



Draft



Presentation on

**Impact of COVID-19 on the Labour Market
Policy Proposals for Trade Union on
Employment, Gender and Social Security for Sustainable Recovery**

Presentation by

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem

Research Director

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

17 April, 2021

Study Team

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem

Research Director, CPD

Ms Taslima Taznur

Former Programme Associate, CPD

Special thanks to

Mr Tamim Ahmed

Research Associate, CPD

Discussion Points

1. Introduction and Objectives
2. COVID-affected Sectors and Worker-groups: Public Policy Responses Targeting Workers
3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis
4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net
5. Trade Union Policy Strategies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net

1. Introduction and Objectives

1. Introduction and Objectives

- A major part of the global economy has been **struggling** for **rebounding and recovery** since the COVID-19 pandemic
 - This had **profound impact** on the **world of work** during the first half of 2020
 - The recovery would be further delayed due to the **late attack of the second wave** of COVID in the country
- Globally, the **most vulnerable** among the workers were **regular, temporary or casual workers, self-employed and small entrepreneurs** of different sectors
 - These include MSMEs, construction, road, commerce, tourism, and other informal sectors (ILO, 2021)
- The **public policies and employers' actions** in dealing with challenges concerning the world of work and workers have been largely influenced by the **active participation of the trade unions across countries**
 - **108 out of 133 countries** have used **social dialogues** as a key instrument to address the concerns of workers (ILO, 2021)
 - **Trade unions in Bangladesh** have played an active role both in humanitarian issues; however its role was limited in case of workers' rights issues during this crisis period
- Trade unions in Bangladesh **need to revisit their activities** and engagements during the pandemic period and **take lessons from other countries**
 - With a view to **identifying the areas of future engagement** during the process of sustainable recovery

2. COVID-affected Sectors & Worker-groups in Bangladesh: Public Policy Responses

2. COVID-affected Sectors & Worker-groups in Bangladesh: Public Policy Responses

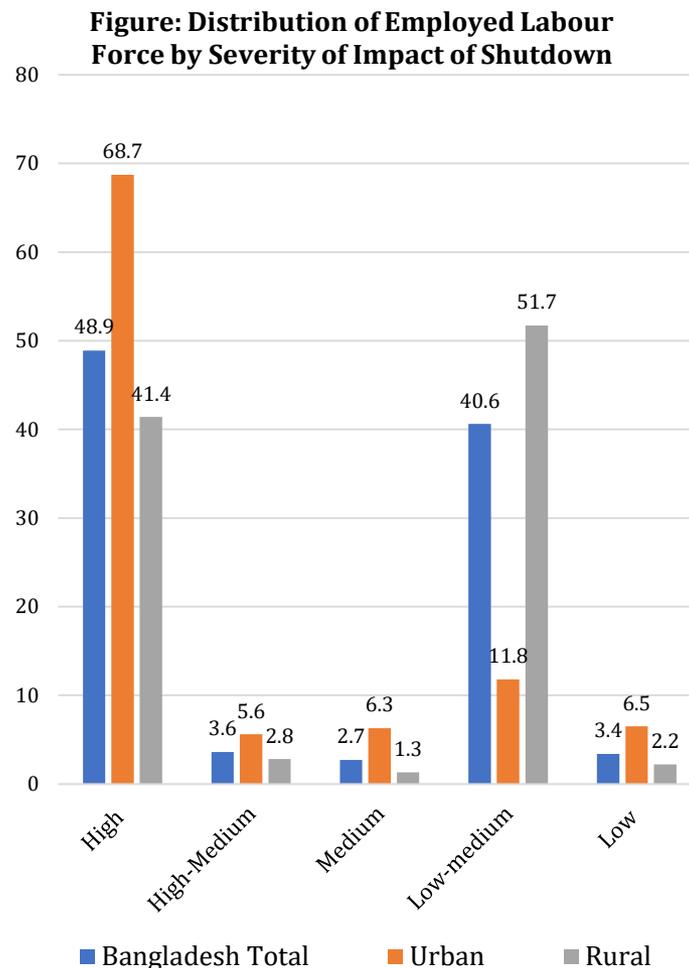
2.1 Vulnerabilities against Workers and Presence of Trade Unions

- The risks of contamination and casualties of the **covid virus among the workers** are likely to be high
 - However, the number of reported patients and reported death among workers are **low**
- The profound impact of the covid pandemic in the world of work was **loss of jobs**
 - Loss of jobs was over **3% of the total labour force** (Rahman, 2020)
 - **Urban informal economy lost 6.78%** of jobs
 - High level of job loss occurred during the immediate period (11.1 mil.- 20.5 mil.)
 - **Highest amount of job loss** would be in the **SMEs and informal sector** till the end of **2021**
 - Loss of jobs in case of overseas employment, in the form of **returnee migrants**, were 0.4 million during March-September, 2020
 - A **slower recovery** in terms of creating jobs in labour-intensive sectors
- **Women-led enterprises** were more vulnerable during the crisis period
 - **Forced them to laid-off** of workers more – about 50% of enterprises have reported laying off 76-100% of their workers (Asia Foundation, 2020)

2. COVID-affected Sectors & Worker-groups in Bangladesh: Public Policy Responses

2.2 Most Affected Sectors

- Based on the level of risks and severity of impact, BILS (2020) has categorised the sectors into three groups (Figure)
 - **High risk and severity impact sectors** such as manufacturing, construction, transport, wholesale and retail trade, food and accommodation services and personal services
 - **Medium-high risk and severity of impact sectors** include finance, domestic service, retail estate and education
 - **Low-risk and severity of impact sectors** include agriculture, health, information and communication
- About 69% of the employed population in urban areas were in high-risk states where the economy's share was 49%
- The pandemic has opened up **business opportunities** in few sectors including e-commerce and health and pharmaceuticals



Source: BILS, 2020
CPD-BILS Study (2021)

2. COVID-affected Sectors & Worker-groups in Bangladesh: Public Policy Responses

2.3 Most Affected Worker Groups

- The most affected workers' groups include urban-based day labourers mainly working in construction, informal services and transport workers (e.g. private car drivers, rickshaw pullers, launch and boat drivers)
 - These also include workers working as petty self-employment in retail trade (e.g. street vendors, hawkers, tea sellers etc.), food service and repairs etc.
 - The urban informal sector has lost jobs by about 1.08 million, which was over 8% of total urban employment at the level of 2016-17

2.4 Real Wages of Workers

- **Workers' overall wages had declined by 37%**, whereas it was declined by 42% in Dhaka and 33% in Chittagong districts (World Bank, 2020)
 - The decline in **income of salaried workers was much higher (49%)** due to a sharp reduction in demand for those services (World Bank, 2020)
- The **loss of income of the enterprises** was much dip
 - SMEs estimated to **lose their revenue by 66%** during the covid pandemic period compared to that of the pre-covid period (BIDS, 2020)
- According to BBS, the income of all the families, including **migrants dropped by 20%** during the period covid pandemic (BBS, 2020)

2. COVID-affected Sectors & Worker-groups in Bangladesh: Public Policy Responses

2.5 Workers' Income and Poverty

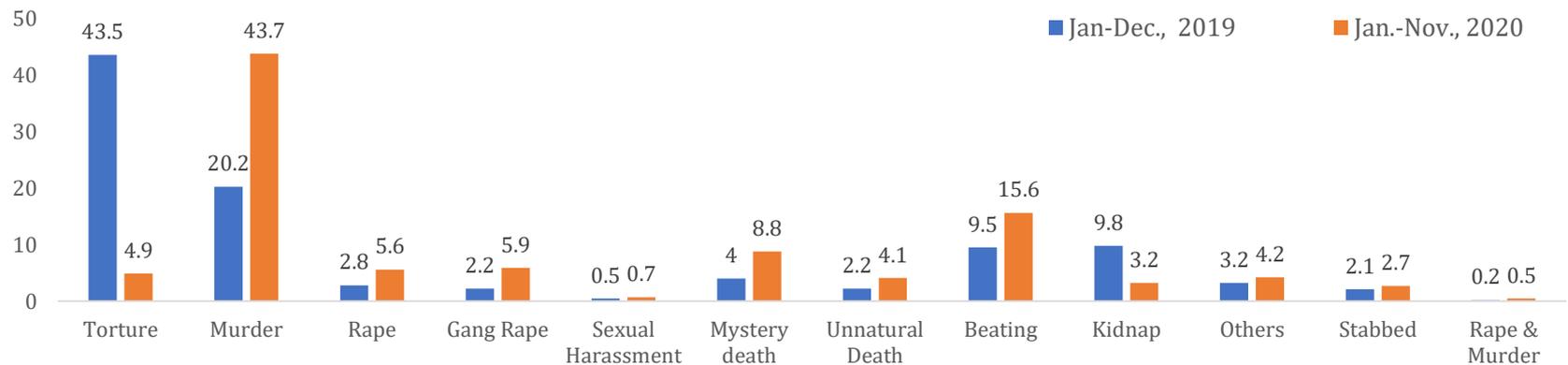
- Due to the fall in income, the incidence of poverty has increased in the country
 - According to CPD (2020), the **head-count poverty rate has increased** from 20% in FY2017 to 33% in FY2020
 - Sen (2020) indicated that if the income of working people in urban and rural areas declined by 80% and 20%, respectively, the **poverty level is likely to increase by 9.1%**
 - These caused a generation of **new poor** by **16.38 million to join** in the second quarter of 2020
 - **Income of the workers' families has dropped sharply**, although most workers' families have more than one earning member (New Age, 2020)
 - Low-income workers' families confronted different types of **financial difficulties** (CPD, 2020)
 - **Inability to pay house rent** (63% of surveyed workers), **unpaid utility bills** (39%), unpaid school fees (36%) & inability to send money back to village (57%)
 - BILS (2020) found 47% of urban slum residents and 32% of total residents reported **having reduced food intake**
 - 67% of urban slum dwellers and 32% of rural residents have used a part of their savings to meet the needs of the family
 - About 59% of female entrepreneurs were **forced to use their savings** to maintain livelihood and 23% depended on other sources for loan (Asia Foundation, 2021)

2. COVID-affected Sectors & Worker-groups in Bangladesh: Public Policy Responses

2.6 Harassment against Workers

- Harassment against workers **marginally declined** due to closure of workplace and limited movement of people during the first half of 2020
 - Some types of **violence against workers had increased** particularly murder, rape and spousal violence against workers

Figure 2: Incidence of Violence against Workers during Pre- and Covid Period (%)



2.7 Policy support for workers in addressing the vulnerabilities

- Out of total stimulus package of **Tk.126,853 crore**, only **Tk.44,973 crore (35.4%)** is allocated for workers, entrepreneurs of SMEs, low-income farmers and small traders, targeted marginal people and unemployed and poor workers
 - Till October 2020, a **total of Tk. 25,457 crores had been disbursed**, which was 56% of the total allocated fund under the stimulus package

2. COVID-affected Sectors & Worker-groups in Bangladesh: Public Policy Responses

- Given the huge non-disbursed amount of allocated funds, a large pool of workers groups, self-employed, and small-scale entrepreneurs **could not benefit from it**
- However, the **allocated amount was not sufficient** against the requirement of support from the workers and entrepreneurs
- Female entrepreneurs have received targeted support under the stimulus package of **Tk.20,000 crore** for small, cottage and medium-sized enterprises
 - According to the daily Financial Express (2021), female entrepreneurs received over the **targeted amount (5.7%)** from the 12,400 crores disbursed so far under that package
 - A special fund for **salaries for workers** of export-oriented factories covered **65% of gross wages** for four months for the factories that are members of the respective associations (i.e. BGMEA, BKMEA)
- The cash **transfer support** was mainly received by the **urban poor (25%)** compared to that of the **rural poor (18%)**
 - Overall, the stimulus package reached **only 8% of the country's total employed population** during the crisis period

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- Trade unions are likely to play a crucial role in addressing workers' concerns
 - Unfortunately, the **majority of workers are not unionised** in the country – only **4.2% of the total labour force** are active trade union members
 - There are as many as **8551 trade unions, most of which are basic trade unions** (DoL, 2021)
- Trade union activities are observed in few sectors
 - **Transport (35.2%** of total workers involved in trade union-related activities), **RMG (11.6%), construction (6.9%)** and **jute (4.6%)**
- **During the covid pandemic**, trade union activities are **largely reflected in these sectors**, mainly through basic trade unions and federations
 - Such a **segmented form of trade union activities** was **unable to address** the concerns of workers who are mostly un-unionised

3.1 Workers as Active Players in Social Dialogues

- Various forms of social dialogues were found operational during the time of covid crisis
 - These social dialogues are in the forms of **tripartite, bi-partite discussion and negotiation at national, sectoral and regional levels**
 - Workers and trade unions organised demonstration with various demands

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- **Trade-union led initiatives:** One of the major organised efforts from the workers and trade unions of different sectors (SKOP) was placing **9 points demand** to the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE). These nine points include-
 - a) **Cancelling the decision to close the nationalised jute mills** and clearing the payment of all dues of workers for jute mills that have been reacquired by the government
 - b) **Modernising state-owned sugar mills** in consultation with the workers' representatives and by involving them in the process of modernisation and ensuring full payment of all workers
 - c) **Making airline, railway and other nationalised companies people-centric** by shifting from wrong policies, reducing corruption and by reducing corruption
 - d) **Taking measures for reducing the complicity for payment of retrenched /laid-off** of workers from closed mills and organisations due to covid pandemic; in this case, all workers should get appointment and identity cards as per articles of 5 and 19(4) of the Labour Act
 - e) **Establishing one corona testing centre**, isolation and quarantine facilities for workers in places where at least 1 lakh workers are working or staying
 - f) **Establishing social safety net for workers'** health and social welfare

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- g) Taking special initiatives and monitoring measures for operationalising workers' welfare fund and central fund to provide support for the retrenched workers of garments and other sectors
- h) Taking special measures to include foreign buyers to use their contribution in the central fund; considering the provision of 50% fund of the central fund to be allowed for emergency use, the government should allow using those funds for the well-being of the workers
- i) Addressing the complexity of compiling a list of workers in the informal sector; Tea and rubber plantation workers must be guaranteed a living wage, quality rations, medical facilities and land rights; planned measures should be taken to protect the leather industry and its products
- j) Ensuring the safety of doctors, nurses, medical personnel, all media personnel, law enforcement personnel, security services, cleaners, road and water transport operators, sailors, helpers, and haulage workers
- k) Ensuring all private institutions and informal sector workers, employees getting unusual disaster/risk allowances
- l) Stopping laying-off of or retrenchment of workers in industrial factories; and
- m) Making a list of returning migrant workers and taking steps to help and rehabilitating them

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- The trade unions of the inland cargo services placed 11-point demand to the government
- Overall, those nine point-demands have covered largely the concerns of workers related to the covid-19 pandemic
 - However, the nine-point demands have been made public after six months (in September, 2020) since the pandemic was detected in March, 2020
 - Such proposals should be placed to the government much earlier during the pandemic's early phase (April-May, 2020)
- Not many visible initiatives have been undertaken based on the nine point-demand except preparing and circulating a report by the DIFE regarding the state of workers working in different industrial clusters
- Some of the demands particularly related to workers of state-owned enterprises did not emerge during the covid-19 pandemic but have consequences for some actions undertaken by the government during the time of the crisis

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- A number of workers organisations – such as IndustriAll Bangladesh Council (IBC), National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) undertook different activities
 - Organised procession, blockade, and demonstration favouring different demands of workers, including no harassment of workers during the crisis period
 - Attended meetings organised by public organisations (MoLE and MoHA) and private organisations (BGMEA)
- In some instances, representatives of workers' organisations boycotted the meetings when the decisions taken against the workers
 - These national organisations participated in meetings with international trade unions such as Global Union, international brands and expressed their protest against the cancellation of orders made by the buyers/brands
 - Special discussion sessions were arranged with the participation of female workers about ILO convention 190 on anti-harassment
 - Trade unions, along with workers, protested the government's decision to shut down the state-owned jute mills without proper consultation with the workers during the pandemic
 - Trade unions tried to work with the MoLE with the demand for the jute mills' opening; however, the ministry did not take notice of the trade unions' demand

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- **Worker related organizations' initiatives:** The organisations working on workers and labour rights issues, such as the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), have arranged **a number of discussion meetings**
 - With **different public and private organisations**, including the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Ministry of Commerce (MoC), Ministry of Food (MoF) and Ministry of Finance (MoF)
- These meetings were attended by **representatives of employers and different workers organisations**
 - Discussed various worker related concerns such as **reduction of workers' wages, laying off of workers and retrenchments of workers**
- With the **ILO's support**, **a common position paper** was prepared with the **demands of the workers** and was **distributed to the government** and the private sector
- A **series of webinars** were arranged on key issues in the labour market, such as **employment, occupational safety and health (OSH), and the challenges of migrant workers**
- By attending meetings organised by the government, the **job security of workers has been strongly raised**

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- **Government-led Tri-partite Initiatives:** The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) has formed **16 Crisis Management Committees (CMC)**
 - By including representatives of different government offices (DIFE, DoL), representatives of workers' organisations and employers' associations
- The **CMC were instructed to visit factories** where different kinds of irregularities have been reported and were given the responsibility to solve those issues
 - However, the **CMC were found active at the initial phase of the crisis period.**
 - In some instances, the **committee could not solve the problem due to a lack of contact with the owners or their representatives**
- **SKOP representatives met with the CMC to ensure taking measures** in support of workers by putting pressure on the **owners to clear the dues of workers**
- **DIFE officially announced that about 30,000 workers were laid off**, although the government has instructions for not laying off/retrenched workers while availing the subsidised credit support
 - **SKOP with the support of the CMC ensured dues of workers of a factory (Dragon Sweaters Company)**

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- According to a number of respondents of the KIIs, except 2/3 CMCs, **most of the CMC were not effectively functional during the crisis period**
 - Trade Unions' representatives were **not included in the process of selecting potential recipients of public support, distributing the support** among the recipients and monitoring the function of the distribution-related activities
 - The **role of the CMC was frustrating** in the sense that it **could not ensure support to the eligible workers** in a number of cases
 - According to the DIFE representatives, the **organisation has tried to ensure compliance standards** in the factories during the crisis period through undertaking inspections as much as possible
- The **MoLE has organised a number of tri-partite discussions** in order to **fix workers' wages** considering the challenges confronted by the enterprises during the crisis period
 - Based on the discussion, the wages were fixed to be 60-65% of gross wages for four months when factories received subsidised credit support from the government
 - The **guideline for maternity benefit for eligible workers has been set** by the DIFE. However, the **guidelines were not properly implemented**
- The **allocation of Tk.1258 crore to distribute** among 50 lakh households who are marginalised was well-appreciated
 - **Lack of a comprehensive database, poor detection process, poor administration and monitoring** – were major weaknesses. About 30% remain undisbursed

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- The **crisis of returnee migrant workers** has been discussed at the **tri-partite level**
 - In **partnership with ILO**, BEF has been working with **National Skill Development Authority** to provide skill development training to returnee migrants
 - In case of potential migrants, **BEF proposed to the NSDA to sign a "G to G" agreement with the sourcing countries for mutual recognition of local skill development training certificates** – so that locally trained workers with their certificates would be able to get skill-oriented jobs in those countries
- **Overall Observations:** Major progress in the social dialogue process is as follows.
 - **Income protection for workers by undertaking quick action** through crisis management committees
 - **Putting pressure on factories not to harass or retrench workers**, particularly pregnant workers
 - **Jointly monitoring factories** where crisis emerged
- Bangladesh's trade unions have **limited scope for being functional**
 - Despite the rise in workers' employment, trade union activities either stalled or declined in different sectors
 - Activities of the trade unions have **further confined to humanitarian issues**
 - Activities related to **workers' entitlements and rights were very few**
 - It is alleged that **government officials were not fully cooperative** in the tripartite discussions to provide sufficient attention to workers' demands
 - Consequently, **factory management did not take those into consideration** and thereby not enforced properly

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- It is alleged that the space for undertaking activities by trade unions has narrowed down during the COVID period
 - Lack of cooperation from government authorities and employers has constrained trade unions to work on their right-based activities
 - Moreover, the official decisions have been taken without much consultation and discussion with workers; rather, those were enforced through official announcements

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

3.2 Bipartite social dialogue between trade unions and employers and their organisations

- ***Bipartite discussion between trade unions and employers organisations:*** Since March 2020, over 30 bipartite discussions took place, which were arranged by **employers' organisations (BGMEA/BKMEA) and different workers organisations**
 - Major agenda of those meetings were to ensure **timely payment of workers' dues and payment of their festival bonuses** etc.
 - **Employers requested the workers' representative** to be supportive as employers were in difficulties due to lack of production orders
 - **Workers' organisations** such as the national garment workers federation (NGWF) **negotiated with the employers' association (BGMEA) to ensure unpaid salary** and compensation for workers
 - **IndustriAll Bangladesh Council (IBC) attended meetings** with employers' organisation such as BGMEA on a regular basis with the demand for **ensuring full payment for workers** during the lockdown period
 - IBC, in collaboration with BGMEA, put pressure on the factory management and thereby pursued them to take initiatives **against harassment of female workers and retrenchments of pregnant workers**
- A number of **complaints have been made** from the workers' side
 - These include **retrenchment of more female workers, disruptions in accessing maternity benefits and pressurised the workers to receive a lower level of wages** in case of reemploying at the same factory
- While **admitting the weaknesses, BEF indicated that those incidences did not take** place across the board rather those happened randomly

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF) usually organises **networking meetings** with workers and trade union representatives to discuss worker-related issues and challenges and try to find out possible way out
 - Unfortunately, **such events did not occur during the crisis-period** due to difficulty arranging the event physically and organising online activities
- Employers **positively acknowledged the role of trade union** during the covid pandemic to improve understanding between employers and workers
 - Workers like employers took into cognisance of the **challenges of employers due to the cancellation of orders** and lack of cash in hand
- **Employers extended support to workers and small entrepreneurs:** BEF, BGMEA, and BKMEA have **encouraged their member enterprises to take positive measures** by not laying off/retrenched workers, paying salaries etc.
 - Similarly, **employers of the leather sectors have been encouraged to pay salaries/wages**. Employers of the garments sector have been a major partner in implementing the European Union's cash support (Tk.3000 per worker per month for three months)
- However, the **list of unemployed workers could not be prepared properly due to lack of cooperation from the employers** as well as technical difficulties in identifying retrenched workers (e.g. lack of having an original NID to some workers, reemployed a section of unemployed workers etc.)
 - While the actual unemployment from the garments factories was rather high (3.5 lac according to CPD (2021)), only 27,000 were reported to be listed, of which only 7.5 thousand received the support

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- According to the stakeholders, the support of Tk.3000 under the social safety net programme for the RMG workers is a positive contribution from the German/EU countries
 - **BEF requested international NGOs** to extend support during the crisis period; however, the response was quite modest
 - Even the **ILOs' global call for action arranged partial support** during November-December, 2020 when the initial crisis period was ended
- It was reported in the discussion that about 26,500 workers had been reemployed in the RMG factories either earlier or in new factories
 - However, the **majority of workers were reinstated in the job at lower wages** compared to the earlier wages; only in few cases workers reinstated in their earlier wages
 - NGWF, in a number of instances, **protested against such a situation**, although the success from such initiatives was very few
 - IBC had arranged a discussion with BGMEA on similar issues along with pressing to recruit new workers
- With regard to workers safety in the workplace, **SKOP demanded an isolation centre** for workers in each factory and necessary health measures
 - **Regular health updates of covid patients** among workers were also demanded. However, such demands have not been addressed by the employers or employers' association

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- NGWF arranged a discussion meeting with BGMEA and placed a number of proposals
 - These include maintaining social distance in the workplace by placing machineries with sufficient spaces, workers should be disinfected at the entrance of the factories, **recruitment of one doctor and two nurses in each factory to monitor covid incidences** and to take measures for covid affected patients, ensuring availability of medicine at the factory premises and introducing three different time periods for entering the factory premises
 - **IBC** demanded providing the **death record of workers from** the associations (i.e. BGMEA and BKMEA)
- The success in case of Bangladesh **is limited only** on better understanding between the two parties in terms of raising demands from the workers' end
- The success observed in other countries in different areas, was largely absent in Bangladesh
 - **Joint statements and proposals** to lobby government on various issues, **joint requests** to governments, enhanced measures discussed and implemented by social partners to ensure the safety and health of workers, additional benefits have been granted to specific categories of workers, **memorandums of understanding** and collective bargaining agreements etc

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

3.3 Bilateral interactions between governments and trade unions

- ***Enforcement of labour laws properly:*** Workers raised 9-points demand on different issues where specific demand was raised on **Sections 5 and 19 (4) (5) of the Labor Act** in order to ensure providing all the workers, including the transferee, the **identity card** stating the date of appointment
 - Such a measure would help retrenched/laid-off workers to get their dues without any complexity
 - One of the demand was to undertake special support measures for the unemployed workers based on workers' welfare fund and central fund
- **A number of sections under the labour act need to be amended**, which does not allow the workers to organise and protest any unlawful activities
 - These include **section on responsibility for doing unlawful activities** or disorderly activities which are not properly defined
- **Workers' health safety guideline prepared by the DIFE:** Considering the health emergency of RMG workers, DIFE, with the support of the ILO, prepared the health safety guideline and provided necessary training for workers in different industrial clusters
 - While the **factories trained their workers about the guideline**, its implementation **at the factory level was limited**

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- Health and safety measures maintained by factories have declined overtime (Moazzem et al., 2021)
 - **BILS kept a record** of number of casualties among workers due to the pandemic
 - The NGWF proposed that workers who died for the pandemic should receive compensation similar to that received by the Rana Plaza victims' families, which should be paid by employers, buyers, and the government
 - However, those demands were not followed up later, particularly due to a lack of casualties among the workers
 - **IBC sent letters to Workers' Welfare Foundation** to support the families of the covid victims
- **Workers raised their demands through procession: SKOP made public procession** by arranging human chain, rallies across the country with the demand of workers' health and safety in the workplace
 - Those demands had little influence on government in taking positive decision
- **Government took support from the workers organisations:** Both DIFE and DoL took support from the workers' organisations for raising awareness
 - **Government provided two-point instructions regarding** ensuring workers safety
 - These include factories maintaining proper safety protocol in case of opening and operating factories and providing necessary number of masks and arrangement of hand sanitiser for the workers
 - Trade unions **complained about a lack of cooperation** from the employers as well as from the government's side in enforcing those measures

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- **Capacity building and awareness-raising programmes are arranged:** BILS arranged four **webinars on four issues: employment-related, occupational safety and health-related, migrant worker-related**
- Along with ILO, a virtual training manual for ensuring workplace safety has been related
- The DIFE has undertaken a project called '**Gender Equality and Women Empowerment**' in 2009 with a view to building awareness against gender-based violence, especially in tea gardens, leather and RMG factories
 - A **total of 200 such training sessions were organised** which ended in 2020

3.4 Trade Union Activities in Other Countries

- Trade unions across the world have been active in undertaking various initiatives in addressing issues and concerns related to workers
 - According to ILO (2021), **108 countries out of 133 countries applied different types of social dialogue instruments** as a mechanism to address the covid pandemic in achieving consensus on targeted measures to protect workers and enterprises
 - While Asian **countries are ahead in terms of undertaking tri-partite**, bipartite and bilateral dialogues, these **countries are also ahead of violating workers/trade union rights** (ILO, 2021)
 - In other words, the **higher rates of violations might** cause a higher number of social dialogues in Asian countries

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- Trade unions of different South Asian countries have taken initiatives considering their capacity and areas of priority during the pandemic
 - However, most of those initiatives have been undertaken from humanitarian point of view compared to that from rights point of view
 - Different forms of social dialogue mechanisms had been functioning for different issues in these countries
- In India, the tri-partite discussion had taken place on a number of important issues; however, most of the discussions did not come out with concrete deliverables, particularly the demands raised by the trade unions
 - The discussion had been confined to humanitarian and workers' entitled benefit issues, including ensuring workers' wages, opening up factories, addressing the challenges confronted by the MSMEs
 - The discussion lacked focus on the sustainable recovery of businesses and workers. No agreement is signed between the government, employers and workers on any issue
 - Bipartite discussion took place between employers and the government with regard to opening up factories and legally enforceable payment to workers
 - The High Court of India provided directives in favour of employers that no pressure to be created to employers with regard to opening up factories and payment of workers' wages in case those are legally binding
 - Trade unions arranged procession across the country where senior political leaders and worker leaders participated, and even a number of trade union leaders were arrested who were later released

3. Trade Union Responses to the COVID Crisis

- In Sri Lanka, trade unions were able to sign a contract with the government under which no workers were forced to be retrenched
 - As per the agreement, workers will receive 50% of their usual gross wages during the crisis period. No workers were forced to work more during the covid pandemic period
 - A major drive undertaken by the government was to ensure the livelihood need of workers during this crisis period by creating employment opportunities through alternate means
 - Pakistan, likewise India, organised bipartite and tripartite discussions between workers, employers and government on different worker-related issues
- Unlike other South Asian countries, trade unions in Bangladesh were relatively less vocal about the demand of the workers
 - Trade unions took much time to set their strategies which reflects their deficit in taking prompt action
- At least three weaknesses have been identified as regards trade union-related activities during this crisis period
 - *First, local trade unions did not pay sufficient attention to the global contexts* particularly there are limited knowledge and exercise at the local level about the global level preparations and initiatives regarding workers' rights
 - Often the demands raised, procession arranged, and initiatives undertaken were particularly focused on local/sectoral perspectives

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

- *Second*, the nine-point demands made by the SKOP **could not make enough traction** to local stakeholders, including the government and the employers
 - Trade unions should follow up their demands by creating committees/sub-committees with representatives of different government offices and employers organisations
- *Third*, trade unions were not **able to create adequate linkages** with workers regarding worker-related demands and to undertake activities and create pressure on the government and the private sector with the support of mass-scale workers
- Hence, trade unions **need to revisit their strategies, approaches** and activities while formulating future policies and strategies

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

- Trade unions need to appreciate the focus and strategies of the medium and long-term policies to design the policy proposals
- The important policy documents that need to be consulted in this regard include the National Jobs Strategy, 8th Five Year Plan,, National Social Security Strategies (NSSS), and National Priority Targets (NPTs) of the SDGs
 - The key analytical perspective in preparing a trade union policy proposal is how employment, gender and social security issues are addressed in those documents
 - Based on that, how trade unions prioritise their initiatives and activities and which types of social dialogues would be effective in these regards

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

National Jobs Strategy

- The draft National Jobs Strategy has designed employment-related initiatives under a **three-pillar approach at macroeconomic and sectoral levels**
 - The 1st pillar titled '**boosting jobs that result from output growth**' focuses on
 - a) more **inclusive monetary policy for job growth** in every sector that implies easy access to credit for the agriculture sector, SME sector etc.
 - b) **restructuring the discriminatory fiscal incentive** policies that can improve the other sectors as well as RMG and export-oriented sector; and
 - c) **boosting up the government policy** implementation process
 - The 2nd pillar, titled '**active labour market policies (ALMPs)** for boosting job growth' focuses on –
 - a) **emphasising and enhancing labour-related policies** through training and skill development;
 - b) the **effectiveness of training and skill development programmes**; and
 - c) **enriching women employment opportunities**.
 - The 3rd pillar, titled '**strategies for safe migration at low cost and for reintegrating returning workers**' aims –
 - a) **bilateral contract with the destination countries**;
 - b) **reduction of cost of migration**; and
 - c) preparing **database on returnee migrants**

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

- A major challenge for National Jobs Strategy is to address a **large number of unemployed people** who lost their jobs during the COVID pandemic and those who need employment on a priority basis
 - Unlike creating opportunities for the newly recruited people in the labour force, this strategy will address **jobs of people, including those of returnee migrants, through decent jobs**
 - These people include **both low-skilled people working** in different informal services and manufacturing activities; at the same time, these people include educated professionals involved in different formal service sector related activities
 - Accommodating these people in jobs on a sustained basis is a daunting task. According to the trade union representatives, job creation would not meet the purpose rather, a **focus should be made on creating decent work**
 - **Skill gap, particularly maintaining international standards**, is a major challenge that could be difficult to fill up by vocational training only
- The National Jobs Strategy related activities need to be **customised by the trade unions according to their strategies and modalities** of dialogues for immediate, short, medium and long term period
 - These activities need to be customised into two categories – **first, by addressing immediate challenges** and helping workers towards rebound and recovery and second, by **supporting the workers towards long term development**

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

4.1 8th FYP on employment, gender, social security

- The 8th FYP, which will be implemented during 2021–2025, put special focus on employment, gender and social security issues
- Under the broad theme of making the growth pro-poor and inclusive, the plan projected an 8.0% GDP growth over the period of FY2021–25
- According to the plan, a **pro-poor and inclusive growth** during this period will depend on three factors such as: a) **growth in employment**; b) **improvement in labour productivity**; and c) **increase in real wages**
- The critical areas will be **to stimulate labour-intensive and export-oriented manufacturing-led growth, promote agriculture diversification, infuse dynamism in MSMEs, strengthen the modern service sector**, and promote non-factor services that encourage **ICT-based entrepreneurship and strengthen overseas employment**
- The projected employment will accommodate the total additional labour force to be joined the labour market during FY2021–25 (7.81 million) with excess employment of 3.52 million
- The policies to be highlighted in this regard include macroeconomic stability, fiscal policy for equitable growth, savings and capital accumulation-driven growth model, knowledge-based economy, trade-led growth, exchange rate policy, safety net and social protection programme and the critical role of the governance

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

- The addressed issues of the 8th five-year plan aim to enhance employment, 4IR, the role of the service sector (especially transport and health sectors), and gender strategy and so on
- Based on such initiatives, the 8th FYP proposed strategies such as improving the incentive policies for boosting private investment, increasing public sector investment
 - For infrastructure development, completing all ongoing major transport and communication-related projects located in urban centres, especially Dhaka and Chittagong, upgrading and expanding district tertiary public health care facilities and increasing women's economic benefits, and creating an enabling environment for women's advancement etc.
- Trade unions should take a due attention to the strategies highlighted in this important policy documents and should prepare their policy strategies with effective engagement with the concerned ministries and departments and with the private sector in undertaking targeted measures with a view to achieving a significant outcome
- From gender point of view, five strategic areas have been identified in the 8th FYP
 - These include- (a) improvement of women's human capabilities through extending a number of services; (b) increasing women's economic benefits by enhancing their participation and ensuring economic benefits;

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

- (c) enhancing women's voice and agency by promoting their leadership in public and private sphere; (d) creating an enabling environment for women's advancement by strengthening gender equity; and (e) enhancing mother and child benefit programmes through provisioning cash and in-kind transfer.
- These would require actions in the areas of – (a) creating short- and long-term opportunities for decent employment; (b) generating employment in public and private sectors at home and abroad; (c) expanding employment opportunities both at home and abroad; (c) creating opportunities for higher value self-employment; (d) promoting business development services for entrepreneurs and (e) improving financial inclusion; (f) improving work environment; (g) addressing violence and sexual harassment;
- (h) ensuring access to local, national and international markets; (i) promoting higher value activities in agro- and industrial value chains; (j) accessing technology and information on upcoming opportunities in ICT; (k) establishing a conducive legal and regulatory environment for gender equality; (l) providing Infrastructure and communication services for women;
- (m) improving institutional capacity, accountability and oversight; and (m) increase protection and resilience from crisis and shocks. Trade unions should expand their social dialogue mechanism with the participation of workers, the private sector and the government by pointing out the policy actions in addressing different gender-related concerns.

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

- Social safety net and social protection programmes, according to the 8th FYP, will be continued through safety nets, social funds, microcredit and targeted cash and in-kind programmes, especially in health and education
 - Given the weaknesses in the programmes in the past, the safety-net programmes will be enforced through better governance by strengthening democratic accountability and transparency
- The targeted strategies include- (a) enhanced social protection system allocation in view of COVID 19; (b) expanding mother and child benefit programmes (MCBP); (c) implementation of NSSS recommendation on school stipend; (d) intervention for the betterment of adolescent girls; (e) expansion of the VGD programme; (f) expansion of programmes for the disabled citizen; (g) allowances for freedom fighters; (h) reaching out to the socially excluded population; (i) introducing social insurance programmes; (j) introducing insurance for working-age people; and (k) introducing contributory pension programme
- Trade union should give due attention to the new and existing programmes to be implemented during the next five years under different social safety net schemes.
 - Given the slow recovery of the businesses and the rise in poverty among the working people, a strong role needs to be played by trade union to ensure social safety net facilities for the workers

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

National Social Security Strategy

- By taking a lifecycle approach, the national social security strategy delineates **five different types of strategies**. These include –
 - a) **Consolidating a lifecycle system of social security** which covers support for children, working-age people, the pension system for elderly, social security for disabilities and affordable healthcare
 - b) **Social security for the socially excluded groups**, which include social security for excluded groups, social security for urban poor
 - c) **Consolidation of food transfer programme**
 - d) **Consolidation of special programme** and small schemes; and
 - e) **Strengthening resilience in the face of covariate shocks**
- The pandemic recalls that social security programmes currently being implemented are inadequate to meet different target groups' needs
 - Special focus should be made on the **immediate introduction of social insurance/unemployment insurance** for retrenched and laid-off workers during the crisis period
 - Bangladesh needs to take measures **to ratify ILO conventions 102 and 190 which are related to the minimum age of workers and anti-harassment to the workers**

4. National Policies on Employment, Gender and Social Safety Net and Role of Trade Unions

- Trade unions should take initiatives in consultation with the government and the private sector to make the social security programmes legally binding
 - The unions could formulate their strategies considering the social safety net programmes that match the needs of the workers and their families
 - Such initiatives of consultation could be undertaken both at a bilateral level between government and workers organisations and at the tri-partite level

4.4 National Priority Targets (NPT) under SDGs

- The government has set 39+1 national priority targets out of 169 SDG targets which will get special focus in terms of implementation of SDGs
 - Among those, a number of the indicators are directly related to employment, gender and social security point of view
 - Relevant indicators include NPT 14, NPT 15, NPT16, NPT 21, NPT 22 and NPT 23
- Gender-related indicators focus on rising female labour force participation to 50%, reducing married women who are aged below 15 years (to 0%) and aged below 18 years (to 10%)
 - In case of decent employment point of view, the key indicators are reduction of unemployment rate (below 3%) and reduction of youth population not in education, employment or training (10%)
 - Since the government is prioritising those indicators, the trade union could strategise those issues through necessary initiatives with the government, employers and workers

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- It is experienced that the global crisis in the past **caused basic structural deficits** which had a **detrimental effect on industrial relations, production management, labour relations, the relation between state**, private sector and workforce and thereby tri-partite relations (Webster et al., 2011)
 - Most importantly, the **'decent work deficit'** further widened during the crisis period, and it was observed during this crisis as well
- **Labour institutions and instruments** should take initiatives **beyond 'business as usual' initiatives** to handle these unusual challenges –**traditional strategies of organising, bargaining and regulation would not be sufficient** in these regards (Conor Cradden, 2011)
 - Trade unions should **not only focus on collective bargaining** as the means to address the decent work deficit; rather, they should **combine their activities on other advocacy tools for policy reforms** at the national and international levels.
- **Better tax regulations, greater transparency and public reporting requirements**, and state protection of workers alongside the pursuit of traditional unions strategies of organising, collective bargaining, information and consultation (Thomas, 2011) are found to be essential tools
- **Transnational enterprises have a major role to play in this context** – signing transnational framework agreement (TFAs) in promoting labour rights found to be better functioned when national-level rules are weakly enforced (Schomann, 2011)

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- In Bangladesh, workers across all economic activities have been worst affected due to the COVID pandemic
 - However, the high risk and severity impact sectors are those which are relatively labour-intensive in nature, such as manufacturing, construction, transport, wholesale and retail trade, food and accommodation services and personal services
 - An overwhelming share of workers working in these sectors is unorganised and not being part of any trade union-related initiatives and activities
 - With the rebounding and resilience, a large section of these workers has been able to recover through their employment and income
 - However, the recovery level was highly uneven where informal sector workers, self-employed, and SMEs were slow
 - Moreover, the second wave of covid-19 pandemic is likely to delay these sections of workers and enterprises' recovery
- Thus, trade union policy strategy should focus on the world of work, particularly highlighting the workers of those who are organised as well as those who are unorganised
 - The achievements in the form of different types of social dialogues in the country are rather limited compared to the overall performance of trade unions in other countries (ILO, 2021)

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- The trade unions should set their strategies on three areas.
 - a) Social dialogues addressing short term challenges
 - b) Social dialogues addressing medium/long term challenges; and
 - c) Strengthening the social dialogues mechanism across different sectors

5.1 Social dialogues addressing short term challenges

- ***Tri-partite discussion and agreement for job and income security:*** Different tripartite discussions and negotiations that have been undertaken during this crisis period have ensured limited success in favour of workers and MSMEs regarding coping with the risks and rebounding and recovery from the crisis
 - As a result, the workers, self-employed and MSMEs were disproportionately rebounded and lagged behind compared to those of other categories
 - The second wave of the covid pandemic is likely to delay their recovery further.
 - In this backdrop, trade unions should **strengthen their tri-partite discussion and negotiations with employers and government with regard to retaining the jobs and ensuring workers' wages**
 - In this context, the **modality of negotiation and bargaining will put pressure through 'insider bargaining' as well as the 'concessional bargaining' approaches**
 - Such tri-partite discussion should take **place more at the sectoral levels, particularly those where workers' concentration is high, including RMG, transportation and construction**
 - **Joint statements could be released with the agreement on protection of jobs, income and prohibition of lay off**

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- ***Tri-partite discussion and agreement for health care and workplace safety:***
Workers' health and safety are in a vulnerable state due to the second wave of the pandemic
 - The health and safety protocol prepared by the DIFE with the ILO's support has been weakly maintained in factories
- **Trade unions should take a proactive** role with regard to organising a tri-partite discussion with the lead of the MoLE **for proper monitoring and enforcement of OSH protocol**
 - Such a discussion will come with an understanding of how factories will ensure workplace safety and workers health
 - The trade unions **should create pressure for introducing punitive measures** for factories where health protocols are not maintained properly
- It is important to ensure **free testing facilities for workers** with cough, fever and flu-like symptoms at the nearby localities
 - Workers who are detected as covid positive **should get leave from the factories** with eligible benefits
- Based on that discussion, the **MoLE/DIFE will circulate necessary instructions** for workplace safety for different sectors

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- ***Tripartite discussion and joint statement on job-security for youth, female, disabled and marginal groups:*** The COVID crisis has disproportionately affected youth, female, disabled and marginal groups in terms of securing their jobs, income, and social safety net support and treatment facilities for covid patients
- Trade unions should put forward issues and challenges of the above-mentioned vulnerable groups with concerned ministries such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of labour and employment, the Ministry of Commerce and departments such as DIFE and DoL
 - Joint statements should be released with how the interests of the different marginal groups will be ensured
- In this context, various policy documents such as 8th FYP, national jobs strategy, national social SafetyNet strategies could provide necessary policy directions
 - Trade union will put forward suggestions for the requirement of training and capacity development and requirement of necessary budgetary allocations

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- ***Tripartite discussion and joint statement on financial support for enterprises:*** Different categories of enterprises, particularly those MSMEs, need targeted support to cope with the risks and rebound from the crisis
 - Given the difficulties confronted by these enterprises in accessing the monetary policy support, innovative modalities and instruments need to be suggested by the entrepreneurs and trade unions
 - It is also important to provide estimates of financial support required by different categories of enterprises
 - Trade unions **should place concrete proposals about alternate mechanisms and modalities for disbursing financial supports to these** enterprises
 - In this connection, a technical discussion needs to be carried out with other important stakeholders, including **bankers, business associations**, NGOs, etc
 - Based on discussion at tri-partite levels, **a joint statement could be issued as regards the urgency of support and modalities** of extending those support to the enterprises.

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- ***Tripartite discussion and agreement on dispute resolution:*** The CMCs need to be made functional
 - The limited success of CMCs in dispute resolution indicates that a large section of workers has been deprived of getting the support of these committees
 - In this context, a **joint statement could be released, which will assure public reporting of the role and activities of CMCs** with regard to dispute resolution
 - The activities of the **CMC should be reported publicly on a regular** basis
- ***Bipartite social dialogues between trade unions, employers and their organisations:*** Trade unions and employers of different sectors will discuss at bipartite level with regard to the demands of the workers, workplace safety and avoiding laying off/retrenchment of workers
 - **Both the parties jointly made a request to the government about different support** required for **SMEs and workers, including** subsidised credit support under the stimulus package and infrastructure and logistic facilities for testing of vaccines.
 - **Joint request should be made to the government** for an arrangement of support for workers under social safety net programme mainly for workers of different industrial clusters
 - **Trade unions and employers could jointly undertake measures raising awareness** among workers' health and safety protocol in the factories and workers.
 - In this context, **workers' participation committees (WPCs) could be effectively used** to better understand workers' challenges and undertake awareness-raising measures
 - Both the parties agree to ensure the effective operation of trade unions in the factories

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- ***Bilateral interactions between government and trade unions:*** Trade unions should further engage with the government on worker-related priority issues. The priority should be made on issues that are related to union members of different sectors
 - Given the crisis caused major damage to workers who are unorganised and work under different informal sectors, trade unions should prioritise their issues
 - Since a large part of informal and marginal workers fell below the poverty line, ensuring support under the social safety net needs to be ensured
 - Given the challenges confronted by the government in extending cash support to those informal and marginal workers earlier, **trade unions should suggest an innovative, effective and transparent mechanism for the distribution of cash support to those segments of the workers**
- ***Bilateral understanding on taking measures against violations of labour laws, ILO conventions and other rights:*** Since workers have been suffering from an increasing number of violations of labour rules, international labour standards, non-compliance with labour regulations related to lay-offs, working hours and payment wages etc., it is important for trade unions **to get an understanding from the government about the actions to be taken in these regards**

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- These incidences need to be reported publicly, and the actions taken by the government need to be made public for ensuring better transparency and accountability
 - Similarly, trade union needs to discuss with the government how factories should maintain OSH standards and protocol and how it is to be reported publicly
- The government will need to ensure that necessary measures have been taken against those who violate the compliance standards and that information will be reported on a regular basis
- Gender and sexual harassment-related issues need to be addressed through affirmative actions
 - In this context, BILS could provide necessary technical support to the DIFE and DoL in extending information on where different types of violations happened
- ***Bilateral discussion between governments and trade unions and official announcement against lay-off and retrenchment of workers:*** Trade unions will discuss with the government, particularly with the MoLE, regarding the protection of workers' jobs and income.
 - Based on that, it will request the government to make an official announcement regarding the protection of employment, workers' rights and ensured entitled benefits
 - In cases, entrepreneurs find it difficult to accommodate the entitled benefits of the workers, enterprises would be advised to ensure workers' jobs and a part of their income for a specified period

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

5.2 Social dialogues for medium/long term measures

- ***Better clarity and understanding about long term policies and possible areas of engagement of trade unions:*** Most of the economic and social policies have specific provisions which are related to the world of work and especially with workers
 - These policies include National Jobs Strategy, 8th FYP, SDGs and National Social SafetyNet Strategy (NSSS) etc.
- Often these policies presented the issues in a manner from where worker-related issues need to be extracted for proper interpretation and understanding
 - Moreover, a number of policy issues have implications and impact on workers and the world of work indirectly, such as macroeconomic and fiscal measures mentioned in the 8th FYP and National Jobs Strategy
- Trade unions need to **take an interest in these issues and ensure their deeper understanding of related issues** –
 - **How different strategies of each of the long-term** policies could influence the world of work
 - **What are the possible initiatives that would require** to be undertaken from trade union's side in order to protect workers' interest including jobs, wages, benefits, entitlements and gender equality and gender harassment etc

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- ***Tripartite discussion and joint statement on ensuring the interest of workers through implementing the long-term policies:*** Usually, policy papers are prepared taking input from different stakeholder through a number of consultation meetings, including those with employers and workers
 - However, implementation of these policy documents often found to be difficult due to a lack of action plan and lack of clarity about assigned authorities to undertake those actions. In case of the policy documents mentioned above, no specific action plan is stipulated (except NPTs of the SDGs).
 - Thus, it is important to discuss at the tripartite level on issues related to workers and the world of work and thereby identify a plan of action how those could be implemented by different public organisations with the support of private and workers organisations.
 - These discussions could take place at the sectoral level.
 - Therefore, **respective sectoral level joint statements could be announced, focusing on sustainable development, decent employment, OSH, workers' rights, and gender rights.**

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- ***Bilateral interactions between governments and trade unions:*** Based on the national social SafetyNet strategies, trade unions need to identify various support measures required for workers and their families under the provisions of social security for the working-age people, socially excluded groups, a food transfer programme, security for disabilities and affordable healthcare
 - Trade unions should negotiate with the government for unemployment insurance, employment injury insurance (EII) and health insurance programmes
 - Based on the discussion, the government will announce a time-bound action plan for introducing/implementing those programmes among the target groups of workers
 - In case of employment-related insurance schemes (social insurance, employment injury insurance), in-depth discussion and consultation with employers' associations, including Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF), will be required for further progress, thereby ensuring effective implementation

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

5.3 Strengthening the social dialogues mechanism across different sectors

- ***Working with government, employers and other stakeholders for signing agreements related to international labour and human rights:*** Bangladesh government needs to take proactive measures with regard to signing agreements on important human labour rights issues, **which include convention on minimum wage for entrance in the job market (C138) and convention on anti-harassment (C190)**
 - The government needs to take **necessary measures to establish anti-harassment committees** in factories as per the High Court's directives
 - Trade unions rights **need to be ensured at the factory level under the BLA**
 - Necessary initiatives need to be **taken to set up an industrial safety unit to address workplace safety-related issues** for all sectors
- ***Government will need to extend necessary support to broaden the trade union activities:*** Trade **union-related activities need to be widened** both in sectors where it is available and need to be introduced where it is at a very limited scale
 - Both **formal and informal sectors need to be targeted** to widen these activities
 - **National trade unions (i.e. federations) should design and develop an activity plan** for gradually extending trade union activities across major sectors and activities

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- Government **should support unionisation activities** in the country
 - **Employers should come forward to facilitate setting up** more trade unions in different sectors- **BEF should take a positive move in this case**
 - However, further discussion would be required about which issues will be dealt with at what levels, including wage-setting issue
 - The issue of **collective bargaining needs to be structured properly**
- ***Effective institutional mechanism is required to protect workers from violation of workers and trade union rights:*** Workers often deprived of getting proper treatment through an **in-house grievance system available** in the factories or the formal complaint mechanism available at the association level for dispute settlement
- The **labour courts, which are the last resort for workers**, often found inadequate in meeting the workers' demands **due to lengthy process**
- Since violation of workers' rights has increased during the covid pandemic, which would rise further in the coming days, ensuring effective operation of grievance mechanism within the factory, at the association level, and at the labour courts have become critically important
 - **Trade unions should raise these issues to the enterprises, associations, crisis management committees, and the MoLE**
- ***Trade Unions should focus on returnee migrant and migrant workers:*** Migrant workers are one of the major working population of the country which contributed significantly to the economy through sending remittance
 - They are found to be in one of the most vulnerable states due to having an absence of voice under trade unions

5. Trade Union Policy Strategies

- Returnee migrants who lost their jobs have been suffering most without adequate support
 - Trade unions should **raise their voice in their favour for signing a bilateral agreement with destination countries** in order to ensure legal support for aggrieved workers
 - Ensuring **social SafetyNet support for returnee migrant** workers
 - The **subsidised credit support under the stimulus package for returnee** migrants and their family members need to be distributed without major hassles for their reintegration– trade unions should raise voice in these regards
- ***Facilitating registration and functioning of trade unions at the factory levels:***
Often, trade unions complained about a lack of cooperation from the Department of Labour in the process of registering new trade unions
 - Despite developing standard operating procedure and online-based follow-up mechanism, applicants often complained about a weak governance system
 - **DoL needs to make the process transparent and make the responsible officers** accountable
 - In this context, **regular reporting of application status submitted**, applications in the process of review, and those that get registered need to be reported
 - Trade **unions should closely work with the MoLE as well as ILO in** order to make the process functional and effective

Thank you.