Skills Partnerships on Migration in the Western African & Central African regions

Skills partnerships can contribute to reaping migrants’ potential more effectively, acting as an innovative mechanism for maximising brain gain and sharing the benefits of migration for both origin and destination countries.

Ultimately, these partnerships help skills development systems become more inclusive, migration more demand-led, and migrant workers better prepared, protected and able to utilize their skills.

The highest incidence of low- and semi-skilled migration on the African continent is found in the Central African, West-African and Sahel regions. As part of the SKILL-UP Programme, developed jointly with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ILO embarked on a 12-month project designed to promote skills partnerships in a tripartite consultative manner and developed implementable and potentially scalable ideas for skills partnerships at country- and corridor-level.
Why Skills Partnerships on Migration?

In 2018, Heads of State adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration at the United Nations General Assembly. Recognising the need for skills partnerships, this intergovernmental agreement dedicates its Objective 18 to the issue of investing in skills development and facilitating mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences.

In collaboration with UNESCO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Organization of Employers (IOE), the ILO launched the Global Skills Partnership to support the development of skills partnerships between countries, along migration corridors and within selected regions. While most international cooperation regarding the free movement of people focuses on highly skilled individuals, the Global Skills Partnerships pays particular attention to low- and medium-skilled migrants.

What has been achieved so far?

Sub-regional analysis of the potential for skills partnerships on migration:

With a team of 16 national and 2 international experts, the ILO conducted 16 country studies and two sub-regional scoping studies identifying the potential for skills partnerships on migration between different countries and skills institutions, including ministries, training providers, employment services, sectoral bodies and employers’ and workers’ organizations.

These studies provided the basis for the discussions that took place under two separate tripartite workshops organised by the ILO in Western Africa and the Sahel, and in Central Africa.

Tripartite consultations for the formulation of skills partnerships on migration:

The tripartite workshop for Western Africa and Sahel took place from 11-13 September 2019 in Abuja, Nigeria, and brought together 61 participants from 8 countries, along with partners from the Global Skills Partnership.

The tripartite workshop for Central Africa took place from 16-18 September 2019 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and brought together 46 participants from 6 countries, along with partners from the Global Skills Partnership.

The methodology for the workshop, co-designed with the ILO International Training Centre (ITC-ILO) in Turin, stimulated participation and helped to promote ownership.

1. The work in West Africa was cost-shared with the FMM West Africa Project, funded by the European Union.
The winning partnership ideas and their action plans provide solutions for countries to strengthen their skills systems and labour migration governance. The ILO stands ready to support these initiatives and their implementation to promote inclusive growth in the sub-regions.

Some of the ideas retained are presented below:

**Recognition and validation of prior learning for priority occupations**

Mauritania and Senegal agreed on a five-year joint action plan to develop common occupational, competency and assessment standards in the priority occupations they will identify. They also committed to support enterprises to upgrade the equipment and training of tutors.

**Harmonization of training programmes in agriculture, construction and metal construction**

Burkina Faso and Mali formed a three-year partnership to harmonize the content of their training programmes in three different sectors. Their action plan also involves sharing experiences and good practices while facilitating the socio-professional integration of migrants.

**Harmonization of certification and standards**

Nigeria, Ghana and Togo agreed to collaborate on the harmonization of certifications and standards to facilitate the portability of skills between the three countries. This will boost the confidence of employers in hiring migrant workers and facilitate better integration of migrant workers in the workforce.
There are around 6 million migrant workers currently residing in the 16 project countries:

1. Burkina Faso
2. Cameroon
3. Central African Republic
4. Chad
5. Congo
6. Côte d’Ivoire
7. Democratic Republic of Congo
8. Equatorial Guinee
9. Gabon
10. Ghana
11. Mali
12. Mauritania
13. Niger
14. Nigeria
15. Senegal
16. Togo

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