

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



BNSK

বাংলাদেশ নারী শক্তিক কেন্দ্র



A platform of workers, activists, think-tanks and policy-makers working together to achieve a society where all women workers are provided with their rights, dignity and recognised for their contribution

Message from Chairperson and Executive Director

Since 2010, Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK) has been fighting to defend the rights of the nation's workers, build up their capacities, spread knowledge, and act as an advocate. BNSK has been battling for the rights of Bangladeshi workers both in the formal and informal sectors for the past few years. Bangladeshi workers who rely on their own labor or small businesses and enterprises to make a living do not receive regular salaries and welfare benefits like those who work in the formal sector do. Workers in the informal sector are the most vulnerable group of workers in our nation. Workers in the informal sector make up 93% of the working force. More than 99% of Bangladesh's labor force is female, and this is particularly true of other SAARC nations. Their labor is worthless. As a result, their contribution is hidden. Women workers themselves continue to be undercounted and unnoticed.

This year, BNSK has been able to make huge strides towards the development of Bangladeshi women workers. But this year, the theme of BNSK was "Rebirth, Remake and Reintegrate". With thanks to BNSK Team and Field officers we have been able to identify, capacitate and reintegrate vulnerable women workers.

Their success stories and changed momentum in life has been a source of motivation for us at BNSK and hope it will be the same for you. We would also like to thank our Donors, Stakeholders and Advisors for guiding us as we Rebuild stories and life of vulnerable women.



Professor Dr. Kamrun Nahar

Chairperson



Sumaiya Islam

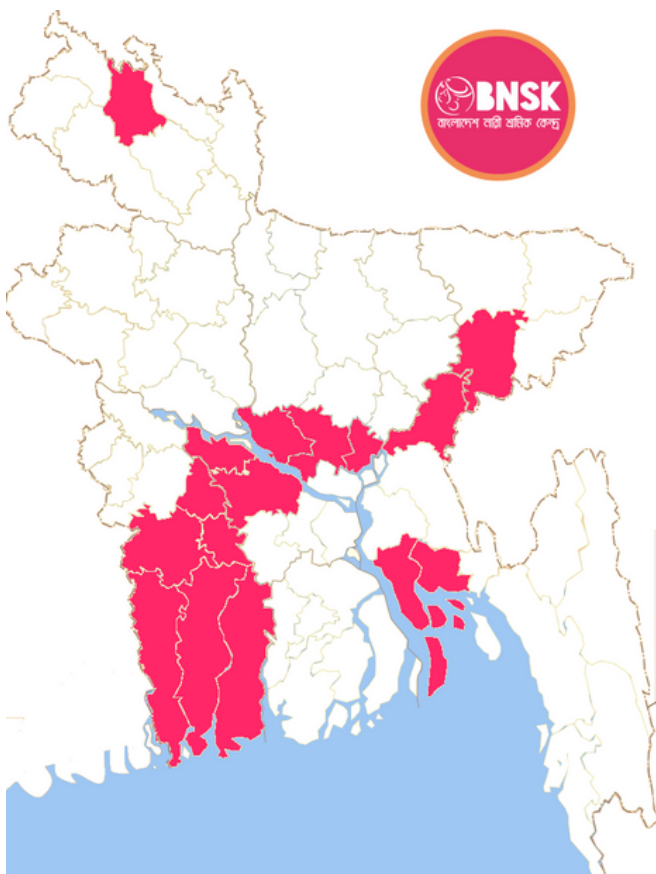
Executive Director

About BNSK

An organization standing for workers while being built further by the workers themselves

Starting was challenging for BNSK. The resettling women migrants lacked the requisite management skills to lead the organization. It was not simple to integrate immigrant women. The founding members approached the problem of migrant women's safety with tenacity, and as a result, BNSK has effectively provided a varied form of action. The group began operating in Mohammadpur, three TTCs in Mirpur, and the Manikganj district.

Currently, BNSK has access and Pre-departure Materials at TTCs across 64 districts of Bangladesh. Along with that BNSK has direct interventions and project activities across 16 Districts in Bangladesh.



BNSK Current Project Work Area

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| (1) Dhaka | (9) Brahmanbaria |
| (2) Manikganj | (10) Sylhet |
| (3) Rupganj | (11) Nilphamari |
| (4) Rajbari | (12) Noakhali |
| (5) Khulna | (13) Lakshmipur |
| (6) Narail | (14) Magura |
| (7) Jessore | (15) Bagerhat |
| (8) Faridpur | (16) Satkhira |

VISION

A Bangladeshi society which collectively upholds the rights of Bangladeshi women workers within their families, communities, tribes, and nations, realizes their works, respects them with dignity and justice while on the job, and recognizes their contribution to their families, communities, and the nation.

MISSION

We are devoted to advancing the status of Bangladeshi women workers within their families, tribes, and nations. We are dedicated to creating an atmosphere that is supportive and free from exploitation, unfairness, and prejudice in the workplace. Establishing networks at the local, state, and international levels to further BANK's purpose; advocacy for improved working conditions, skill development for employees, particularly women, on their rights under the law and business management; Our beliefs include reduce violence against women and children (VAWC), stopping the trafficking of women, defending the rights of those who have already been victims, preventing irregular migration, and cooperating with GOB and NGOs.

AIM

By 2025, contribute to creating an enabling environment for women workers, here individual women workers, their family members and the organizations can consistently uphold their rights, promote economic well-being, and to cooperate with relevant stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE

- To empower women workers working as domestic work, day-labor, construction work & informal business owners.
- To ensure dignity and uphold the rights of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors
- To build resilience of formal and informal migrant's low skilled women workers by providing social and economic reintegration support and advocacy.
- To advocate for improved, protective recognition and legislation of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors.
- To ensure Social Protection of formal and informal women migrant workers, migrated due to climate change and disaster

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

This year, we at BNSK took it upon ourselves to highlight and accelerate the amount of women workers who worked abroad and in country to start their own Income Generating Venture. For this we utilised IOM's Integrated Approach to Reintegration Model for identification, training, capacity building and support.

The second strategic objective was to work for the empowerment of women migrant workers and their families through community participation in protecting their rights. It will increase the awareness of migrants and their families about their rights.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Executive Committee is the highest policy making body of BNSK consisting of the 9 Members that represents the social worker, well-wisher, doctor, migrant workers from a cross section of people, professionals and social workers. The EC makes organizational policies, approves annual budget and audit reports, appoints auditors and elects the Executive Director to run this organization.

List of Executive Committee members

President:	Prof. Dr. Kamrun nahar
Vice President:	Monjushree Saha
Treasurer:	Anika Rahman Lipy
Secretary:	Sumaiya Islam, ED
Joint Secretary-	Dr. Khaleda Muheb
Members:	Ad. Shipra Goswami Shilpi Shaha Nurunnahar Begum Niharika Akter

PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT

- External migrant workers (Male and female)
- Government of Bangladesh
- Donors from abroad
- Like-minded organizations, forums and networks both national and international
- Media
- Local Govt.

Areas of specialisation in 2023

ADVOCACY:

Women's rights are often violated and neglected in every aspect of our society. BNSK believes that policy support should continue with government officials, recruiting organizations and the Bangladeshi elite. This process will ensure women's participation in decision-making processes, policies and ultimately situation of women to change.

AWARENESS PROGRAM (WOMEN WORKERS)

BNSK Raises Public Awareness By making women workers and their families aware of the services they need, every BNSK project has this important public awareness component. From decision-making to collection of remittances to human right awareness of domestic workers, extensive information campaign activities have been initiated at the grassroots level and awareness is created to enhance their psychological, social counselling, leadership quality and capacity.

CAPACITY BUILDING:

Empowerment of women through training is another important area to ensure empowerment of migrant women. Lack of access to information and services puts women particularly at greater risk when working in a more complete socio-cultural context. BNSK in collaboration with GOs/NGOs has been successfully providing pre-departure training to prospective women migrants.



STRENGTHENING SUPPORT SERVICE AND GOVERNANCE:

BNSK fully believes that in order to bring sustainable and effective change in Bangladeshi society, involvement of government is a must. BNSK has worked with Local Government and National Government to improve and create better support service mechanism catered women workers in Bangladesh as well as working abroad.

REINTEGRATION:

BNSK recognises the fact that every women workers specially the vulnerable workers in Bangladesh poses the ability to become a successful business owner and role model of Bangladeshi Resilience against all sorts of shocks and situations. With the help of IOM's IAR, BNSK has been able to do on-hand reintegration of over 20 women workers and off-hand reintegration of over 100.

PARTNERSHIP:

BNSK now operates from decision-making to return, host country services, return and repatriation services. Natural Agriculture and BNSK signed an MoU for economic rehabilitation of returning women workers. Under this agreement, they will provide migrant workers with technical assistance for agri-based business development and farm management. BNSK has also signed MoUs with rights-based non-governmental NGOs to provide services to migrant workers in countries such as Jordan and Malaysia. Under this Memorandum of Understanding, BNSK may assist workers in seeking assistance from the government of the destination country in seeking compensation from BNSK member workers, such as employers, if they seek legal rights from the destination country's legal process.

A beacon of hope and resilience

Meet Rina Apa, a returnee migrant woman from Jordan. Throughout her time abroad and upon her return amidst COVID with minimal savings, she is proof of the unwavering strength of migrant women who are the backbone of our economy.

Even after constant shocks and struggle, Rina's resilience was wonderful. With the support of BNSK Team members, she embarked on her reintegration journey, training at BNSKWomenCafe and participating in the Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

Today, she proudly owns a thriving food business in Narail, with ambitious plans to delve into livestock rearing. Rina's journey underscores the invaluable contributions of migrant women, both abroad and upon their return, as they forge new paths as entrepreneurs and pillars of our economy.



BNSK Implementation Strategy

The activities implementation strategy is defined by the word LEADS. And the meaning is as follows-

LISTENING living the stories of joy and bringing eyes to the ones of hidden and unhidden plan

EDUCATING on the fight against systemic information and less empowered women, we provided over

ADVOCATING standing up for women and workers' rights everywhere from grassroots to national and UN assemblies

DEVELOPING looking, analyzing and evaluating existing human rights, existing services and existing mechanisms to develop them to be better for underserved women

SUPPORTING whatever, whenever and wherever there are crises, we provide crisis support for everyone facing them.



Projects and Activities

Project no-1

Reintegration of Migrant Worker in Bangladesh Project

Goal-

To enable women returnee migrant workers with capacity to be reintegrated with mainstream society and economy to claim social and economic rights as a citizen, woman, migrant and worker by 2026.

Outcome-

As BNSK will complement/rend its services to achieve the target of a selected outcome (stated below) of a reintegration project of **SDC-BRAC under project management partnership with MJF**, it also would like to align its project outcome as the main project outcome stated in the Terms of Reference provided.

- **Outcome-01:** To improve security and livelihoods of the returnee migrants in Bangladesh through creating dignified social and economic reintegration particularly for women returnee migrants.
- **Output 1.** Returnee MWs are well informed, with having easy access to adequate information, better investment of their savings.
- **Output 1.2:** Reintegration of returnee MWs
- **Output 3:** Skill Development to create the scope of decent job for returnee migrant workers **Working area:** Kalia, Lohagora and Narail Sadar, Narail District

Major stakeholders Government departments: DEMO, TTC, Youth Development Office, LGRD offices etc. Nongovt offices, SME Foundation, PKSF, NGOs involved with IGA and Enterprise development.

Project period: 1st February 2023 to 31st May 2026

Major Project Implimentation

Activity	Target Dec 22- 31st Decemb er 2023	Achievement	Male	Female	Total
Awareness program with Returnee Migrants Family members, relatives and other stakeholders at village/para level	10	10	8	316	324
District based Day Observation & Campaign: International Migrants Day (18 December) and 15-days' campaign on Gender Based Violence- (25 Nov-10 Dec)	1	1	8	32	40
District based Planning meeting of MWSF representatives, Local Government representatives, public administration, local influential elite etc. to form 'Nirapad <u>Ovibashan</u> Forum-district based Planning meeting of MWSF representatives, Local Government	1	1	4	13	17
representatives, public administration, influential persons etc. to form ' <u>Nirapad Ovibashan</u> Forum-NIOF'					
Regular information, resource and referral actions by MISCs to returnee migrant workers to avail entrepreneurship trainings and micro-credit/loans	80	406		406	406
Organizing village-based Courtyard Meetings (UTHAN BOITHOK) for returnee migrant worker and their families to develop awareness &	8	8	44	141	185

Organize Linkage/Skill/Entrepreneurship training for returnee Migrants	84	48		48	48
Lobby meetings with different prospective banks for facilitating Entrepreneurship Loans with relaxed condition	1	1	10	14	24
Provide <u>psycho Social</u> counseling for tortured women and left behind children and migrants and partnership with Psycho social Institution/Specialist	418	418		418	418
Economic reintegration for women returnees through business advisory support, linking with financial and technical <u>institution</u> , training of entrepreneurship etc.	340	119		119	119
Dialogue with district legal aid committee, lawyers and law enforcement agencies	1	1	9	8	17
Organize workshops with traditional leaders, bodies and networks on reducing GBV	2	3	117	76	193
Organize sensitization workshop with relevant networks/ platforms on gender issues, women rights, GBV for mobilization and collective actions	1	1	24	5	29
Project inception workshop with different stakeholders (service providers, traditional leaders, Chairman, members of upazila and Ups)	1	3	103	35	138
Provide skill training to 7000 returnee migrant worker	80	92		92	92



Project no- 2

REMA(K)ER: Returning Migrants Achieve Economic Resilience and social cohesion within their communities

Overall objective

To contribute to the strengthening of social cohesion and achievement of economic resilience of returning migrants and their families with their communities.

Outcome-1: CSO & NGO in Bangladesh promote community cohesion among returning migrants and their communities, in close coordination with relevant Government authorities.

Output 1.1: CSO & NGO are trained and community cohesion events are organized to promote durable reintegration of migrants, in close coordination with relevant Government authorities.

Outcome-2: Returning migrant workers and vulnerable women use acquired necessary skills to achieve self-employment.

Output 2.1: CSOs NGO have increased knowledge and skills to conduct beneficiary self employment capacity development programs, with a focus on digitalization. **Output 2.2:** Pilot workshop are conducted to determine whether returning migrants in the selected Upazilas, should be trained and equipped to seek employment and /or create opportunities for self-employment.

Working area: Singair & Manikganj Sadar Upazila of Manikganj District

Project period: 15 December 2022 to 15 August 2023

The journey with International Organization for Migration & Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra has started from 15th December 2022 with an 8-month project implementation named “REMA(K)ER: Returning Migrants Achieve Economic Resilience and social cohesion within their communities”.

REMA(K)ER project has been implemented with the partnership of IOM and 3 other renowned migration focused organizations including BNSK; Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) and Welfare Association for the Rights of Bangladeshi Emigrants Development Foundation (WARBE DF).

The target beneficiaries of the project are vulnerable returnee migrant women, their family members & the community people of these areas. Through the community level awareness raising activities and dialogues of the project, BNSK has reached out around 1200 community people consisting returnee migrants & family members, aspirant migrants, community people, local govt representatives. The activities are compiled with 30 courtyard meetings on safe migration and reintegration with migrant family and communities.

Through capacity building activities, BNSK firstly identified 60 returnee women migrants, selected 30 returnee women and completed economic profiling for them, then finally selected 12 returnee beneficiaries by evaluating vulnerability level for the target beneficiary of the project.

Workshop: The 12 beneficiaries received a 3-Day training workshop on financial management, business management along with in-kind assistance materials for their business startups. BNSK with the support of IOM-IDF contributed in the livelihood development of the 12 selected beneficiaries.



Project no-3

Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE): Reintegration of Returning Migrants

Objectives

- To provide psycho-social counseling to the returnee migrant workers through the welfare center;
- To provide referral services for the welfare of returnee migrant workers by engaging concerned stakeholders;
- To promote livelihood opportunities through skill development, job placement and remigration;
- To provide cash incentives to the selected returnee migrant workers;
- To generate an effective database of returnee migrant workers.

IOM is the Lead Consultant in project implementation at the central level in close coordination with the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the RAISE project, the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB), the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE), and the World Bank.

IOM engaged seven national sub-consultants: Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK), BRAC, Katnarpara Nari Unnayan Sangstha (KNUS), Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP), Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Prottyashi, and WARBE Development Foundation (WARBE). These organizations will carry out field activities under the close guidance and monitoring of IOM.

Within this one-year project period 22,000 returnee will be registered along with counseling and referral to the service providers. Total three Welfare Center is running by BNSK i.e. Noakhali, Jahsore and Khulna district. A total of 14 staff were recruited in the 3 WC for smooth running of the activities of this project.

Achievement of up to **24 January 2024** are given below:

Activity	June 2023 to June 2024	Male	Female	Total
Screening of Returnee Migrant Workers	22000	9079	1146	10225
Registration of Returnee Migrant Workers		6652	1147	7799
Social and Economic Reintegration Counseling		2009	595	2604
Referrals for Reintegration / Welfare Services		1611	459	2070

Project 4 GOALS project

Capacity building training in Nepal:

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) in collaboration with the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC), and Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK) was commissioned by UN Women developed a capacity building program for CSOs and Trade Unions to engage with RCPs in particular the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and Colombo Process. The capacity building program is developed as part of the UN Women and ILO GOALS project.

The objectives of this program are

1. Facilitate understanding among CSOs and TUs about issues faced by women migrant workers, Gender Based Violence and VAW against women migrant workers
2. Capacitate CSOs and TUs to engage the Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue in line with advocating for rights of women migrant workers.
3. Participants Participants of the program include civil society organizations, trade union. A total of three staff and 2 female returnees participated the training program from 5-8 September 2023. Further, BNSK organized FGD in Bangladesh and contributed to develop module for capacity building.

Project 5

BNSK Crisis Support and Reintegration Programme

For Vulnerable Women Workers and Trafficked Victims

Implemented by:	BNSK- Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra
Title of Project:	BNSK Crisis Support and Reintegration Programme- For Vulnerable Migrant Workers and Trafficked Victims
Implementation Period	From July 2020 onwards
Target Area	All over bangladesh, with focus on trafficking prone areas: Shylet, Jessore-Khulna-Narail Belt, Manikganj and Teknaf
Funded By	BNSK-IGA (income generating activities)

Activity Description

- Emergent Rescue Service of Women in need while working abroad (for both Documented, Undocumented and Trafficked Workers)

BNSK Targets to reach 3 form of Women workers when trying to inform about our crisis support, Documented Legal Migrants, Undocumented Migrant and Trafficked Workers.

We reach Documented Migrants through providing our hotline number and services during their Pre-departure training in TTCs

Since undocumented and trafficked workers do not go through any legal channels, we try to reach them through word of mouth in their origin community.

We have realized that no matter where, migrant workers going through any channel (legal or illegal) always find a way to communicate with their family. So what we try to do is provide the local community and the families with our crisis support information. We do that by holding courtyard meeting and informing the local community leaders about our service. This inturn makes the family and community people pass along the information to their loved ones working abroad about out hotline and crisis support.

Another way we try to reach is through social media, we make posts in migrant worker groups in Facebook and Telegram. And through there, the ones who sees the posts spreads the information around.

Once the workers knows about our crisis services, the ones who do fall victim to exploitation or abuse, they reach us through our Hotline service or IMO or Telegram or Whatsapp.

After collecting the necessary information about them, If the migrant worker has went through Legal Channels, we contact the recruiting agency that send them and try to mediate through them. If the agencies are not willing to bring the workers back we take legal actions through our partner BLAST and try to rescue them as soon as possible.

If the worker has unfortunately went through Illegal or legal gray channels to the point where they don't have any documents, we involve the Local CSOs at their country of destination. In this cases we contact the Local Embassies and involve their help. And in extreme cases we involve the help of IOM bangladesh and Local IOM agencies.

We follow the same pathway of support for Trafficked Victims in modern slavery or Bonded Labour Situation. However in those cases, sometimes the involvement of local authorities comes in, and during that time we also involve our Bangladeshi NHRC to make sure there has been no infringement of human rights of the trafficked victims upon rescue through the Local Authorities.

To all the victims who gets rescued by us, we provide them with any support they need from Safe housing to Financial Support to Reintegration into the Domestic Economy.

- **Crisis Support to any scammed or abused pre-departing migrant workers**

Quite often some women migrant workers try to go abroad through middlemen and unauthorized agencies. They end up paying huge sums of money to these unlicensed agents and what happens is that the agents vanishes with the money without providing any hopes of the migrant worker actually going abroad.

For these cases the migrant workers might reach out to the Local Government or the Community leaders for help. And this is where the LG officials and the Community Leaders refer these workers to us at BNSK Crisis Support Programme.

If there are any leads about who the middlemen or the agency was, we try to find them and take legal action against them in hopes of providing the scammed money of the workers back to them. More often than not, finding these middlemen is tough, but either way we provide these migrant workers with any support they need from Safe housing to Financial Support to Reintegration into the Domestic Economy.

Reintegration Services

A lot of migrant workers and trafficked victims upon return, find it hard to get a job or a source of income in the domestic economy, due to a lot of social stigma and skill gap. Even more so with victimized returnees. This is where BNSK reintegration services come into play.

We provide Financial Leadership, Economic Development and Entrepreneurship Development training free for all returnee workers. These training sessions are mandatory for all the returnees we try to reintegrate.

After these trainings we do a skill assessment of them where we try to determine their existing skills and the places where they need to develop further skills. If they need further skills we refer them to the existing government services that provide those trainings. A lot of the time they are provided by the Livestock Development Dept., Youth Development Dept., Women-Children Affairs Dept. and the TTCs.

After they have developed the proper skill according to their wish/prior skills. We try to develop a business plan or a job search plan for these workers. This is where we try to find financial aids for them, to be their business capital or to sustain them while they search for jobs.

Activity Summary

In the last year we have reached over 976 Migrant Workers in crisis, 85 Trafficked Victims, Directly Reintegrated 58 Vulnerable Women, Referred and Counselling over 2581 Vulnerable Women.

The migrant workers in crisis were usually from the middle east region.

Trafficked victims came from all range of place, from Europe to India to Singapore to Australia to Middle East. However this year a trend of the Victims origin were places which were devastated by Climate Disaster or Climate Change.

While the trafficked and rescue victims were offered reintegration services, majority declined the offer due to the reintegration service taking a long period of time and not having enough funding. (The length of the reintegration service is usually long due us relying on referring to government services for developing their skills, and finding financial aid or services takes a long time).

However, we have successfully reintegration 58 Vulnerable women back into the domestic economy. 28 of them took the job option and found well paying jobs. While the 30 of the women took the business option and are currently running successful business of their own, providing enough income to sustain their family.

Our counseling service has been free for all, but due to us only being able to employ 1 at a time due to lack of sufficient funding from the IGAs, we counsel around 3-4 migrant workers per week. However, this number is nowhere near the amount of workers who come to us seeking counseling. We decide on who to provide the service by determining who is the most vulnerable at that point in time.

Project 6

BNSK Domestic worker's rights Awareness and Advocacy Programme

This is a very small project initiative taken by BNSK during the start of COVID 19. During COVID-19 BNSK Realised that in bangladesh along with international migrant women workers, Domestic workers in Bangladesh are more vulnerable.

Upon further investigation we found that the major reason for the vulnerability of these Domestic workers is that they do not have any formal or legal recognition from the government, which leads to them not being able to claim or avail any form of social security or protection.

After noticing their vulnerability and situation, BNSK has started pilot program on 2022, “BNSK Domestic worker’s rights Awareness and Advocacy Programme”. This program is completely self funded and implemented upon the volunteered time of BNSK Staff, EC members, and Interns.

Activity Description & Summary

- (1) GBV Awareness sessions at Slums around Dhaka
- (2) Psycho-social counselling of Vulnerable women in Dhaka slums
- (3) Referral Service of Domestic workers to EDP
- (4) Legal Aid and Counsel to Domestic workers facing violence at workplace and Mitigation of dispute among employers and domestic workers

LISTENING

EDUCATING

ADVOCATING

DEVELOPING

SUPPORTING

