

Improved Migration Infrastructure Needed to Better Protect Soaring South Asian Labour Migrants

For immediate release: Monday, 14 July 2008 (ROAP/08/28)

(ILO Dhaka) Protection for the soaring number of migrant workers from South Asia – and the ability or inability of countries to provide this protection – will be the focus of an international conference to be held in Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, Bangladesh from 15 to 16 July 2008.

The Regional Symposium on the Deployment of Workers Overseas: A Shared Responsibility, organized by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the International Labour Organization (ILO) will be represented by government, worker and employer organizations from ten countries.

More than 1.5 million South Asian workers are estimated to migrate every year, many of them destined for the Gulf region to perform construction, maintenance, and other service jobs. Counting only those who go through regular channels, more than 200,000 workers are estimated to depart every year from each of Sri Lanka and Pakistan, and many more from India and Bangladesh.

In 2007, remittances to the region were estimated by the World Bank to have exceeded US\$40 billion. Of these, India accounted for US\$27 billion, Bangladesh US\$6.4 billion, Pakistan US\$6.1 billion, Sri Lanka US\$2.7 billion, and Nepal US\$1.6 billion.

But rights protection for South Asia's migrant workers is the major concern. By standard definition, South Asian migrants would be classified as highly vulnerable: large numbers take irregular routes; most are low-skilled and young; and for some countries the majority are women. In Sri Lanka, between 60-70 per cent of outgoing workers in recent years were women finding employment mainly as domestic helpers. This is confounded by exorbitant recruitment costs and corrupt recruitment practices widespread in some countries.

"If the region is to reduce the risks for migrants, and maximize the benefits of this large and growing migration, it should constantly adapt its migration infrastructures to emerging conditions and realities in the global labour market," said Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Director of the ILO Sub-regional Office for South Asia.

Migration infrastructures are institutions that facilitate migration and remittances, and return. They include regulatory agencies to monitor recruitment, social security provision for migrant workers, training centers, money transfer agencies, and cooperation agreements with receiving countries.

The symposium is a concrete step in pursuit of 'improving dialogue and the management of labour migration so as to benefit both sending and receiving countries and better protect the rights and equal treatment of migrant workers, which was identified as a national priority for action at the ILO Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting on Decent Work in Asia held in Busan, Korea in 2006.

Participants include high-level government officials, and representatives from workers' and employers' organizations from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, the United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka.

The symposium will discuss recruitment policies and cooperation mechanisms between origin and destination countries, and will provide a venue for exchange of best practices on the preparation of workers for foreign employment and provision of on-site services and monitoring.

The conference hopes to contribute to the development of recruitment practices and labour migration management in South Asia. Financial and technical support for this event is provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the ILO/EU Asian Programme on the Governance of Labour Migration.

For more information please contact:
A.F.M. Jamiluddin, Programme Officer, ILO Dhaka
Email: jamil@ilodhaka.org
Tel.: 880 2 8114705; 9112907; 9112876
Fax: 880 2 8114211

ข่าวเผยแพร่
Press Release

