

Brac comes to aid of Libya returnees

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Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (Brac) has launched a Tk 70 lakh credit programme, funded by Brac Bank, for more than a hundred of those repatriated from strife-torn Libya.

Under the scheme, Tk 10 lakh will be distributed to the most vulnerable people

while Tk 60 lakh to some others as soft loans, said Shipa Hafiza, director of Brac's Gender, Justice, Diversity and Advocacy Programme.

"It is a very small project... Actually, funding has been a major problem. However, we started this, expecting the government to start its rehabilitation

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programme soon," she told The Daily Star on Friday.

Since the Libyan civil war broke out late February, over 36,000 Bangladeshis have returned home with the assistance of International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the government.

Brac, the world's largest non-government organisation, working in 17 districts under the safe migration project, has created a database of 10,800 returnees.

From them, one hundred most needy people have been selected for a loan of maximum Tk 10,000 each, said another Brac official.

Shipa said the money would be lent to the returnees to help them start small businesses or enterprises. Condition for the loan will be flexible and interest rates will be low, she said.

She said the project will benefit only a few hundred. The government, private sector and other organisations should come up to help them, as a majority of the returnees are broke and indebted.

With a loan of \$40 million from World Bank, the government has planned to give the returnees a grant of Tk 50,000 each. But the money handover is yet to start.

Now, the IOM and the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) are verifying the names of the returnees. BMET officials said the money handover will start in a month through banks.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) earlier pledged a fund for the rehabilitation of the repatriated citizens. But it has yet to do anything about the issue.