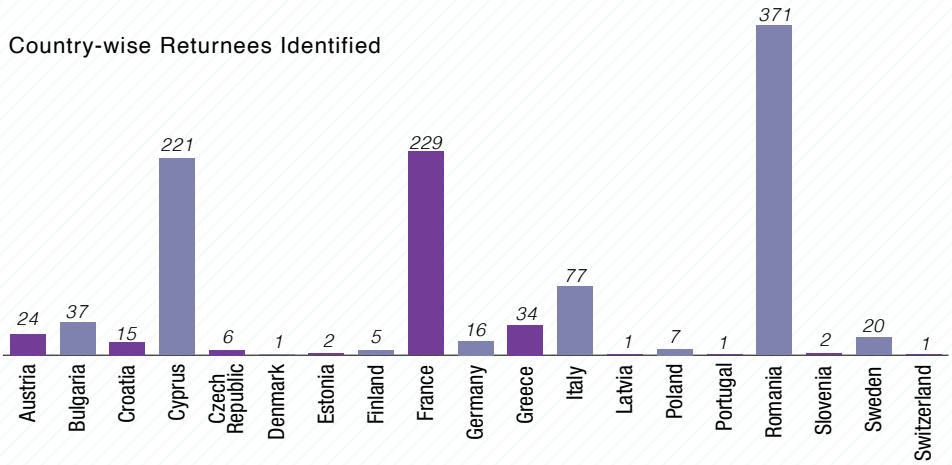
To fund the migration, Robiul and his family made significant sacrifices. He paid approximately BDT 7,00,000 (€4,925) to the middleman and arranged another BDT 3,00,000 (€2,110) through loans, savings, and by selling his mother's gold jewelry—the family's most valuable asset. Determined to honor their sacrifice, Robiul embraced the journey with resilience.

In Cyprus, he faced cultural and language barriers while working long hours as a hotel cashier. Over five years, he earned around BDT 30,00,000 (€21,104), sending nearly half—BDT 15,00,000 (€10,552)—home to support household expenses, repay loans, and meet his sister's needs. Despite his hard work, personal advancement remained limited. As his work permit neared expiration, documentation issues made employment unstable. With no legal pathway to continue working abroad, Robiul returned to Bangladesh on 20 December 2025.

Following his return, Robiul received support from the BRAC Migration Programme under the Frontex European Union Reintegration Programme (Frontex EURP). At the airport, he received immediate cash assistance of BDT 29,141 (€205) and later, on 22 February 2026, reintegration support worth BDT 1,42,150 (€1,000) in the form of two bulls to help him start a small livestock business. Using this support, he repaired his cowshed and began raising the bulls, reconnecting with childhood memories of livestock in his village. He plans to sell them during Eid al-Adha, hoping the profit will allow him to expand the business and provide stable financial support for his family.

For Robiul, the reintegration support represents more than financial aid—it restored his confidence and gave him a clear direction after years of uncertainty abroad. While his dream of long-term settlement overseas did not materialize, he remains determined to build a stable future at home. In February 2026 alone, 32 returnees had arrived under Frontex EURP, with 16 receiving post-arrival assistance, most of them men returning from France and Cyprus.

Reintegration assistance focused on sustainable livelihoods aligned with local demand: 50.42% in livestock, 5.84% in transportation businesses, 5.60% in motorbikes, 5.01% in grocery shops, 1.91% in telecom, 1.07% in clothing businesses, and 30.15% in other small enterprises.




## Returnees Reached with Reintegration Assistance

| Returnee Identified in Bangladesh | | On-Arrival Cash Support | | Number of Reintegration Support | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly | Cumulative | Monthly | Cumulative | Monthly | Cumulative |
| 32 | 1,070 | 16 | 349 | 14 | 849 |

Mass Campaign to Combat Human Trafficking and People Smuggling

# RELIGIOUS LEADERS VOWED TO JOIN HANDS IN COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING



*Meeting with Religious Leaders in Savar, Dhaka*

Religious leaders and scholars can play a pivotal role in preventing human trafficking and irregular migration by disseminating accurate information on safe migration pathways to the grassroots, speakers told a series of discussion meetings held throughout February.

BRAC Migration Programme, under its "Mass Campaign to Combat Human Trafficking and People Smuggling" project funded by the Australian government, organised the sessions across Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, and Cox's Bazar.

A total of 86 religious leaders, including three women, participated in the four meetings, committing to integrate anti-trafficking and safe migration messages into their Friday sermons (Khutbas) and other religious gatherings.

Throughout the sessions, participants discussed the tactics used by traffickers and the importance of regular migration channels, as well as the support services available for survivors.

At a meeting held at the Gazipur Islamic Foundation office on 26 February, Islamic Foundation Deputy Director Md Yusuf Ali warned that many people risk their lives on illegal routes, driven by the lure of a better life, often leading to tragic deaths. He urged the Alems and Ulemas to lead awareness efforts.

Similar sentiments were echoed in Savar on 25 February, where Islamic Foundation Supervisor Md Badruzzaman Hawlader noted that human trafficking is rising due to a lack of awareness and fraud.

He described Bangladesh's people as the country's greatest asset and stressed the need for proactive community engagement to protect them from traffickers.

In Cox's Bazar, another session at the Sadar Upazila Model Mosque highlighted the grave risks of maritime irregular migration. Maulana Kamal Uddin, president of the District Imam Samity, stated that the community has lost many lives to risky sea journeys. He emphasised that creating public awareness through Khutbas is a moral responsibility for religious leaders to stop such crimes against humanity.

Meanwhile, at a meeting in Narayanganj, Islamic Foundation Deputy Director Md Yasir Arafat pointed out that marginalised populations are the most vulnerable to deception in the name of migration.

He noted that irregular migration often ends in death at sea or torture at the hands of traffickers, describing the situation as a "death trap" that requires urgent intervention from imams through religious discourse.

In another event organised with the Islamic Foundation office in Dhaka, religious leaders and scholars from Dhaka North and South City Corporations participated. During the session, the Director General of the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Md. A. Salam Khan (Senior District and Sessions Judge) said, "There are nearly five hundred thousand mosques across the country. The imams and religious scholars of these mosques can discuss safe migration in their khutbas (sermons)." Shariful Islam Hasan, Associate Director of the BRAC Migration Program and Youth Platform, delivered the keynote address at the event.

By linking religious values with human rights and protection, the initiative aims to strengthen community-based prevention mechanisms, helping aspiring migrants recognise deceptive offers and make informed decisions.



*Meeting with Religious Leaders in Cox's Bazar*

Mass Campaign to Combat Human Trafficking and People Smuggling

## ABF-FUNDED PROJECT ORGANISES UNION-LEVEL WORKSHOP




*Union-Level Capacity Development Workshops in Cox's Bazar*

Through Union-level capacity development workshops, local stakeholders are empowered to reach grassroots communities and respond quickly to the risks of human trafficking and people smuggling. In February 2026, BRAC engaged 61 community-level representatives through two Union-Level Capacity Development Workshops in Cox's Bazar, held in Ukhia Upazila and Teknaf Upazila.

The workshops brought together local representatives, Counter Trafficking Committee members, Union Parishad members, village police, teachers, religious leaders, women leaders, and youth representatives. Among the participants, 54 were men and 7 were women. These engagements strengthened community-led action to prevent human trafficking and people smuggling at the local level.

The activities were implemented across the project's working areas to raise awareness among adolescents, youth, and community leaders about their roles in preventing human trafficking and people smuggling through workshops conducted under the 'Mass Campaign to Combat Human Trafficking and People Smuggling' project, funded by the Australian Border Force, which aimed to promote community-based prevention and early response mechanisms.

The workshops shed light on the differences between human trafficking and people smuggling, examined current migration trends, and highlighted common traps, including risky sea routes to Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and nearby countries. Participants from Ukhia and Teknaf, where fishing and coastal livelihoods are prevalent, acknowledged the high vulnerability of their communities and shared concerns about neighbours and relatives attempting unsafe migration without knowing the risks.

The sessions were highly appreciated for boosting participants' understanding of trafficking, smuggling, and the steps needed for safe and regular migration. By strengthening coordination among local administration, village police, teachers, and community leaders, and by activating Union Counter Trafficking Committees, the workshops empowered participants to monitor risks effectively and respond promptly, thereby enhancing community-level prevention against trafficking and smuggling.

Overall, these union-level capacity-building efforts contribute to stronger accountability, participatory governance, and sustainable, community-based prevention mechanisms against human trafficking and people smuggling.




*Project Staff Raise Awareness on People Smuggling Among Community Leaders in Cox's Bazar*

Combating Human Trafficking through Strengthening the 4Ps (CTIP) project

# COORDINATED ACTION ESSENTIAL TO MAKE ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAWS EFFECTIVE, SAY EXPERTS




*DLAC Meeting on the Prevention of Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration*

Legal experts and law enforcement officials at a consultation meeting in Khulna have underscored that legislation must be matched by institutional coordination to protect survivors of human trafficking and irregular migration.

The meeting, titled 'Prevention of Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration', was organised by the 'Combating Human Trafficking through Strengthening 4Ps' project of BRAC Migration Programme in collaboration with the District Legal Aid Committee (DLAC) at the District Judge Court conference room on 23 February.

The session brought together members of the judiciary, law enforcement, civil society, and survivors of human trafficking to address the practical challenges of enforcing newly enacted legal measures.

Highlighting the limitations of policy without practice, the District Legal Aid Officer remarked during the closing session that strong laws alone are not enough.

The official noted that the effectiveness of such legislation depends entirely on coordinated implementation to ensure rescue, rehabilitation, legal aid, and the long-term safety of survivors.

Senior District and Sessions Judge and DLAC Chairperson Chand Mohammad Abdul Alim Al Raji described the recently enacted ordinance as a crucial step in penalising traffickers but cautioned that safe migration is only possible through rigorous enforcement against fraudsters who target marginalised and vulnerable communities.

Judicial speakers at the event explained that the new law has expanded its scope to include irregular migration and migrant smuggling.

By making preliminary inquiries mandatory and providing clearer definitions of offences, officials believe the law will prevent misuse while ensuring genuine victims receive the justice they deserve.

Law enforcement representatives also stressed the necessity of accurate case documentation and stronger ties with non-governmental organisations.

Additional Superintendent of Police Md Khairul Anam stated that when complaints meet legal standards, the police are better equipped to investigate and take action, noting that strong coordination is the key to successful prosecutions.

The consultation reaffirmed the commitment of the BRAC Migration Programme to support survivors through an integrated approach that spans from prevention and legal enforcement to rehabilitation and reintegration.

Participants concluded that a shared responsibility among all institutions is required to ensure that survivors are not only rescued but supported with dignity within a rights-based migration framework.

Healing through Listening

# MONER JOTNO MARKS ONE YEAR OF SERVICE



*Participants pose for a Group Photo at the End of the Anniversary Event*

In a room filled with the soft hum of voices and the weight of a thousand untold stories, BRAC'S 'Moner Jotno' initiative marked its first anniversary with a two-day refreshment training on 7-8 February.

The gathering at BRAC Centre was not just a professional meeting; it was a sanctuary for the 70 psychosocial counsellors who have spent the last year standing on the frontlines of Bangladesh's mental health crisis, turning sleepless nights into whispers of hope.

The platform was born from the wreckage of a nation in pain. July 2024 will remain etched in the collective memory as a month of political unrest. Before the heart could heal, devastating floods swept away homes and livelihoods. It was in this vacuum of despair that BRAC Migration Programme, BIED, and Neeramoy, launched 'Moner Jotno', a tele-counselling lifeline for anyone, anywhere, to reach out and find a hand in the dark.

Over the past year, these counsellors, balancing their own professional burdens, have answered 13,108 calls between noon and the deep silence of 2 am. Each call, averaging 20-25 minutes, represents a soul reaching for connection. For many, it was the first time they were heard without judgment.

The emotional weight of this service was brought to the forefront when a counsellor shared the story of a farmer from a remote village. The man had called not for financial aid, but simply to ask the counsellor to convey his deepest gratitude to the management. He felt a sense of relief, he said, just knowing that someone respected his pain enough to listen. Another counsellor spoke of an elderly woman whose voice trembled as she offered a heartbreaking compliment, "You are better than my daughter. You give me the time and the listening ear that I expect from her but never get."

Asif Saleh, executive director of BRAC, moved by these testimonies, remarked that a farmer's gratitude is the truest measure of the standard of service. "If a farmer is expressing this kind of gratitude, then surely Moner Jotno is reaching out to our community people and maintaining the standard of service", he noted, validating the tireless empathy of the team.

The training session combined technical and communication aspects, featuring workshops by renowned professionals, Professor Mehtab Khanam and Dr Mahzabeen Haque, alongside a 'Pitha Utsob' and art therapy to help the counsellors process the heavy emotions they carry for others. As the two days drew to a close, the underlying message was clear, "mental health is not a luxury afforded to the few; it is a necessity for the many."

'Moner Jotno' operates on the belief that in a world filled with noise and crisis, true healing begins with the simple yet powerful act of pausing to genuinely listen to another person.



*Asif Saleh, Executive Director of BRAC addressing the Audience*

Switzerland-supported Reintegration of Migrant Workers in Bangladesh project

# STAKEHOLDERS UNDERSCORED THE IMPORTANCE OF REFERRAL MECHANISMS AS A CORNERSTONE OF PROGRESS




*Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Members after the Meeting*

The Switzerland-supported "Reintegration of the Migrant Workers in Bangladesh" project has successfully reached nearly 9,000 returnee migrant workers of its total target of 13,220 beneficiaries.

The figures were revealed during the 5th Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting held on 2 February at the Hotel Amari.

The four-year initiative, implemented by BRAC in partnership with OKUP and MJF, spans 16 districts and specifically assists those who have returned to the country since 2020.

The meeting, chaired by Zafar Ahmed Khan, former senior secretary of Bangladesh's Local Government Division, focused on the project's progress in providing sustainable socioeconomic support.

Stakeholders highlighted that referral mechanisms have been a cornerstone of this progress, linking returnees to essential services, including trade-based skills training, microfinance, and social protection schemes.

Experts, including psychologists and gender specialists, emphasised that a holistic approach, incorporating mental health care alongside entrepreneurship development, is vital for the long-term stability of returnees.

The committee plans to use evidence-based results to advocate for more sustainable government policies, ensuring that returnee migrant workers are not only brought back but are effectively reintegrated with dignity and economic purpose.

Despite the achievements, the committee addressed several persistent challenges.

While 9,000 people have received support, project members noted limited participation in trade-specific training and significant barriers in accessing formal bank loans.

The need for stronger coordination between the relevant ministries and other financial institutions was underscored to ensure that reintegration is treated as a core component of the migration cycle.

The PAC, comprised of 18 members from diverse institutions including the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, the Wage Earner's Welfare Board, the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, the Embassy of Switzerland, the Bangladesh Employer Federation, BRAC, OKUP, MJF, ILO, Winrock, Helvetas, UNCDF, and PKB, recommended institutionalising these reintegration services within national systems.

Combating Human Trafficking through Strengthening the 4Ps (CTIP) project

# "SHE DOES NOT TALK, BUT AT LEAST SHE'S ALIVE"



*An Emotional Reunion as Rejiya Begum Meets Her Family*

For five long years, three children in a small village in Moulvibazar lived in the agonising shadow of the unknown. They waited for a phone call that never came and a voice that never answered, eventually surrendering to the crushing belief that their mother was dead.

When Rejiya Begum finally stood before her family at the BRAC Migration Welfare Centre in Uttara on 24 February, the air was not filled with joyous reunions or dramatic speeches, but with the heavy, rhythmic sound of weeping.

Rejiya has returned, but the woman who left to build a future for her children is gone, replaced by a hollow silence that no embrace can break.

"She does not speak," said her daughter, Liza Akter, her voice trembling as she faced a mother who no longer recognised the world. "We thought she was gone. We had accepted that she might be dead."

Rejiya's descent into this silence began in 2019, when she left Mamdannagar village for Saudi Arabia.

Like countless others, she trusted a local broker and a recruiting agency, hoping her wages as a domestic worker would shield her children from poverty.

According to her family, the dream fractured almost immediately. Reports of torture at the hands of her employer were met with indifference by the agency. By 2021, the line went dead.

For years, the family sought answers, even filing a complaint with the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training in 2023, but Rejiya had vanished into the vast machinery of irregular migration.

Her return was as anonymous as her disappearance.

On 12 February, a Saudi Airlines flight landed in Dhaka carrying a passenger who possessed no documents, no name, and no memory. Warrant Officer Mahbub Alam of Civil Aviation Security described her mental and physical state as unstable. She was a ghost in the terminal, unable to utter a single word about her identity or her home.

It took nearly two weeks of intensive effort by BRAC and the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to reclaim her name. Through fingerprint matching—the first time the PBI has identified a distressed female migrant using such data—she was finally confirmed as Rejiya Begum.

Yet, when her children saw her, they saw a stranger.

"The torture completely changed her," Liza said, staring at the mother who survived the unthinkable only to lose her voice.

The tragedy has sparked renewed calls for systemic change. Shariful Islam Hasan, Associate Director of BRAC Migration Programme, noted that while women return "mentally broken," abused, and even pregnant, the state lacks a formal standard operating procedure at airports to assist them upon arrival. He lamented a system where traffickers remain powerful while victims return to a life of uncertainty.

For now, the family is heading back to Moulvibazar with a mother who has come home but remains locked away in her own trauma.

Liza Akter finds her only solace in a heartbreaking reality: "She does not talk," she said softly. "But at least she's alive."




*Rejiya Begum Reunited with Her Family with Support from BRAC*

# GALLERY

## FEBRUARY 2026 IN PHOTOS



*Participants Posed for a Group Photo after the Workshop on Digitalization and Monitoring*



*Women Migrants Forum members engaging in a meeting in Chattogram*



*A coordination meeting with RAISE in Munshiganj*



*Courtyard meeting held at Dhepur Union, Munshiganj*



*Awareness session at an educational institution in Basail, Tangail*