



REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR ASIAN LABOUR MIGRANTS

Background

The Regional Dialogue on the Health Challenges for Asian Labour Migrants was held 13-14 July, 2010 in Bangkok, Thailand. Organized by UNDP, IOM and UNAIDS in cooperation with WHO, ILO and the Joint UN Initiative on Mobility & HIV/AIDS in South East Asia (JUNIMA), the meeting served as a preparation for the upcoming Colombo Process Ministerial Consultations (early 2011, Dhaka), where migrants' health issues are expected to be discussed for the first time.

Representatives from the ministries of health and labour/overseas employment, as well as foreign affairs, from 13 countries came together to discuss the health challenges faced by the region's 55 million migrant workers, and adopted Joint Recommendations (see reverse side) on key actions to improve the health and well-being of migrant workers.



For more information and to download the Meeting Report visit:

<http://regionalcentrebangkok.undp.or.th/practices/hivaids/RegionalDialogue.html>



"We know from experience that addressing the health challenges of labour migrants is not something that can be done by one ministry alone, or by one country alone. It requires a combination of efforts, across ministries, across borders and across regions."

- Dr Chanvit Tharathep, MD, FRCST., Director of Health Administration Bureau, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand



Joint Recommendations

Highlighted recommendations include:

At national level:

1. Strongly encourage and support relevant government ministries to review existing policies, laws and practices related to labour migration and health, aiming an overall coherence among policies that may affect migrants' health and their ability to access services.
2. Identify and/or designate a focal entity for migration health within concerned ministries tasked to initiate inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral dialogue.
6. Ensure that the existing practice of medical testing done in connection with overseas employment is done in compliance with internationally-accepted quality standards with due consideration to confidentiality and counseling, as well as rights-based access to preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services.
13. Promote migrant health needs in existing national budgets and encourage regional and global funding mechanisms.

At bilateral, regional, intra-regional level:

17. Develop guidelines and minimum standards to assist countries of origin and destination, based on effective practices and existing models, for migrant workers, including health financial schemes and social protection in health, i.e. mandatory health insurance, that will benefit migrants as well as their families, regardless if they are joining migrant workers or staying behind.
20. Support multi-country partnerships to facilitate uninterrupted management for conditions requiring long-term treatment (e.g TB, HIV).

See the Meeting Report for the full set of Joint Recommendations.

"...in spite of all the contributions made by labour migrants, migrants' health needs are very often overlooked and marginalized in the global migration discourse. A large majority of migrant workers face challenges in accessing health facilities and services – and this is particularly true for the temporary contractual workers, who are often excluded from all forms of support and facilities."

- Ms Rabab Fatima, Regional Representative for South Asia,
International Organization for Migration

