



Migrant community health workers gather much needed health information for labour migrants in Thailand (Photo: © Thierry Falaise/IOM 2006/MTH0108)

IOM and Labour Migration

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an inter-governmental body, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration, advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration, and work towards effective respect of the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Labour migration is defined as the movement of persons from their home State to another State for the purpose of employment. Today, an estimated 86 million persons are working in a country other than their country of birth. Despite the efforts made to ensure the protection of migrant workers, many migrants continue to experience numerous problems particularly more vulnerable groups, such as female domestic workers, entertainers and lower skilled workers.

Organized and well managed labour migration has enormous potential for Governments, communities, migrants, employers and other stakeholders in countries of origin and destination. While job creation at home is the first best option, an increasing number of countries see international labour migration as an integral part of national development and employment strategies by taking advantage of global

employment opportunities and bringing in foreign exchange.

In countries of origin labour migration can relieve pressure on unemployment and can contribute to development through the channeling of remittances, transfer of know-how, and the creation of business and trade networks. In countries of destination facing labour shortages, orderly and well-managed labour migration can lighten labour scarcity, facilitate mobility, and add to the human capital stock.

To protect migrant workers and to optimize the benefits of labour migration for both the country of origin and destination as well as for the migrants themselves, clearly formulated labour migration policies, legislation and effective strategies are required.



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The IOM approach to labour migration management

International labour migration is a transnational phenomenon and therefore cannot be effectively managed or addressed only at a national level, and also needs to be addressed at bilateral, regional and international levels. IOM, through its extensive global network of missions is able to bring together stakeholders from countries of origin and destination to introduce and establish labour migration projects, programmes, and mechanisms that balance different interests, with a special focus on addressing migrants' needs.

The IOM approach to international labour migration is to foster the synergies between labour migration and development and promote legal avenues of labour migration as an alternative to irregular migration. Moreover, IOM aims to facilitate the development of policies and programmes that are in the interest of migrants and society and that provide effective protection for labour migrants and their families.

IOM activities for orderly and well managed labour migration

Policy advice and capacity building in labour migration management

Policy advice and capacity building in countries of origin includes assisting governments in developing and adopting policies, legislation and structures that promote efficient and effective foreign employment of their workforce while minimizing negative effects such as brain drain. IOM moreover builds the capacity of countries of destination seeking ways to better manage their labour inflows and the integration of the labour migrants in their new workplace and the host society.

In West Africa IOM builds the capacity of the sending countries Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, to manage labour migration and to combat irregular migration. This is done through assessments of the national labour migration policies and practices; by providing assistance for the establishment of mechanisms for the identification, registration and selection of candidate migrant workers to match needs in receiving countries, and through information dissemination on labour migration opportunities, procedures and the risks of irregular migration. This mainly EU funded regional project will moreover develop the capacity of Libya as a country of destination to develop labour immigration management through the review of policy objectives, legislation and mechanisms in place regarding labour admission. *For more information please contact: iomaccra@iom.int.*

In Central Asia IOM seeks to improve the situation of labour migrants from and in Central Asia through better labour migration management in

five selected countries: Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. IOM works with government counterparts, parliaments, international and regional organizations, and the media to promote the formulation of policies and laws that recognize the economic reality of labour migration and give legal status and protection to labour migrants. Under this project, thematic workshops and other regional events are organized to encourage regional information-sharing and coordination. *For more information please contact: iomalmaty@nursat.kz.*

Information and awareness raising

IOM works in close collaboration with countries of origin and destination to prevent irregular migration, labour abuse and the misinformation of migrant workers through awareness raising activities and provision of information to migrants in origin, destination and transit countries. IOM implements activities to inform migrants about their future living and working environment prior to their departure and assists migrants by developing language training courses to facilitate integration in the workplace and host society. Moreover, IOM informs the migrant workers of the risks and realities associated with labour migration and works to improve migrants' access to information on immigration and labour legislation through:

IOM staff in Kosovo providing information and assistance to potential migrants (Photo: ©



- The establishment of migrant resource centers;
- information campaigns and outreach activities in countries of origin and destination;
- orientation and training for migrant workers and members of their family.

IOM is working to establish information, advice and referral services for migrants and potential migrants through an established regional network of Migrant Service Centres (MSCs) in the Western Balkans. The MSCs will provide migrants and potential migrants with individualized assistance and group counseling sessions on the reality and risks of irregular migration. Moreover, the migrants and potential migrants will receive information on possibilities and procedures for decent work opportunities in the country and/or for legal emigration. The MSCs will be embedded within local structures, such as local and regional Employment Offices and relevant Ministries. Local officials within these local structures will work in tandem with IOM and will receive on-the-job training within the daily activities of the MSCs. This will allow for IOM to fully phase-out and handover of the tasks to relevant institutions by the end of the project. *For more information please contact: mrfbudapest@iom.int.*

Sheremet Kukaj/IOM 2005/MYU0118)



Facilitation of foreign recruitment and circular migration

Many industrialized countries require foreign workers on a temporary and longer term basis because the local labour force cannot meet local demands to remain competitive in the global market economy. Facilitating circular migration can respond to short-term requirements for labour, while at the same time maximizing the development impact of migration in countries and communities of origin.

Increasingly, governments as well as private sector entities have sought IOM's assistance to put into place transparent, equitable recruitment schemes ensuring that migrant workers are placed in decent working conditions in particular within the framework of bilateral arrangements. IOM's specific areas of focus include information dissemination, database set-up and registration of potential migrant workers, matching skills with demand, selection and pre-departure orientation, transit and post-arrival assistance, complementary orientation in the receiving country, job placement, return and reintegration in the country of origin.

For more information on IOM's work in foreign recruitment and for the IOM Position Paper on Recruitment of Foreign Workers, please contact Labour and Facilitated Migration Division at IOM Headquarters in Geneva.

Based on previous experiences in Labour Migration, IOM coordinates with the support of the Government of the Republic of Colombia, the consolidation and expansion of the Temporary Circular Labour Migration (TCLM) model between Spain and Colombia that had been established by the Farmers' Union of Catalonia. The TCLM model allow Spanish farmers to temporarily hire Colombian labour migrants for agricultural work. After a fixed-period of time, the migrant workers return to Colombia with the potential prospect of being contracted again for the following harvest season. IOM through strategic alliances provides pre-departure training for Colombian migrant workers and access to social and productive services upon return. Moreover, the model promotes the potential channeling of migrants' savings obtained during their stay in Spain to contribute to the regional and local development in Colombia. *For more information please contact: iombogota@iom.int.*

Interstate dialogue and regional cooperation

Dialogue and cooperation among States involved in labour migration processes is essential if international labour migration is to benefit all the stakeholders involved. IOM therefore facilitates inter-state dialogue and regional cooperation.

In response to a request from several Asian countries of origin, IOM organized ministerial level consultations in 2003 (Colombo), 2004

(Manila) and 2005 (Bali) in order to provide a forum for Asian labour origin countries to share experiences, discuss common issues and identify steps for follow-up in the form of ministerial recommendations. This became known as the “Colombo Process.”

The Abu Dhabi Dialogue, an offshoot of the Colombo Process and hosted by the United Arab Emirates and co-organized by IOM brought together for the first time the Colombo Process States with the Gulf Cooperation Council States, Yemen and the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Singapore. The Abu Dhabi Dialogue serves as a forum for both countries of origin and destination. For more information see: www.colomboprocess.org.

Labour migration resource material

IOM, ILO and OSCE

- “Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and Destination”
- “Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and Destination”. Mediterranean Edition

Both versions of the handbook can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/706>.

These publications provide assistance to States in their efforts to develop new policy solutions and approaches for better management of labour migration and labour migration flows in countries of origin and of destination, and to social partners, the media, non-governmental organizations, academia and the general public by providing accurate and reliable information on labour migration policies and practices.



Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica working in the construction industry. (Photo: © Jéssica Saavedra/IOM 2007/MCR0003)

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