

Draft Concept Note

# Model Consulate



## Scaling consular services to migrants through partnership

Model Consulate aims to make consular services scalable and replicable ensuring impact and value for money.

At its very core, the concept is:

- **adaptive** – at every stage, evidence on usability will be collected to measure impact, scalability and value for money, and take lessons for improvement
- **inclusive** – to ensure gender-sensitive consular services
- **collective** – where government and international agencies, and CSOs from both sending and receiving countries will work in partnership for implementation and monitoring
- **government-led and CSO-supported** – while government agencies will carry out implementation at the field level, CSOs and development partners will collect feedback from migrants and provide additional support for improvement

### Context

To enhance consular services at the Embassies and High Commissions, and to improve the overall image of Bangladesh as a migration sending countries in the destination countries, several initiatives have been taken over the years by Bangladesh government and development organisations.

The Government of Bangladesh has been highly committed to attaining the global commitments on migration. The government, through the pledge ‘No One Behind’, is committed to take actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 where safe, orderly and regular migration has been a highlight. Bangladesh’s commitment to safe migration was further emphasized when the Prime Minister’s proposal for UN Global Compact on Migration was adopted in the 11<sup>th</sup> GFMD 2018 in Morocco. Since 2018,

Bangladesh government along with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and international bodies have made considerable progress to promote safe, orderly and skilled migration.

However, there still exists a gap in learning from the lessons and bringing positive changes based on the lesson learned for improving the overall consular services in the destination countries. The gap became more evident upon further investigations. In 2018, [we asked migrant workers to share their experiences and expectations from the Bangladesh High Commissions](#) through an online campaign using IID's migrants network, Bibhui Facebook page. The social media survey revealed that many of our workers, regardless of their status, face a wide array of problems at the embassies. Another recent rapid survey titled 'What do migrants talk about during pandemic?', carried out by IID reviewed 29 Facebook pages and groups and analysed 309 online public posts by the migrants to understand the needs of our migrants in the destination countries in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Analysis of these online discussion enabled IID to shed some light on the current situation of the migrants in the context of the pandemic and understand their concerns. The study reveals that the issue of support service is the second most talked-about topic among the migrants right now while lack of information remains the top discussed issues. As a result, improving the consular services needs to be revisited and requires practical interventions.

### **'Model Consulate' Conceptualisation**

To ensure delivery of quality services to Bangladeshi expatriates, the notion of setting up Model Consulates at the destination countries was coined at an IID policy dialogue in 2017. It was later acknowledged and discussed by members of the government, CSOs and NGOs through IID initiated programs including a [Policy Breakfast on Model High Commission, Consultation with the government](#) on improving services at the Bangladeshi Consulates.

### **Components of Model Consulate**

In consultation with government and non-government experts, the concept aims to scale up essential consular services through innovation and partnership approaches. In its implementation, a set of minimum viable services will be tested and explored in one or two consulates and then gradually scaled up on the basis of their measurability, impact, essentiality and scalability.

Three key characteristics of a Model Consulate are:

- 1) it encompasses adaptive management for bringing positive changes in consular services based on lesson learning in every step, scalability and value for money;
- 2) it emphasizes on partnership – mirroring GFMD's emphasis on cooperation between various stakeholders in both origin and host countries;

3) it ensures inclusiveness and gender-sensitive consular services.

The idea is to conceptualize a replicable model for consular services at the Embassies and High Commissions that can improve the services and governance of migration cycle—from recruitment to return and reintegration. For implementation of the ‘Model Consulate’ idea, we propose employing the ‘Build-Measure-Learn’ model. Firstly, outlining how to improve consular services, a manual of Model Consulate will be developed to establishing a Model Consulate. Then, one or more consulates will be selected for implementation of the concept using the manual. Then, for tracking the impact of the implementation, the selected consulates will be monitored, documented and evaluated over the years. Finally, using the lessons learned, the implementation of the idea will be scaled up.

In the implementation process, CSOs can provide support to the government agencies in two specific areas-

- **Information:** CSOs can provide necessary information support to the Labour Wing through the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment with evidenced-based data and research. The Minister particularly raised the issue of effective communication with the migrants during the 12<sup>th</sup> GFMD. In regard to information gap, there are two specific areas need to be addressed: taking the information to the doorstep and lack of coordinated and absorbable data about the lacking in generic consular services. A survey conducted by on ‘Youth Economic Opportunity’ among 1195 respondents from 27 Technical Training Centres reveals that 7% male and 9% of the aspirants had not education. Understandably, communicating effectively with a migrant population with no education can indeed become a challenging task. In bridging the information gap, CSOs can play an effective role. For example, using the data collected from the study ‘What do migrants talk about during pandemic?’, IID has created a Q&A database. With support from the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, IID will be able to ensure the accuracy of the information and improve the database for the migrants.
- **Grievance Management:** While there are large scale grievance management systems in place at the moment and several initiatives are being carried out by different CSOs, the impacts of these existing systems are still arguable. In this context, initiatives by CSOs in two specific areas at smaller scale can significantly help enhancing the existing grievance management systems:
  - I) establishing out-bound call centre in Bangladesh that will allow making random and periodic call to the migrants to check if they are alright. This will be particularly helpful for checking up on domestic women migrant workers who often do not have access to phone. Bangladesh government may come to an arrangement that enforces the employers to give the women workers access to periodic phone calls. Also, when the workers will not be accessible via phones, the foreign consulate will enquire to the employers.

- II) ensuring data inter-operability and standardisation of basic privacy while collecting data from the migrants. This issue has already been highlighted in the 2020 GFMD Regional Consultations: Abu Dhabi Dialogue and Bali Process. While there are different initiatives in place by CSOs, there is a lack of coordination in data collection. A standardised method of data collection can significantly help in creating a larger database for future.

Also, consulates do not only represent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rather the entire country to the outside world. Different ministries, government agencies and other international organisations are constantly affiliated with consulates at different capacities. As a result, intra-ministerial coordination and public-private partnership can also play a key role in developing the consular services.

### **Progress So Far**

Since the inception of the idea, several steps have been identified to explore the possibility of setting up a few model consulates and IID has working on the idea in consultation with different govt agencies, ministries and BMET, with support from DFID, PROKAS. As part of the process, the concept was discussed and acknowledged during a [side event at the 12<sup>th</sup> GFMD held in Quito with participation of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).

We have also seen encouraging acknowledgment of the concept from government's side for further development of the concept. IID shared the idea of establishing a migrant-friendly Model Consulate with the newly appointed Ambassador of Bangladesh to Jordan, Nahida Sobhan at a [meeting](#) early this year. The idea was well received, and we are grateful that the Ambassador expressed her interest to work towards the concept and asked to share the framework of the Model Consulate with her. We now hope to get support from the government to explore the possibility of implementing the Model Consulate concept in at least one other country.

### **Going Forward**

We now, therefore, humbly submit the concept of 'Model Consulate' to further the development and implementation of the concept by piloting it in at least two countries. Then, through collective efforts, impacts of the implementation will be monitored and measured over the period of next two years and eventually, utilising the lessons learned, the implementation will be scaled up.