

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL**

Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/WG.5/7/Report  
9 September 2011  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**

**REPORT**

**WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE BETWEEN ESCWA AND ESCAP  
COUNTRIES ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
BEIRUT, 28-30 JUNE 2011**

**Summary**

The Population and Social Development Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Social Policy Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) jointly organized the Workshop on Strengthening Dialogue Between ESCWA and ESCAP Countries on International Migration and Development in Beirut from 28-30 June 2011. The Workshop, which brought together policymakers and independent experts, was part of a two-year Development Account project entitled “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impacts”. This report provides a summary of the papers presented and discussed during the Workshop, a summary of the panel discussion on national experience, and the findings and recommendations of the Workshop.

The Workshop was organized around four components: (a) understanding the key trends of migration between countries of the ESCWA and ESCAP regions; (b) managing migration between the countries of the regions while protecting migrants; (c) assessing migration between ESCAP and ESCWA member countries from a gender perspective; and (d) sharing national experience and good practice related to the management of international migration and the protection of migrants.

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## **Introduction**

1. The Population and Social Development Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Social Policy Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) jointly organized a Workshop on Strengthening Dialogue Between ESCWA and ESCAP Countries on International Migration and Development in Beirut from 28-30 June 2011.
2. The Workshop was held as part of the two-year Development Account (DA) project entitled “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impacts”. In line with the objectives of the project, the Workshop aimed to: (a) enhance national-level skills and capacity to design and implement policies and programmes which maximise the gains and minimize the challenges of international migration for development, manage labour migration from the perspective of countries of origin and destination, and increase understanding of the policy options that could be taken to manage international migration to maximize its positive impact on development while benefiting migrant workers; and (b) develop recommendations to feed into future international consultative processes on migration, and contribute to increasing the availability of data and information on international migration.
3. The Workshop therefore addressed issues of migration and protection, migration and gender, and interregional cooperation. It provided participants with the opportunity to understand the current situation in relation to migration between countries of the ESCAP and ESCWA regions, discuss activities within the framework of global best practice, and consider how cooperation on migration issues could be maximized for the benefit of all concerned.
4. In particular, the Workshop focused on national experience and discussed ways forward in terms of (a) identifying areas of concern for countries of origin and destination relating to the protection of migrants, and discussing good practice in that area; and (b) cooperation on migration management issues between countries of origin and destination.

## **I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5. The working papers, presentations and discussions of the Workshop highlighted a number of concerns relating to the management of migration for both ESCWA and ESCAP member countries. There was a consensus among participants on the following conclusions and recommendations.

### **A. CONCLUSIONS**

6. Migration from the ESCAP to the ESCWA region is significant: of the 26 million migrants in the ESCWA region, between two thirds and three quarters are from ESCAP countries. This migration is generally perceived as temporary, with no expectations from Governments that migrants will remain in the country of destination permanently. Migration within and between the ESCWA and ESCAP regions reflects the importance of South-South migration in international migration.
7. Migration has the potential to bring mutual benefits to countries of destination, countries of origin and migrants themselves, yet it is not a substitute for development. Countries of destination receive workers who contribute to filling skill and labour shortages, and to economic growth and development, while the economies of countries of origin can benefit from financial remittances, transfer of skills and reduced pressure on labour markets. A successful migration experience can enable migrants themselves to increase their physical and social capital, and achieve better standards of living for themselves and their families.
8. The economic, social and cultural vulnerability of migrants remains high, due to gaps in social protection measures.

9. Consultation with and participation of civil society in the issues governing the migration process and in areas of policy dialogue is relatively weak.
10. The financial costs of migration remain relatively high compared with the average income of migrants.
11. The regulation and oversight of recruitment processes, including recruitment agencies in both countries of origin and destination, is insufficient. This leads to hardship and problems for migrants.
12. The *kafeel* system still suffers from a number of shortcomings.
13. The level of compliance with regulations and legislation governing migration has been relatively low in most countries of origin and destination. The adoption and enforcement of bilateral and multilateral agreements has also been insufficient.
14. Due to the nature of their employment, migrant domestic workers, particularly women, are vulnerable to exploitation. Domestic workers are rarely covered by national labour laws and a low value is accorded to their work. This situation is often exacerbated by the exploitation of migrant domestic workers by private recruitment agencies in both countries of origin and destination.
15. Available, accessible, timely, comparable and accurate data remain crucial for evidence-based policymaking on migration and development.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Recommendations relating to migration and development:
  - (a) Greater attention should be given to the integration of migration into development plans at all levels of government;
  - (b) Governments of countries of origin, with the active participation of migrants, should provide an enabling environment for enhanced skill acquisition, technology transfer and more productive use of remittances for development;
  - (c) Reintegration of migrants and their families should be included in the national and local development plans of countries of origin;
  - (d) There remains a need for more available, accessible, timely, comparable and accurate qualitative and quantitative data, and shared information on migrant inflows and outflows, migrant stocks and the experiences of migrants through the migration cycle.
17. Recommendations relating to the governance of labour migration:
  - (a) Governments should continue to review and assess current systems of governance and regulation of labour migration. Evidence is required on the need for reform, and which alternative systems may work better;
  - (b) The excessive cost of migration, for both migrants and their employers, requires greater attention and scrutiny. Recruitment and placement costs should be reduced in order to maximise the benefits of international migration;
  - (c) There is a need to promote transparent and effective bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding on better migration governance with an effective monitoring process.

18. Recommendations relating to the protection of migrant workers, especially female migrant workers, and the rights and obligations of migrant workers and employers:

(a) Enabling mechanisms should be put in place to enable migrants and employers to exercise their rights and obligations more easily;

(b) Employment contracts and obligations, including salaries, must be fully respected by workers and employers;

(c) Social protection mechanisms, including health care, should be extended to migrant workers to reduce their vulnerability and exclusion. Efforts should be made to enhance the portability of such protection schemes;

(d) More explicit attention needs to be given to the particular needs of female migrants and the impact of female migration on both countries of origin and destination. This is particularly relevant to the experiences of domestic workers.

19. Recommendations relating to multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation and dialogue:

(a) International and regional organizations should continue to promote mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation, ensuring the participation of countries of origin and destination;

(b) Both ESCWA and ESCAP should continue to promote dialogue and collaboration on migration in the two regions. Interregional dialogue is essential for the exchange of ideas and experiences, and ultimately for enhancing the benefits of international migration. This should be inclusive of the voices of migrants themselves, as well as civil society.

## **II. ISSUES CONSIDERED**

20. The agenda of the Workshop comprised seven sessions. Background papers were presented which covered the international migration experience of ESCWA and ESCAP member countries.

### **A. KEY TRENDS AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

21. The session was chaired by Mr. Ronald Skeldon, Professional Fellow, School of African and Asian Studies, University of Sussex, United Kingdom.

22. Ms. Sabine Henning, Population Affairs Officer, Migration Section, United Nations Population Division, presented a paper entitled “International Migration and Development in Asia and the Pacific: Key Issues and Recommendations for Action”. The presentation provided an overview of key trends related to migration between ESCAP and ESCWA member countries. Ms. Henning showed that there had been an overall growth in the number of migrants in Asia since 1990, with the number of migrants in ESCAP countries reaching 107 million in 2010, and with the ESCWA region hosting over 25 million. ESCWA countries were among the most important migrant-hosting countries in the world by the proportion of foreign-born in the population. Ms. Henning noted that migration in general is intraregional, and that South-South migration is an important phenomenon. Asian migrant stocks are particular, however, in that they are heavily male-dominated, with a high representation of working-age men in particular.

23. Ms. Henning highlighted the importance of remittances to both ESCWA and ESCAP member countries, as they represented a high proportion of the gross domestic product in many Asian countries. She showed that these remittances have been recovering from the decrease suffered during the global economic crisis and in many cases already exceeded pre-crisis levels.

24. Ms. Henning also discussed the level of ratification of international instruments relating to migration, noting that progress in this area had been uneven, and that many ESCWA and ESCAP member countries had not ratified key conventions. She also outlined the increase in international meetings on the subject of migration and development since 2006, including the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forums on Migration and Development. She also explored the importance of data, showing that Asian countries could do more to cover migrants in their censuses, suggesting methods to improve the coverage of migration in these processes and presenting the Global Migration Database of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as a tool for research. She concluded by arguing for the need for greater evidence, engagement, cooperation and capacity-building in the field of migration.

25. Mr. Paulo Saad, Chief, Population and Development Area, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) gave a presentation entitled “International Migration: An Overview of the Main Findings from the Latin American and Caribbean Region”. He outlined the objectives of the DA project entitled “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact”, and discussed the findings of the ECLAC regional workshop “Looking Towards the Future: New Trends, Issues and Approaches” and the publication *International Migration in Latin American and the Caribbean: New Trends and Approaches*, produced by ECLAC within the framework of the project. Mr Saad noted that their research and discussion had found that Latin American migrants in Spain and the United States of America faced specific challenges, but they also contributed to demographic, social and economic reproduction, to the benefit of their countries of destination. Mr. Saad also outlined future work within the framework of the project, including an interregional workshop covering the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe and ECLAC; the consolidation of regional information systems developed under the project; the final workshop to be held under the project; and the dissemination of the project outcomes.

26. Mr. Paul Tacon, Associate Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division, ESCWA, presented the United Nations DA project “International Migration: An Overview of the Main Findings from the ESCWA Region”. He discussed the activities carried out by ESCWA on international migration and development, and presented a regional study entitled *International Migration Challenges in the Arab Mashreq and the GCC Countries*, and the regional workshop “International Migration in the Arab Region: Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies”. He noted that the project had found that there was significant potential for migration to contribute to development in the region, although challenges remained. He also discussed the positive recommendations that had come from those activities, as well as the implications for dialogue with ESCAP member countries. In particular, he noted the importance given to dialogue by ESCWA member countries, their understanding of the importance of migration for development, their concern for the rights of migrants and their desire to achieve the best possible outcomes for all concerned by the process.

27. Ms. Vanessa Steinmayer, Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Division, ESCAP, discussed the United Nations DA project “International Migration: Main Findings from the ESCAP Region”. She noted the achievements of the project to date in the ESCAP region, such as the research and enhanced data collection, as well as the findings of the *project, which include the need for policy coherence, and attention to the migration of women, recruitment costs and protection*. She identified a number of areas for potential interregional cooperation and dialogue, such as discussing the *Kafala* system, the rights of domestic workers and the social protection of migrants.

28. The discussant, Mr. Ibrahim Awad, Director of the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, opened up a general discussion on the session papers. He proceeded by clarifying that international migration is not only a movement from South to North, from developing to industrialized countries, but also happens to a significant extent between and among developing countries. Indeed, levels of interregional and intraregional migration within Asia are greater than migration out of Asia, and the same applies to international migration within Africa. South-South migration has thus become one of the most important migration streams globally. He added that some 50 per cent of international migrants

are migrant workers and almost 40 per cent are families of those migrant workers, such that their migration makes a social, economic and demographic contribution to development in both countries of origin and destination.

29. Mr. Awad emphasized that trans-border issues can only be addressed if there is international cooperation. Furthermore, migration and development issues cannot be addressed in isolation of protection and rights issues, as underlined by the DA project on international migration. The protection of the rights of international migrants is necessary to ensure the contribution of migration to development in both countries of origin and destination. The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forum on Migration and Development should address the issue of protecting the rights of international migrants. Where the nation State is the primary actor, there is a need to look at what is happening within it in order to protect migrants and benefit from these new international citizens. The economic activities of the world have become increasingly globalized. The migrant workers are the beginning of “global citizens” and their needs should be addressed through a “global system”.

30. In the discussions that followed, participants raised issues relating to demographic trends and the future of interregional migration, as well as the impact of climate change on migration. It was noted that data in key areas were lacking, not only in relation to the number of people leaving their countries of origin, but also relating to those returning. The question of reform was also raised, with the example of the reform of the temporary work permit system of the Republic of Korea being highlighted in particular.

#### B. MANAGING INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION WHILE PROTECTING MIGRANTS

31. The Session was chaired by Mr. Irudaya Rajan, Professor, Research Unit on International Migration, Center for Development Studies, Kerala, India.

32. Mr. Federico Neto, Director, Social Development Division, ESCWA, gave a presentation entitled “The Relationship Between Migration, Development and Social Protection”, which outlined the opportunities and challenges for development through international migration. These include the transfer of workforce, knowledge and funds. Mr. Neto highlighted the “triple-win-approach”, through which both countries of origin and destination, as well as migrants themselves, can benefit from international migration. He identified vulnerabilities faced by migrants and proposed various types of social protection measures that could be introduced to address them. He outlined some of the existing social protection measures extended to migrants in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) before concluding his presentation with a set of recommendations on ways in which social protection for migrant workers could be strengthened.

33. Ms. Nicola Piper, Research Fellow, Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute for Socio-cultural Research, Freiburg, Germany, gave a presentation entitled “Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers from South Asia: Key Issues”, in which she provided an overview of the human rights framework underlying international migration. She identified the specific features of international migration within South Asia, as well as from South Asia to the GCC countries, and considered the specific vulnerabilities and human rights issues arising from the migration process. The employer-tied work permit system, the low skill profile of migrants, the involvement of private recruitment agencies and the high share of female migrants from certain countries of origin were highlighted as some of the key issues. Ms. Piper concluded her presentation by setting out some of the existing approaches of rights-based migration governance.

34. A number of issues were raised in the ensuing discussion, in particular pertaining to the lack of regulation of private recruitment agencies and the need to extend social protection to migrant workers and to families left behind in the country of origin. The low educational level of many migrant workers, especially domestic workers, often results in distorted expectations and increases their vulnerability. The instrumental role of civil society in protecting the rights of migrant workers was emphasized and the need for adequate pre-departure training and ensuring that future employers receive accurate information about workers was raised. The importance of bilateral memoranda of understanding or adequate regulation to oversee the

migration process was also highlighted, and the potential role of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was discussed.

35. Ms. Hélène Harroff-Tavel, Associate Expert, International Labour Organization, gave a presentation entitled “The Implications of the Recent Reform of the Sponsorship System: Challenges and Opportunities”. After providing an overview of the *Kafala* system (the system which requires migrant workers to have a local sponsor, binding them to their employers and preventing them from changing jobs or leaving the country), Ms. Harroff-Tavel outlined a number of key challenges facing the system. She also provided an overview of the reforms undertaken to date, noting that the likelihood of comprehensive reforms being undertaken was low, although she highlighted a number of encouraging changes in certain ESCWA member countries. She concluded her presentation by proposing an alternative to the *Kafala* system.

36. Ms. Tasneem Siddiqui, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, gave a presentation entitled “Recruitment Costs in Bangladesh: Challenges of Governing International Migration in Countries of Origin”. She provided an outline of recent trends in international migration from Bangladesh to Western Asia and highlighted the significance of remittances to the Bangladeshi economy. She argued that the recruitment of migrant workers should be managed by the Government, yet noted that over time the role of private recruitment agencies had increased and that approximately half the cost of recruitment is now generated by fees in the country of origin. She explained that the cost of migration was different for each country of destination and was dependent on a number of factors, including the level of skill of migrants. She outlined the average length of time that migrants have to work to recover the cost of migration and explained that they often had to take loans from a number of different sources to cover the cost. She also noted that the practice of visa trading in countries of destination also posed a challenge in governing international migration.

37. Mr. William Gois, Regional Coordinator, Migrant Forum Asia, gave a presentation entitled “The Role of Civil Society in the Protection of Migrant Workers”. He explained that Migrant Forum Asia is a regional network of non-governmental organizations committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers. He emphasized the role that civil society can play in providing support to protect the rights of migrant workers, such as providing shelter for undocumented migrant workers. Having explained that civil society is playing an increasing role in the Global Forum on Migration and Development, he did, however, question the level of commitment shown to the concerns raised by civil society organizations. Furthermore, he noted that while there was agreement on the involvement of civil society in the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, to date no mechanism to ensure such involvement had been established. He identified the following key areas for the involvement of civil society at the regional level: (a) issues related to the *Kafala* system; (b) access to justice systems; (c) unemployment of undocumented migrant workers; and (d) access to detention centres and prisons for Embassy and Consular officials.

38. The discussant, Mr. Ahmed Ghoneim, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Cairo, responded to the presentation by highlighting additional issues related to the reform of the *Kafala* system, such as the unofficial income streams generated by the system through visa trading, as well as the need for information on alternatives to the system. He also questioned whether the essence of the problem does in fact lie with the *Kafala* system, pointing out that there are issues related to the protection of migrant workers in other countries as well. He argued that the political economy of reforming the *Kafala* system, including the interference of lobby groups in any attempt to reform, is a crucial issue that needs to be fully addressed.

39. Regarding recruitment costs, Mr. Ghoneim pointed out that migrants sometimes needed to work for several years simply to repay the loans they had taken out to finance their migration, which, in the short term, exacerbated the poverty level of their families in their countries of origin. He also noted that further research was required to understand why migrants choose to work in the GCC countries, which offer the lowest salaries, the highest recruitment costs and the longest recovery time of such costs. He also stressed the indirect cost of migration, namely the social cost. He argued that the role of civil society in the protection of migrant workers should be enhanced, as civil society is generally better able to collect data and



information on migrants and more strongly positioned to raise issues related to the protection of the rights of migrants in receiving countries.

40. In the discussion that followed, participants pointed out that there were challenges to the governance of international migration in both countries of origin and destination. Participants also noted that the need for reform existed not only in countries of destination, but also in countries of origin. They expressed the view that the use of private recruitment agencies should be subject to greater scrutiny. A number of participants also observed that the high cost of recruitment precluded migration by the poorest of the poor.

41. Participants also raised the question as to whether it could be expected that migration to the GCC countries would continue, given continuing high fertility rates in the GCC countries and high levels of unemployment among nationals. While some participants noted that in the GCC countries, foreign and national labour were imperfect substitutes and that a dual labour market existed, characterized by the low propensity of the local labour force to work for the wages offered by the private sector, other participants expressed the view that as unemployment rates increased in the local labour force, there would be a concomitant increase in pressure to accept lower-paid jobs.

### C. ASSESSING MIGRATION FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

42. The session was chaired by Mr. Jerrold Huguet, Population Consultant, ESCAP. It commenced with a short film entitled “Maid in Lebanon”, depicting the difficult choices thousands of female migrant workers take when they decide to leave their families to go to work in Lebanon.

43. Ms. Simel Esim, Senior Regional Technical Specialist, International Labour Organization, gave a presentation entitled “The Situation of Migrant Domestic Workers in Arab States – A Legislative Overview”. She noted that although the Arab region has the largest gender gap in employment, women represent as many as one third of migrant workers. Domestic workers are increasingly female live-in domestic workers from Asia and Africa, and examples the abusive working conditions faced by some of them were given. Ms. Esim explained that the cost of employing a domestic worker was often three times the monthly salary of the employer and that this often created a sense of entitlement which could result in abusive practices. She outlined the international human rights and labour standards applicable to domestic workers, and highlighted in particular the United Nations Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, which includes measures to ensure fair terms of employment. Ms. Esim also pointed out that most Arab States had not yet ratified a number of important conventions relating to migrant workers and that even when regulations were in place, they were often not enforced. Ms. Esim concluded her presentation by reaffirming the need both to amend national labour legislation and to ensure its enforcement.

44. Ms. Aswatini Raharto, Chairman for Social Sciences and Humanities, Indonesian Institute of Sciences, gave a presentation entitled “The Migratory Experience of Returned Domestic Workers: the Example of Indonesia”. Ms. Raharto provided background information on Indonesian migrant workers based on her recent survey and said that research had shown that most migrants from Indonesia to GCC countries are women, more than 98 per cent of whom are domestic workers. She noted that the majority had migrated several times and that the main reason for migration was the lack of equivalent job opportunities in Indonesia. The majority of domestic workers had received some training prior to departure, worked 15 hours or more daily and regularly sent remittances to their families, which were primarily used to cover daily household expenses. Ms. Raharto also outlined Government policies related to the migration of domestic workers and concluded by emphasizing the importance of existing legislation being fully enforced in countries of both origin and destination.

45. The discussant, Ms. Fahima Charafeddine, President, Committee for the Follow-Up on Women’s Issues, Lebanon, commented on the papers presented by the previous two speakers and opened the discussion. She posited that discrimination against domestic workers is a reflection of the general discrimination structures which exist in Arab societies and should therefore be addressed within that context.

Female domestic workers face double discrimination: first, as is the case for their male counterparts, they are legally vulnerable because of the prevailing legislative setting, and second, they are subjected to gender-based discrimination because of the prevailing socio-cultural setting that still condones violence against women in the family. In this context, she reiterated that a major explanatory factor for the low salaries of female domestic workers is that the household work of women is neither valued, nor accounted for economically. Ms. Charafeddine suggested that while current legislation focused on the security dimension, issues related to the protection of migrant workers actually needed to be addressed in a stronger gender context. She also emphasized that legislation per se was not sufficient; implementation was critical.

46. Ms. Stella Banawis, Deputy Administrator, Philippines Overseas Employment Agency, reported on reforms undertaken in the Philippines to provide greater protection for migrant domestic workers. A minimum wage for domestic helpers had been introduced, but not adequately enforced. The Philippines have also started to classify destination countries as compliant or non-compliant with labour regulations, hoping to encourage dialogue with countries of destination to enhance the protection of migrant workers.

47. In the discussion that followed, a number of points were raised on ways in which the protection of migrant workers could be strengthened. Participants from countries of origin mentioned that the enforcement of the rights of migrant workers required consistent monitoring. It was noted that most employers were concerned about the protection of workers and that there was a willingness on the part of countries of destination to have a dialogue on the ways in which social protection could be enhanced. Other participants noted that the number of complaints was not a reliable indicator of abuse of domestic workers, as only a minority of abused domestic workers actually filed an official complaint.

48. With regard to training, participants mentioned that while there was at least some minimum training for migrant domestic workers on the culture of the country of destination, it would also be worthwhile to train employers on labour regulation and the needs of migrant domestic workers, and that the media could play a role in such training. It was also suggested that countries of destination should be stricter in selecting the families who would be allowed to hire a migrant domestic worker, as many families who hired such workers could not truly afford to do so, which had negative consequences for the working and living conditions of migrant domestic workers. The need for more effective regulation of private employment agencies was highlighted once again, to ensure that all parties are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and are treated fairly.

49. Participants raised the issue of the need for greater value to be attributed to domestic work, which was frequently not considered to constitute labour. It was also mentioned that many domestic workers actually performed care tasks, such as caring for older persons or persons with disabilities, for which they were often not trained, yet they were still considered to be – and paid as – domestic workers.

#### D. SHARING NATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND GOOD PRACTICE RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE PROTECTION OF MIGRANTS

50. The session was conducted as a panel discussion and was moderated by Ms. Yuko Hamada, Senior Regional Programme Development Officer, International Organization for Migration. A panel of representatives of the GCC, Lebanon, Pakistan and the Philippines presented reports on policy measures undertaken to protect migrants, which were followed by general discussion.

51. Ms. Stella Banawis, Deputy Administrator, Philippines Overseas Employment Agency, reported on practices of migration management in the Philippines, including policy formulation. She highlighted the sensitization of migrants to irregular recruitment by private recruitment agencies as a good practice. Another important practice was the documentation of all migrant workers in a common database, through which they could be tracked when needed. She concluded by affirming that while good migration management in countries of origin could increase the welfare of migrants, there was also a need for greater involvement by

countries of destination in good migration management by, for example, ensuring that employers comply fully with the terms of contracts of employment.

52. Mr. Jamal al-Salman, Director of Labour, GCC, provided an overview of good practice in the GCC countries. He started by noting that it would be more appropriate to define migration to the GCC countries as “temporary contract migration”. He stated that the GCC countries guaranteed the dignity of migrant workers through anti-trafficking and labour laws which, for example, provide for the protection of wages and the freedom to transfer money to the country of origin. He also explained that migrants are entitled to disability and accident insurance, annual leave and health care. Successful initiatives in the GCC countries include the tripartite labour market system in Bahrain and an electronic system to protect wages in the United Arab Emirates. Mr. al-Salman conceded that certain practices had not been successful to date, such as the regulation of recruitment agencies and of domestic work generally. He also emphasized the importance of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue for the GCC countries and bilateral dialogue with India and the Philippines.

53. Mr. Rana Matloob Ahmed, Director of Research, Pakistani Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, highlighted the fact that 96 per cent of temporary labour migrants from Pakistan migrated to the GCC countries. Their remittances had been of great importance to the economy of Pakistan, especially during such emergency situations as the earthquake in 2005 and the floods in 2010. He set out a number of good practices in managing migration which have been adopted in Pakistan, including the pre-departure training of migrants and the provision of health policies, through which all migrants have health insurance. Pakistan has also established initiatives to facilitate the transfer of remittances; the Bank of Pakistan has established a branch in Saudi Arabia and is planning to establish branches in other countries of destination. To ensure adequate social protection of migrant workers, the Government is working towards reducing irregular migration and promoting the migration of skilled workers, and has established a complaints management system to regulate recruitment agencies. Mr. Matloob Ahmed concluded by emphasizing the importance of continuing the dialogue between countries of origin and destination.

54. Ms. Marline Atallah, Director, Foreign Labour Force Division, Ministry of Labour, gave a presentation on the experience of Lebanon in protecting the rights of migrant workers. She noted that Lebanon was both a country of origin and of destination. For many years, it has suffered particularly severely as a result of the emigration of highly skilled workers, but in recent years it has received increasing numbers of migrant domestic workers as Lebanese women have become increasingly active in the labour market; there are currently 23,573 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. Ms. Atallah then focused on the regulation and services provided by the Lebanese Ministry of Labour for the protection of migrant domestic workers, which include the fact that the Ministry is working with the International Labour Organization to translate a standardized contract of employment for domestic workers into several languages; employers are now obliged to provide health insurance for domestic workers; a hotline has been set up for domestic workers suffering from abuse; and a guide to Lebanese culture for migrant workers is being developed. Turning to the challenges related to the management of migrant domestic workers, she highlighted the fact that the information provided by recruitment agencies is frequently inaccurate; many domestic workers possess only basic skills; and the widespread problem of the unfulfilled expectations which all too frequently result from the sizeable financial outlay required of employers who wish to recruit a domestic worker.

55. In the discussion that followed, participants shared country-specific experience. A programme to curb illegal practices by recruitment agencies, a compulsory registration system for migrant workers at the airport of departure and the provision of free insurance for registered migrant workers were among the good practices highlighted from Sri Lanka. There are a significant number of migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, China, yet since the involvement of civil society increased in the 1990s, improved legislation has been adopted, significantly reducing the incidence of physical abuse of such workers. In Bangladesh, a migrant welfare bank was recently opened, providing collateral-free soft loans to finance the migration process and facilitate remittances. A number of participants from countries of origin also reported that their experience with the Republic of Korea had been positive, as the Korean Government has established a special system which has resulted in lower recruitment costs in comparison with the countries of the ESCWA region.

Finally, the issue of compulsory health checks, whether carried out in the country of origin or destination, was brought up by a number of participants.

56. Several participants also noted the importance of finding joint solutions between countries of origin and destination in order to protect migrant workers. In that respect, it was suggested that the focus should not only be on the challenges, but also on the opportunities presented by migration and the contribution made by migrant workers in both countries of origin and destination.

57. Representatives of receiving member countries emphasized the importance of the interrelation between migration and development in general, noting that South-South migration has become one of the most important labour migrations worldwide, particularly in the case of labour migration to the GCC countries, which has contributed to the development process in both countries of origin and destination. In this context, it is also important to note the examples of the Philippines and Egypt, where academic research has found that international migration has contributed to lowering poverty levels by 10-15 per cent.

58. Mr. Donovan Storey, Chief, Social Policy and Population Section, ESCAP and Ms. Batool Shakoori, Chief, Population and Social Development Section, ESCWA, summarized the interventions made by participants and identified the following priorities for countries of destination and origin in working towards achieving equity and social protection:

(a) Acknowledging the human rights of migrant workers in all respects, including personal rights and rights related to the family in the country of origin; recognizing the rights of migrant workers to equity and enjoyment of the laws protecting physical and moral rights; and ensuring economic rights through pensions, decent housing, education and appropriate health services;

(b) Ensuring social equity for female migrants and their coverage under legislation that protects their rights, with an emphasis on the importance of legislation that protects the rights and dignity of labour migrants in the countries of origin and destination;

(c) Addressing the issue of wages and enacting legislation that specifies minimum wages. In this context, it should be emphasized that legislation and regulations should cover both the local workforce and immigrant workers;

(d) Reconsidering the sponsorship system. For many years, countries of destination have attempted to amend the system and reform it to better meet the requirements of employers and employees in order to reach a balance between their respective rights and to ensure that all are equal before the law;

(e) Agreeing on common definitions of the various types of labour migration. ESCWA is reconsidering the use of definitions in accordance with the agreements reached as part of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue process (using the concept of “expatriate workers”, for example). It is hoped that the GCC countries will also reconsider their use of migration terminology, particularly in relation to “temporary contractual labour migration”;

(f) In the case of Lebanon, dialogue and legislation are important in creating a common understanding between the three key stakeholders: the country of origin, the country of destination and recruitment offices in both countries. In fact, the problems faced by domestic workers are not limited to their abuse by employers in the receiving country, but also include their abuse and exploitation by recruitment offices in the country of origin.

59. With regard to training, participants mentioned that while there was at least some minimum training for migrant domestic workers on the culture of the country of destination, it would also be worthwhile to train employers on labour regulations and the needs of migrant domestic workers, and that the media could play a role in such training. It was also suggested that countries of destination should be stricter in selecting

the families who would be allowed to hire a migrant domestic worker, as many families who hired such workers could not truly afford to do so, which had negative consequences for the working and living conditions of the workers.

60. Participants from countries of origin mentioned that the enforcement of the rights of migrant workers required consistent monitoring. It was noted that most employers were concerned about worker protection and that there was a willingness on the part of countries of destination to have a dialogue on the ways in which social protection could be enhanced. Other participants noted that the number of complaints was not a reliable indicator of abuse of domestic workers, as only a minority of abused domestic workers actually filed a complaint.

61. Participants also raised the issue of the need for greater value to be attributed to domestic work, which was frequently not considered to constitute labour. It was noted that many domestic workers actually performed important care tasks, such as caring for older persons or persons with disabilities, for which they were often not trained, yet they were still considered to be – and paid as – domestic workers.

#### **E. WORKING GROUPS: PREPARING THE AGENDA FOR FUTURE INTERREGIONAL DIALOGUE**

62. The participants were split into two groups: one to discuss the findings and the other to discuss the recommendations. These groups were designed to ensure geographical and gender balance. The outcome of the working group discussions was presented and modified in plenary; the results appear as the findings and recommendations in this report.

### **III. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP**

#### **A. VENUE AND DATE**

63. The Workshop on Strengthening Dialogue between ESCWA and ESCAP Countries on International Migration and Development was held at UN House, Beirut, from 28-30 June, 2011.

#### **B. OPENING**

64. Mr. Yousef Nusseir, Director, Information and Communication Technology Division, ESCWA, presented an opening statement on behalf of Ms. Rima Khalaf, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA. He welcomed the participants and noted that the Workshop was held within the framework of the DA project entitled “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact”. He observed that international migration and its impact on development is emerging as an issue of priority, with around one billion migrants worldwide generating remittances of some US\$414 billion in 2009.

65. Mr. Nusseir emphasized that South-South migration has become one of the most important global labour migration streams, although the countries involved frequently still lack the capacity to efficiently manage international migration in such a way as to maximize its benefits and minimize its negative impacts on development. Labour immigration to the GCC countries is distinct from other migration streams in its considerable impact on the population structure and labour force composition; indeed, immigrant workers now form the majority of the population in a number of Gulf countries. However, he pointed out that the share of Arab immigrants working in the GCC countries has declined from 72 per cent in 1975 to just 32 per cent in 2004, revealing the lack of regional integration in Arab labour markets. Thus, in the context of the ESCWA roadmap for regional integration, a common strategic vision should be adopted for consultation and dialogue on Arab labour migration.

66. Mr. Donovan Storey, Chief, Social Policy and Population Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP, delivered an opening statement on behalf of Ms. Nanda Krairiksh, Director, Social Development

Division, ESCAP. He noted the long-standing links between the countries of the ESCWA and ESCAP regions, not only through migration, but also through trade and tourism, which flowed in both directions. He noted that there were currently an estimated 13 million migrants from ESCAP countries in ESCWA countries of destination, and that this migratory flow presented both challenges and benefits, particularly in relation to development. He also noted that protection of the rights of migrant workers was a key concern for countries of origin in the ESCAP region.

67. Mr. Storey emphasized the importance of dialogue in promoting the best development outcomes for migration, and placed the Workshop in the context of the follow-up to the Abu Dhabi Dialogue process, noting that the conclusions and recommendations of the Workshop could be useful for subsequent meetings of that process, as well as for the United Nations High-level Dialogue on Migration, planned for 2013. He also outlined the place of the Workshop in the DA project and noted that the project aimed to identify both the commonalities of international migration across the five regions of the world – Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia – and what is specific to each of the regions. He also clarified that the ESCAP migration programme focuses on assisting ESCAP member States in designing policies on migration that contribute to inclusive and sustainable regional development.

68. Ms. Mariana Al-Khayat Al-Sabbouri, Head, Office of Public Relations and Conferences at the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon and Liaison Officer between ESCWA and the Ministry, delivered an opening statement on behalf of the host country. She thanked ESCWA and ESCAP for providing countries with the opportunity to address the issue of international migration, which has grown in priority for both countries of origin and destination, particularly in the context of the financial crisis and the prevailing political and security conditions in the Arab region.

69. Ms. Al-Sabbouri emphasized the importance of migration flows from ESCAP countries to ESCWA countries, noting that in 2010 the GCC countries hosted some 10 million labour immigrants originating from the ESCAP region. She highlighted the important development benefits of international migration for both countries of origin and destination and noted that many labour-receiving countries have been able to fill the gaps in their national labour markets, while many labour-sending countries have benefited from inward remittances that have lowered poverty levels. She concluded that strengthening their dialogue on international migration and development will enable countries to maximize the development benefits of migration and minimize its negative impacts.

### C. PARTICIPANTS

70. In addition to experts from ESCWA and ESCAP, the Workshop was attended by national experts from Government ministries and departments from three ESCWA member countries (Egypt, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates) and five ESCAP member countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines) which are particularly involved in migration and labour issues. Representatives from international organizations, including the International Organization for Migration, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and other United Nations agencies also participated in the Workshop and provided the perspective of their organizations on the issue of migration and development. A number of United Nations organizations working in the field of migration and development were also represented, as were regional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, and independent academic and civil society experts.

## Annex

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