

National Labour Migration Policy for Sri Lanka

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Background of Labour Migration in Sri Lanka

- ◉ Total population – *20 million*
- ◉ Total number of Migrant Workers - *1.7 million*
 - > 22 % of the total labour force
- ◉ Annual departures for foreign employment
 - > 2006 – 266,000 persons
- ◉ Second highest foreign exchange earner for the country
 - > 2010 – US\$ 4.1 billion

- ◉ Remittance inflow is 8% of the GDP of the country
- ◉ Male - Female ratio among the migrants is *51:49*
- ◉ 90% are in the Middle-eastern countries
- ◉ 11% of the population receives remittance
- ◉ SLBFE is the regulatory body

Why was the National Policy for Labour Migration developed ?

- ◉ Serious gaps in the existing legislative and regulatory framework
- ◉ High share of female, low-skilled migration leading to an increased vulnerability and the need for more protection
- ◉ Ratification of international conventions – *UN Convention 1966, CEDAW*
- ◉ Recognition of the contribution of labour migration to the economy
 - › *Ten Year Horizon Development Framework 2006-2016*

- ◉ Mainstreaming migration into the main policies
 - › *Decent Work Country Programmes*
 - › *National Employment Policy*
- ◉ Global initiatives for promoting migration and linkages with development
- ◉ National interest on labour migration and demands of the stakeholders

Objective of formulating the National Migration Policy

- To develop a long-term vision for the labour migration
- To enhance the benefits and returns of labour migration to the economy, society, migrant workers and their families while minimizing the negative aspects
- To work towards the fulfilment and protection of all human and labour rights of the migrant workers within a decent work environment

Process of formulating the policy

- ◉ The Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare took the lead role and ownership
- ◉ International Labour Organization has given technical and financial assistance through donors
- ◉ Active participation of key stakeholders and tripartite constituents in the whole process
- ◉ Mainly guided by the ILO Multi-lateral framework on labour migration with rights based approach

Information used for policy formulation

- ◉ Annual statistical reports published by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
- ◉ Labour market information bulletins
- ◉ Central Bank of Sri Lanka – Ten Year Development Plan of Sri Lanka (2011 – 2016)
- ◉ National Decent Work policy of Sri Lanka
- ◉ Labour force surveys
- ◉ Reports of the Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka
- ◉ Desk reviews of different aspects of labour migration in Sri Lanka
- ◉ International Conventions related to labour migration

Process followed

- ◉ Established a National Tripartite Steering Committee chaired by the Minister of Foreign Employment and Promotion with representatives from the main stakeholders to guide the process through close interaction
- ◉ Appointed a process manager
- ◉ Established three thematic working groups on the following main areas to co-ordinate and facilitate the process in consultation with the relevant ministry and ILO –
 - › Governance of labour migration
 - › Protection and empowerment of migrant workers
 - › Linking migration and development

- The 3 working groups represented the following sectors and provided strategic inputs and recommendations through discussions –
 - › Government
 - › Trade Unions
 - › Employees / migrant workers
 - › Licensed recruitment agents
 - › Civil society
 - › Concerned NGOs
 - › International agencies working on migration – ILO/IOM/UNICEF/UNAIDS

- Drafted the policy by the policy manager and the drafting committee and presented the draft to the stakeholders for validation

- Presented to the Cabinet of Ministers for state approval

Contents of the National Migration Policy

The policy is developed in 3 sections

1. Governance of the migration process
 - Institutional framework
 - Regulatory
 - Legislative framework
 - International framework
 - Participation of migrant workers in the governance
2. Protection and empowerment of migrant workers and their families (at all the 3 stages)
3. Linking of migration and development process

Challenges and lessons learnt

- ◉ Initial challenge was to include all the stakeholders in the process of migration to be active participants by drafting the National Migration Policy.

Allocation of time and effort of the stakeholders was seen as a challenge

- ◉ Selecting a suitable process manager was a challenge
 - > A person capable of handling the drafting process as well as being acceptable to the government and other stakeholders was required
- ◉ Challenge in the acceptance of the National Policy at the National Consultations and at the meetings of Cabinet of Ministers

- Challenges in finding qualitative data
- Inadequacy of coherence across the migration and related policies such as trade, employment, health, labour, foreign affairs etc.
- Necessity of independent academic institute to conduct studies and research on labour migration
- Necessity of strengthening the regional co-operation in labour migration
- Necessity of enhancing coherence among the government and other stakeholders

Implementation mechanism and the way forward

- ◉ Policy had identified a range of issues and challenges in the process of labour migration and recommended a Strategic Action plan to meet the challenges
- ◉ Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare takes full responsibility and is committed to implementing the policy
- ◉ Established a National Labour Migration Advisory Committee comprising of representatives for monitoring, and periodical evaluation of the implementations and was chaired by the Minister.
- ◉ SLBFE should send periodical reports to the said Advisory Committee on the labour migration situation

- ◉ Establishing an inter-ministerial co-ordinating committee to ensure the co-ordination among government ministries, department and other institutions
- ◉ ILO mobilized funds from other donors to implement the policy, giving priority to each identified strategies such as –
 - › Legislative reviews
 - › Institutional reviews
 - › Review of existing procedures in Diplomatic missions etc

Thank You