

## MANAGING MIGRATION FOR DECENT WORK

### Building a Community of Practice on Labour Migration

In response to its constituents request for better sharing of ILO's knowledge resources, the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific initiated the development of communities of practice, i.e. "interactive networks of committed professionals bound by a common interest" in various subject areas. The first three Communities of Practice – Youth Employment (AP-YouthNet), Green Jobs, and Skills (Skills-AP) – are now operational<sup>1</sup> and accessible at <http://ap-youthnet.ilobkk.or.th/>, <http://greenjobs-ap.ilobkk.or.th/> and <http://skills-ap.ilobkk.or.th/>.

Initial results from the CoPs have been encouraging. They have provided an opportunity for ILO staff and constituents to engage in knowledge-sharing, facilitated debates and discussions on emerging concerns and have reinforced organizational learning, feedback, constituent ownership and use of ILO's technical resources.

#### Why a COP on Labour Migration?

Managing labour migration for decent work is one of five Asian regional priorities<sup>2</sup>, reflecting an important concern of ILO constituents in government, workers' and employers' organizations and the general public. Labour migration continues to rise in the region - over 24 million Asians are estimated working outside of their home countries. While Asians are moving for employment in all part of the world, more and more Asians, approximate 38% are crossing land and sea borders for work in neighboring countries. Many more women and young people are moving than ever before, raising concerns over protection.

Key sending countries in South-east Asia include the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam, in South Asia, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka are also major sending countries, with each having stocks of workers of more than a million workers working overseas. Japan, Korea, Taiwan, POC, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia now have significant share of foreign work force in their labour force.

Asian movement is dynamic and diverse, from highly qualified professionals, skilled craftsmen and technicians to less skilled workers in homes, construction sites, tourism enterprises, informal stores and workshops. Labour markets in Asia have all been affected by migration, with both positive and negative impact. There is no

---

<sup>1</sup> AP YouthNet has been operational since 2008 and Skills-AP and Green Jobs since 2009.

<sup>2</sup>The global outcome on migration (no 7) aims to achieve "More migrant workers are protected and more migrant workers have access to productive employment and decent work" and the outcome (RAS 201) states that "Improved Capacities of Governments and Social Partners to Manage Labour Migration".

dearth of controversy or debate on labour migration. Whether migrants are going for work, staying and assimilating in the destination country or coming back home, there is no single “best approach”. This provides a fertile ground for discussion and dialogue.

### **The Process of Creating a Community of Practice**

While it is intended that the overall design of the CoP on migration will be consistent with other established CoPs of Asia and the Pacific, the establishment of the CoP and agreement on its features is intended to be a participatory and consultative process. It starts with a concept note, as this is, that declares the rationale for a COP on a subject area. A survey (attached as Annex 1 - Pre-Visioning Event Survey) is sent to core group members and interested parties soliciting feedback on the design and proposed implementation. The survey results are consolidated and submitted to scrutiny in a “visioning” exercise, where identified core group members are introduced to the mechanics of the CoP, participate in its formulation, finalize the timeline.

### **Aims**

The Community of Practice on Labour Migration seeks to provide a forum for committed professionals to share and leverage technical and practical knowledge on labour migration and anti-trafficking, to encourage debate and discussions for better understanding, and strengthen a common agenda for managing migration for decent work in Asia and the Pacific. In more specific ways, the CoP will:

- catalyze new thinking and approaches on labour migration and human trafficking in the Asia Pacific region;
- provide access to ILO policy research, technical manuals and tools, training programs other resources related to migration and anti-trafficking;
- provide access to other organizations’ and partners’ resources
- promote events and news on migration
- encourage the development of joint initiatives to further regional and multilateral cooperation on labour migration and human trafficking

### **Community Members**

The CoP will target an initial membership of 100 professionals, consisting of:

- 10 ILO TC staff at the management and technical levels responsible for migration and anti-trafficking projects in Asia and the Pacific;
- 10 ILO country office officers<sup>3</sup> designated to update, monitor and track migration for employment activities of ILO constituents in-country;
- 20 Government policy and/or program officials responsible for migration and anti-trafficking activities;

---

<sup>3</sup> Priority is given to those countries with DWCP country outcomes on migration

- 15 Trade union officials engaged in activities related to labour migration and human trafficking;
- 15 business leaders engaged in activities related to labour migration and human trafficking;
- 15 civil society reps (academic, media, NGOs) undertaking activities related to labour migration and human trafficking
- 15 members of UN Thematic Working Groups on labour migration and human trafficking

Thirty five potential members will be invited to the visioning workshop planned in October 2010.

The ILO has an internal database of participants to ILO migration and anti-trafficking training programs and events of the last few years. All of them will be encouraged to join and participate in the CoP on labour migration.

### Features

The CoP will have the following standard features:

#### Country News

- Updated country information with statistics and news reports on issues. Linked with migration and human trafficking website
- ILO projects in country
- Country Calendar of events

#### Updated Regional Overviews:

- Asian Cross-Country Comparisons of Migration Statistics from the MISA
- Calendar and Information on Regional Training Activities
- News on Regional dialogues and processes
- Project Reports and New Program development
- Special Thematic Focus

#### Community Exchange focused on ILO Research, Resources and Tools on:

- Orderly and equitable **migration process** of labour migration (more regular and protected channels of movement, strategies to address irregular migration, safe and secure return, and new forms of cooperation in times of financial and political turbulence)
- Prevention of and **protection against abusive migration practices** (licensing and supervision of private agencies, regulation of recruitment costs, action against human trafficking, smuggling, indebtedness, proactive information services and mobilization of social partners)
- Close attention to the **most vulnerable migrants** (measures and interventions to meet gender concerns, needs of children and youth in hazardous employment, those in at-risk occupations and for family members – those accompanying and those left behind)

- Positive contribution of **labour migration to development** and poverty reduction in origin and destination countries (critically needed skills, employment, remittances, poverty reduction)

#### Themes<sup>4</sup>

- Return and Reintegration<sup>5</sup>
- Domestic Workers
- Labour Exploitation including Trafficking
- Skilled Migration
- Multilateral Agreements, i.e. ASEAN, EPS

#### Facilitated thematic discussions

There will be 5 themes at the CoP to ensure full coverage of the migration process, from recruitment to reintegration. The aim is to have thematic as well as cross-theme discussions at the CoP, learnings can be shared across the themes and resources will be divided into these themes to facilitate information gathering and access. Please see the detailed discussions in Annex 2 – Thematic areas of the CoP on labour migration.

#### Administration, Rights and Funding

The Senior Regional Migration Specialist and 1 CTA of a migration and anti-trafficking project, on a rotating basis, will be responsible for the overall management of the CoP. In the first year, the CTA of the EU Return and Reintegration Project will serve as co-manager. Both will have full administrator rights. The managers will be assisted by an external collaborator who will facilitate discussion and update the ILO CoP calendar.

Staff of Regional and TC projects on migration and related issues will also have full administrator rights and will play a major role in data entry, especially with regard to meetings and new ILO publications.

Registered members of the CoP will be given full access to ILO technical resources. They can freely access discussions forms and, subject to prior approval, may be able to upload information about their organizations, events and activities.

<sup>4</sup> The ILO-Korea Partnership programme (with a component on labour migration); The ILO-Japan project Managing Cross-Border Movement of Labour in Southeast Asia; ILO-EU project on Economic and social empowerment of returned victims of trafficking to Thailand and the Philippines; Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Application in Bangladesh; TRIANGLE (GMS+Malaysia); Pacific project; EU project on skilled migration; EU project on migration from South Asia to the GCC

<sup>5</sup> The ILO's EU Return and Reintegration project has provision for the development of systematic and updated information sharing through the establishment of a website for migrants and service providers and disseminate project information materials (Activity 1.1.5 in the project updated work plan for the period 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010)

The CoP will have minimal core funding support from the ROAP, TC projects will be asked to contribute some resources to ensure the quality of the CoP.

#### **Criteria for selection of participants at the visioning event**

- 1) He/she have to be direct responsible for migration issues and show a strong commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of migrants
- 2) He/she has to be ready and have knowledge about how to share expertise and information through internet (tech savvy)
- 3) He/she should have good writing skills in English
- 4) He/she should be able to commit time to learning and sharing of information and knowledge as a member of the CoP

#### **Timeline**

January	Internal ILO meeting
June-July	Development of TOR and list of Core group members
August 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send invitation and survey to the core group to attend the Visioning Event</li> <li>• Survey among the predicted members finalized</li> <li>• Survey analyzed and results integrated in the TOR for the visioning event and the road map for the CoP</li> </ul>
October 2010	Visioning event (25-27 October, Chiang Mai Thailand)
November 2010	Roadmap finalized
December 2010	The CoP on Migration will be launched
December, 2010 – March 2011	<p>Regional activities and materials developed to popularize the use of the CoP and to ensure exchange of ideas and discussions at the forums.</p> <p>The CoP is expected to be fully operational by the Asia Pacific Regional Meeting.</p>

## **Annex 1**

### **Pre-Visioning Event Survey**

#### **Building and Sustaining the Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network on Migration Community of Practice (CoP)**

A reflective and forward looking survey

---

Your feedback is valuable to us. This survey will take you less than 10 minutes to complete and is an essential part of the ILO's Migration initiative in Asia and the Pacific's ability to respond to the knowledge sharing demands of its constituents and partners in the region.

The objectives of this survey are to:

- i) further advance plans to establish a Community of Practice for Migration in Asia and the Pacific, and
- ii) identify priority areas of focus, services and products of the Community for its members

Additionally, this survey will help us gauge what it is specifically that we want the community to focus on, scale up and how do we make it more effective. We also seek to identify what kind of products and services we wish to jointly produce and share through the community and to agree on basic roles and responsibilities for key actors within the community.

Note: the survey contains 12 short questions, all of which require an answer, except the last optional comment section.

Thank you for your kind participation.

Link to the survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YY36NF9>

## **Annex 2**

### **Thematic areas of the CoP on labour migration**

#### **Recruitment and Selection**

Research indicates that private recruitment agencies play an important role in temporary labour migration from Asian countries, accounting for a vast majority of labour migrant flows out of and within the region. Given the high level of vulnerability of prospective migrant workers migrating through informal channels, a more effective regularization of private recruitment agencies is desirable. The ILO aims to minimize fraud and abuses and encourage efficiency in the recruitment process. To this end, the ILO plans to work with governments to improve their policies and measures for regulating and monitoring recruitment. The recruitment of migrant workers should only be carried out by; public authorities; prospective employers; or authorized private agencies. The ILO will encourage practices which minimize the cost of obtaining decent jobs abroad and reduce abuse through self-policing by industry associations.

#### **Origin/Departure/ Pre-departure Preparation**

Most labor sending countries want to (1) send more workers abroad, (2) increase the share of skilled workers among migrants, and (3) diversify destinations to include more countries offering higher wages and more migrant protections. Many migrant-sending governments have established ministries or agencies to promote and protect migrants in order to achieve these marketing, up-skilling, and diversification goals.<sup>6</sup> The ultimate goal of migrant sending countries should be development that makes out-migration unnecessary in the future. However, many labor-sending governments assume that remittances will “automatically” accelerate development, and some use remittances rather than economic and job growth as the best indicator of migration’s benefits. The ILO is through a partnership programme with the Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) working on facilitating dialogue between sending countries and ROK in the Employment Permit System (EPS). Under the EPS, workers from 15 countries<sup>7</sup> are required to go through pre-departure training and pass a Korean Language Test to prepare the workers for employment abroad. This provides a good system to ensure that workers are well prepared to migrate and since the costs of recruitment under the EPS are monitored and transparent, it further limits risks of exploitation in the recruitment process.

#### **Destination/On site**

Migrant receiving countries are recruiting foreign workers primarily to respond to labour shortages. Asia includes receiving countries with some of the world’s highest and lowest shares of migrant workers, such as UAE in contrast to Japan. The trends

---

<sup>6</sup> Despite the desires of many labor-sending countries, relatively few Asian migrants move under the terms of bilateral agreements and MOUs.

<sup>7</sup> The government of ROK have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the following countries; Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, East Timor, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Myanmar, Mongolia, Pakistan (as of 2010, May)

are that an increasing number of foreign workers migrating within Asia. For receiving countries it is important to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant workers, one way is to develop sound and efficient policies to manage migration. One of the major challenges is the risk of exploitation when migrants are not employed in standard workplaces that are not subject to standard labour law, such as domestic workers.

### Return and Reintegration

Within the framework of migration, the return and reintegration process is the least subject to policy interventions and research and it is also one of the most difficult issues to address. Return to the home country is an important characteristic of the impact of migration and an integral part of the migration process, unfortunately return and reintegration programmes for migrants are not generally well developed in Asia.

The main responsibility of successful return and reintegration falls on the country of origin and the communities from where the migrants originate. Returning workers are valuable members of the society and often the remittances that they have sent back have contributed to the development of their country of origin. Destination countries however are also in some cases assisting the safe and secure return of migrants, in the EPS process, the government of ROK has initiated a Happy Return programme where training is provided pre-return. The ILO EC funded project on Economic and Social empowerment of migrants returning from EU to Thailand and the Philippines are developing networks between the two Asian countries to facilitate return and reintegration.