Tripartite National Conference on Green Jobs: The Way Forward
Ruposhi Bangla Hotel, Dhaka, 18 September 2011

Summary

A one day national conference titled “Tripartite National Conference on Green Jobs: The Way Forward”, jointly organized by the Ministry of Labour and Employment of Bangladesh government (MoLE) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) was held on 18 September 2011 at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The conference discussed ways of supporting environmentally, economic and socially sustainable enterprises and development and creation of more green jobs in the country. About 130 participants from government, employers’ and workers’ organizations, private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities and research institutions and journalists participated in the conference. Key agenda item included:

- Employment and decent work in a climate-challenged world.
- Putting the green jobs concept into practice.
- Options for green jobs in Bangladesh.
- Green jobs initiative in Bangladesh.
- Technical sectoral presentation on renewable energy and waste management and promotion of Green Jobs in Bangladesh through tripartite initiatives.

Background

Similar to many Asian and Pacific countries, climate change and responses to it is a high priority area for the Government of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) 2009 envisions to build resilience and capacity to withstand and adapt to climate-change impacts. However, employment and labour market dimension of climate change in Bangladesh needs to be well-defined and priorities identified for specific interventions. In particular, the involvement of ILO constituents in the national discussion on climate change leaves much scope for improvement. It is recognized that commitment at the highest political level will be required to ensure that environmental policy debates can address the gender and social dimension more prominently and that employment promotion and job recovery policies can take a more environmentally sustainable path. The country’s Sixth Five Year Plan (2011-2015) will also include climate change interventions as mentioned in the BCCSAP. The BCCSAP sets out six key areas of action including food security, disaster management, research and knowledge management, infrastructure, mitigation and low-carbon technology development. This is expected to be the outline for subsequent integration of climate change issues such as adaptation, technology transfer, low carbon development, and capacity building into the mainstream planning process.

As part of the Green Jobs Programme for Asia and the Pacific, the green jobs initiatives in Bangladesh were implemented by the ILO’s tripartite constituents and partner during the period July 2008 to June 2010.

Following the first phase (2008-2010), the ILO, through its regional office in Bangkok, has undertaken a new regional programme on green jobs (Green Jobs Asia Project based in Bangkok) covering five countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Nepal and Sri Lanka) with support from the Australian Government under ILO - Australia partnership programme (2010-2015). The Green Jobs in Asia Project is

1 Government (Ministry of Labor and Employment), employers’ and workers’ organization
being implemented in Bangladesh by ILO country office and its constituents and aims at deepening ILO's constituents understanding and commitment for the promotion of Green Jobs opportunities and just transition towards a low carbon, climate resilient and environmental friendly development in Bangladesh. The first meeting of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), was held on 22 May 2011. The meeting expressed strong support and commitments for the project work in Bangladesh and endorsed the work plan for country level activities.

Among the country level activities, it was foreseen that a national conference on Green Jobs would be convened to disseminate the Green Jobs initiatives to relevant stakeholders.

The conference was aimed at providing a platform for relevant stakeholders (especially constituents and social partners) to improve awareness and understanding on Green Jobs concept and priorities in Bangladesh and providing recommendations for the way forward.

**Summary of Proceedings**

**Inaugural Session**

Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi, MoLE Secretary chaired the inaugural session. Eng. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Minister for Labor and Employment and Expatriates’ Welfare graced the occasion as chief guest.

**Mr. Gagan Rajbhandari, officer in-charge for the ILO office in Bangladesh**

Mr. Rajbhandari welcomed all participants to the conference. He briefly described the project background and its objectives in Bangladesh. The Green Jobs activities funded by the Australian Aid addresses the impacts of climate change with a key focus on re-skilled employments and labour markets in five countries in Asia including Bangladesh. The program has been ILO’s regional (Asia and the Pacific) priority following the pilot phase during the period 2008-2010 which aimed at increasing awareness and advocacy on Green Jobs. ILO is working on this issue with various social partners including government, NGOs, and private sectors. He thanked the MoLE and other social partners for their support to promote green job initiatives in Bangladesh. Mr. Rajbhandari hoped that the active participation of the participants and their recommendations would help to achieve the goals of the programme.

**Dr. Fazle Rabbi Sadque Ahmed, Climate Change Specialist**

Dr. Ahmed presented the key note of the conference which discussed the impact of climate change on employment and labour market, with a focus on Bangladesh. Speaking about national responses to combat the impact of climate change, Dr. Ahmed mentioned that the government actively addresses this issue. He informed that Climate Change Cell was established in the year 2004 under the Department of Environment and has been working for climate change mainstreaming, capacity building, knowledge management, awareness building and adaptation research. Bangladesh already submitted its initial national communication to the UNFCCC in 2002 and is expected to submit the second national communication in November 2011. He also informed that Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP-2009) is one of the first landmark documents among the developing countries which was prepared with wide consultation with Government and Non-Government sector, community based organizations, development partners, experts and academia etc. Other government initiatives to address the impacts of climate change include establishment of the Climate Change Trust Fund and the Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF). Besides, there are many other existing national policies such as
the National Environment Policy in 1992, the National Energy Policy in 1996, the Renewable Energy Policy of Bangladesh in 2008, the Environment Conservation Rules (ECR) in 1997 and it’s respective amendments etc, which are related and conducive to climate change and Green Jobs initiatives in Bangladesh. To discuss the impacts of climate change on employment and labour market, Dr. Ahmed mentioned that unlike the developed countries, developing countries are not bound to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emission under the Kyoto Protocol. In these countries, there will be lots of job loss due to impact of climate change to agriculture, migration and tourism. However, some developing countries particularly China, Brazil, South Africa, India etc. are planning to follow low carbon development paths and this action will create significant numbers of green jobs. In Bangladesh, the impacts of climate change would be enormous. Reminding that Bangladesh is a crop agriculture based country, Dr. Ahmed informed that Bangladesh will lose estimatedly around 3 % of GDP in the agricultural sector in the coming years due to climate change. In addition, the high technology and low carbon intensive industries might create job loss in the future as well, especially in the labour intensive sectors. Regarding the current measures to respond to the impacts of climate change, he noted that the Government of Bangladesh mainly focuses on adaptation rather than mitigation. On-going climate change adaptation projects are mainly on the development of climate resilient cultivars; maintenance and repair of embankments, polders, cyclone shelters, river training and dredging, aorestation and reforestation etc. He added that application of adaptation practices may create green jobs and opportunities as well in the areas such as climate resilient agriculture, fisheries, livestock and health, river/canal/wetland de-silting, cyclone shelters, flood shelters etc. He informed that the government has set targets for developing renewable energy, mentioning sustainable development and green jobs creation as the prerequisites for Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects. Dr. Ahmed informed that Bangladesh has approved 9 CDM projects which have created many green jobs opportunities. Other measures taken by government for green job creation include conversion of two stroke three wheelers into Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) compatible, conversion of motor vehicles into CNG, distribution of Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL), modernization of brick kiln etc. He proposed some other sectors for creating more green jobs including power, transport, agriculture, forestry, waste management, residential/commercial, industries and renewable etc. subject to capacity building and adequate finance. Dr. Ahmed identified some gaps within the current practices of climate change adaptation, which includes inadequate policy direction of climate change impact in employment and labour market, lack of program to study the impacts of climate change on job loss, job gains, green jobs etc. To conclude, he suggested the financial and technological assessment with due consideration of employment and green jobs, asses the possibility to increase green jobs in the future adaptation and mitigation measures and deals with the climate change related green jobs and other green jobs separately etc.

Mr. Mark Bailey, South Asia Regional Counsellor, Development Cooperation, Australian High Commission in Dhaka

Mr. Bailey informed that the Australian Government is supporting the ILO green jobs activities with approximately 3 million dollars under the ILO-Australia partnership program (2010-2015). The program aims to increase new jobs and create skilled labour markets amidst the context of climate change in five countries covering Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Nepal and Sri Lanka. He mentioned that many countries in Asia and the Pacific are making efforts to deal with GHG emissions. As for the special challenge Bangladesh faces in climate change adaptation, the green jobs activities are to support some specific sectors like energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste management, environmental management, solar technology etc. He hoped for a climate resilient better future as an outcome of these activities. Mr. Bailey acknowledged the Bangladesh government and other stakeholders for being active on the green jobs issues.

Mr. Roy Ramesh Chandra , representative of National Coordination Committee for Workers’ Education (NCCWE)
Mr. Chandra highly emphasized on making huge public investment to address the climate change issue as well as creating more jobs. He felt that this issue needs to be addressed globally. Mr. Chandra mentioned that though many initiatives for promoting green job activities have been taken in Bangladesh, the outcomes are not still satisfactory. He argued that as the working class is mostly affected by climate change, their needs should be reflected in the national policies. He reminded the responsibility of G20 countries to reduce GHG emission and stressed for better coordination to make green jobs initiative successful.

Mr. Md. Fazlul Hoque, President of Bangladesh Employers’ Federation (BEF)

Referring to the impacts of climate change on agriculture as described in the keynote paper, Mr. Hoque pointed out the consequences of job loss in agriculture resulting in rural to urban migration for jobs in urban industries. However, industrial sectors are already suffering from the point of view of green jobs. Regarding energy use, he expressed his doubt in the viability of solar energy for big industries, since this technology requires large area of land and is also expensive. In his opinion, renewable energy may be good for household uses but not a good solution for big industries at this point. He also raised a point on coal based energy and its impact on the environment. According to him, ‘green jobs’ means the working environment should be ‘green’ which is beneficial for workers as well as employers. He argued that product labelled as “green” would have extra value in the western markets. He felt that this is the right time to echo our voice for the slogan of “green jobs”. Acknowledging that Bangladesh has been active on the climate change issue, he asked all to work on the green jobs issues too. Mr. Hoque ensured that the Federation will try its best to market the green jobs concept.

Eng. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Minister for Labor and Employment and Expatriates'

Minister Eng. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain formally inaugurated the conference. In his speech, Eng. Hossain highlighted further cooperation to address the impacts of climate change. Despite of the adverse effects of climate change, he urged to explore alternative areas of cooperation in creating job opportunities in Bangladesh. In his opinion, promotion of green jobs will be a paradigm for employment sectors by 2016. Referring to different actions and policies, he ensured that the government has actively addressed the impacts of climate change on socio economic development of the country. He informed that the Ministry of Labor and Employment is closely working with ILO in promoting the green jobs. Mentioning that ‘climate change’ and ‘environment issues” are not the traditional areas of intervention by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, he said that, it should coordinate its work with the focal ministry (i.e Ministry of Environment and Forest) to integrate the labour market and employment dimensions into climate change discussion. He added that, this integration process can be facilitated by forming a Task Force and the ILO, through the Green Jobs in Asia project, can provide support. He thanked the ILO and the Australian government for taking up the green jobs initiatives.

Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi, Secretary of the Ministry of the Labor and Employment

Mr. Mehdi mentioned that the Ministry of Labour and Employment subsequently confirmed the participation of Bangladesh in the ILO pilot project during 2008-2010. The ministry is closely working with the ILO to promote the green jobs initiatives. He mentioned that there is an ample scope for discussion on climate change involving green jobs, labour market and employment dimension. He expected that this conference would help to identify well-defined priorities for specific interventions, particularly the involvement of ILO constituents to promote green jobs in Bangladesh.
Technical Session One: Green Jobs for a Sustainable Future

The session focused discussion on “green jobs” concept to address the impacts of climate change and how it can act for a sustainable future. It included presentations on “Green Jobs: Employment and Decent Work in a Climate-challenged World - An Introduction” by Mr. Vincent Jugault, Senior Specialist on Green Jobs based at the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) in Bangkok, and “Putting the Green Jobs concept into practice: some indicative cases from the ILO collaboration” by Mr. Hideki Kagohashi, Senior Enterprise Specialist, Decent Work Team based in New Delhi. The technical session was chaired by Md. Faizur Rahman, Joint Secretary (Labour) of the MoLE.

Mr. Vincent Jugault, Senior Specialist on Green Jobs, ILO ROAP

Explaining the conceptual framework of green jobs, Mr. Jugault mentioned that green jobs addresses two challenges of 21st century: climate change and other environmental issues and creation of millions of jobs and decent work for the new comers in the labour markets and eradicate poverty. Green jobs are decent work and quality jobs that cover all aspects of the environmental agenda, e.g. climate change mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity, desertification, ecosystems management, pollution control, etc. Green jobs initiatives aimed at bridging the missing link between the environment, economy and the world of work. He mentioned that green jobs promotes a socially fair transition, in which vulnerabilities, changes in the labour market and new business models are addressed through an inclusive social dialogue. The notion of green jobs is that we need to be able to measure the difference in terms of impact on the environment. He mentioned that policies for promoting green jobs should include enhancing environment friendly sectors and decent work, improving the environmental performance and decent work in traditional sectors and adapting to the effects of climate change. Explaining that Green Jobs varied according to the specific country’s situation, he emphasized the need to define green jobs to suit the national context of each implementing country. For example, research in Bangladesh has suggested that a large number of jobs have been created under climate adaptation programs. He suggested some options for actions in Bangladesh in this regard, which include large scale green skills development in priority sectors (e.g. renewable energy, energy efficiency, recycling, etc.) and social dialogue at policy level at the work place.

Mr. Hideki Kagohashi, senior enterprise specialist, ‘Decent Work Team’ based in New Delhi

Mr. Kagohashi pointed out the challenges of putting green jobs in practices and mainstreaming it in national policies. He argued that green jobs are decent jobs and they can be created in all sectors through reduction in consumption of energy and raw materials, avoiding greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing waste and pollution, protecting and restoring ecosystems and environmental services. Showing statistics, Mr. Hideki informed that Asia is growing fast in investing in renewable energy and China is taking the lead in this regard. He also provided examples of India, Pakistan, Japan, Philippines and Malaysia as investors in this sector. Especially in India, some high profile renewable energy projects have been undertaken such as solar park in Gujaratand large-scale wind turbines in Chennai. He presented some findings from a study which showed that the total estimated jobs in renewable sectors worldwide are around 3.5 million. Regarding putting green jobs in practices, he identified some challenges which included counting and tracking of jobs, quality of jobs concerns, informal economy policies, underestimation of likely jobs, likely gaps related to transformation from brown to green jobs etc. Mentioning that green jobs aspects are often missed in climate change policies, he suggested that to mainstream Green jobs into national policies, we should involve Ministry of Labour, employers & workers in the climate change policy consultations, put this issue into the growth & employment policy discourse, establish a policy coordination platform, identify & prioritize policies and sectors to look into, identify & address the critical knowledge gaps and assist policymakers & stakeholders in the design, implementation and enhancement of relevant policies. However, many things are being done by the
national stakeholders already. For example, climate change policies are being developed and implemented and often it is a matter of communication between ministries. He added that employers’ organizations are often vocal promoter of green economy initiatives. He also informed that trade unions are already in the global climate change discussion to make sure workers are protected in the great transformation. He presented a case study of Indian dairy sector to support his argument.

**Technical Session Two: Green Jobs Initiatives in Bangladesh**

This session discussed green jobs initiatives in Bangladesh with a focus on activities of two organizations: West Concern and Grameen Shakti. It included presentations by Iftekhar Enayetullah, Director of Waste Concern on “Options for Green Jobs in Bangladesh: overview by sectors” and by Dr. Shahidul Islam, Head, International Cooperation and Development, Department of Grameen Shakti on “Green jobs initiatives in Bangladesh: Interventions of Grameen Shakti. Professor Nurul Amin from North South University chaired the session.

**Mr. Iftekhar Enayetullah, Director of Waste Concern**

Mr. Enayetullah, in his presentation, mainly focused on the options for green jobs in Bangladesh and also identified some potential sectors where we can have green jobs. He mentioned that there is no precise definition for green jobs. It is direct employment which reduces environmental impacts and ultimately leads towards sustainable development. In short, green jobs is environmentally sound and decent in social term. He identified agriculture, forestry, energy, transport, and construction, manufacturing and waste management to be the potential sectors for green jobs in Bangladesh. He said that there are many activities that are already going on, but there are some further opportunities available to promote green jobs in these sectors. Referring to two studies carried out by ILO in 2009 and 2010, he informed that the number of green jobs in Bangladesh varies between 0.75- 0.8 million. The proportion of labour employed with these jobs are still very nominal, only 1.6% to 1.7 % of the total labour force. He mentioned that, there are no direct policies in Bangladesh to promote green jobs but some government policies and laws w indirectly promote green jobs. In his opinion, these incentives are insufficient and there are additional issues that need to be addressed. He highlighted three issues that need to be addressed to promote green jobs including the fiscal incentive, positive policy regulation and awareness rising. He argued that green job is private sector driven and fiscal incentives are very important to attract private sectors to invest in these sectors. He mentioned that tax holidays for industries need to be harmonized in order to promote green jobs. He added that fiscal incentives for investors in green jobs sector should also given in the areas of import/duty or VAT and access to finance by introducing lower interest rate compared to commercial rate. Regarding policy regulation, he mentioned that Government should fix rate for purchase of electricity from commercial electricity producer using renewable energy. Furthermore, Government should promote purchase of green products and also provide incentives for marketing these products. In addition, some measures on raising awareness should also be taken to promote green jobs. He also mentioned of the importance of public private partnership in this regard. He mentioned that we have enough policies but these policies should be clearly linked with the decent job concept and some policies need to be adjusted to have a larger impact on promotion of green jobs.

**Dr. Shahidul Islam, Head, International Cooperation and Development, Department of Grameen Shakti**

Dr. Islam elaborately discussed interventions of Grameen Shakti in promoting green jobs initiatives in Bangladesh. Grameen Shakti was established in 1996 by Professor Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank with a mission to empower the rural people with access to green energy and income opportunities. Since then it has started its journey towards green revolution by producing and promoting solar energy. He mentioned that concept of green job is new .This initiative has started in Bangladesh in 2008 and
from the very beginning Grameen Shakti has been involved in promoting this issue. He informed that under ILO funding Grameen Shakti trained a number of solar technicians at different technical centres of the Bureau of ManPower, training and employment. They also provided training to young women on entrepreneurship for solar accessories business at different divisional head quarters. He pointed that Bangladesh is an energy starved country where only 40% of population is connected to national power-grid. To address this issue, Grameen Shakti has been working in rural areas to promote the use of solar energy. He also talked about Grameen Shakti’s countrywide set up and services that are making a positive impact on people’s livelihoods and increasing incomes. Dr. Islam brought different aspects of benefits in the use of solar energy—from creating green jobs for rural women to reduction of carbon emission.

He asserted that Grameen Shakti has been very successful in providing sustainable clean energy solutions to rural people in Bangladesh. It has already installed about 0.7 million solar home systems in Bangladesh. It has also constructed around 20 thousand biogas plants and produced around 0.4 million improved cooking stoves all over in Bangladesh. He added that Grameen Shakti is projected to provide 75 million people of Bangladesh (45% of the population) access to modern, clean, and affordable energy by 2015.

Dr. Islam also identified some challenges of the promotion of solar energy as well as green jobs. These include: improvement of financial and legal framework, investment attraction of financial institutions, higher prices of Solar PV system (increasing price of battery & other accessories), increase of power efficiency of Solar PV system & decrease of production cost of PV including accessories, creation of new & skilled manpower, and creation of Green entrepreneurship opportunities.

Final Session: Panel Discussions on Promotion of Green Jobs in Bangladesh through Tripartite Initiative

Representatives from the ILO constituents participated in the discussion which mainly focused on promotion of Green Jobs in Bangladesh through Tripartite Initiative. Professor Nurul Amin from North South University, Bangladesh chaired the session.

Faroq Ahmed, Secretary General of Bangladesh Employers’ Federation

As a representative of employers, he informed that they are fully convinced that all measures should be taken to protect the environment. However, at this stage, it is difficult for them to be specific what steps should be taken from their part. On behalf of the employment federation, he assured that they are very much keen to work with all the stakeholders to promote green jobs initiatives. He added that workers are partners of employers and they, the employers, are ready to work together to take this issue forward. In this regard, he suggested some steps that can be jointly undertaken. These include awareness building, technical support, assessing and identifying the investment opportunities in the Green Jobs, training on reduction of use of raw materials and waste minimization and identifying the regional and international best practices of Green Jobs. On a different note, he confirmed that steps would be taken to bring ETP under zero duty tariffs.

Mr. Mesbahuddin Ahmed, Representative from NCCWE

Mr. Ahmed said that there are many scopes to invest in the Green jobs sector. That will create many jobs as well. However, he expressed his concern that the intervention of World Bank and IMF through financing in these sectors may restrict this initiative and also impose many barriers for them to plan or work on this issue. According to him, the role of trade union is very limited in this country. They do not have much bargaining power and remain light role in the policy formulation. He mentioned that as employees, in future, their participation in green jobs initiatives will depend on the importance of the
role of trade union is in this regard. However, he ensured that the trade union will be involved in the initiatives to acquire a just, equitable, democratic society where from employers to employee—all will work together for the betterment of the environment. On policy formulation processes, he said that government needs to provide adequate support to promote green jobs and thereby create employment opportunities in this country.

**Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment**

Deputy Secretary (MoLE) mentioned that the government is keen on promoting Green job initiatives in Bangladesh. He mentioned that the presentations and discussion from this conference would help them to work on creating more opportunities for green jobs in Bangladesh.

**Mr. A.R. Chowdhury-REPON, Executive Director — Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environmental Foundation (OSHE)**

Mr. Chowdhury in his presentation described creating Green Economy through “Just Transition” and “Green Jobs Actions”. He defined ‘Just Transition’ as a framework for a fair and sustainable shift to a low carbon economy. This framework makes meaningful environmental transition and sustainable development. It ensures representation and workers’ involvement as well. Mr. Chowdhury discussed the OSHE run “Sustainlabour” climate change project. The objectives of the project were building knowledge capacity of the trade unions to work at national level on climate change and other environment related issues, promoting effective participation of trade unions at state level policy discussions on climate change, Green jobs and environmental issues and promoting collaboration between government-employer and trade union on ‘just transition’ issues. He also discussed the activities of the project that covered research, dialogue, training and advocacy to the policy makers. He suggested various policy recommendations including establishment of a special Technical Committee by MoLE to support the government on development of special policy, and national program on green and sustainable employment issues, social protection scheme, promotion of green culture and good practices, facilitating Capacity Building Training for employers and workers.

**Mr. Nurunnabi Khan, ILO Office for Bangladesh**

Mr. Khan said that the debates on Green jobs will be continued, so is the concept of ‘sustainability’. But he felt that it is important now to fix the roles “who can play what” into the promotion of Green jobs activities. He added that, given that resources are limited and topic is vast, all of us should think to move forward.

**Conclusion by the Chair**

To conclude the conference, Professor Nurul Amin, Chairperson of the session, recapped that climate change is a challenge in Bangladesh and has direct impact on jobs and livelihoods for a large population. He reaffirmed that addressing this challenge is therefore important. In addition, he insisted on the need to improve the two dimensions on green jobs, namely improving working conditions of workers, and ensuring that the greening process can bring productivity gains at enterprise level. He then stressed the need to “lobby” these two aspects of green jobs properly for the continuation and expansion of a green jobs programme in Bangladesh. He finally thanked all participants for attending the conference.