



Evaluation Summaries

Independent cluster evaluation of two ILO projects on labour migration

- 1). ILO/UNIFEM/EC Asian Programme on the Governance of Labour Migration (RAS/05/M02/EEC)
- 2) ILO/Japan Project on Managing Cross-border Movement of Labour in Southeast Asia (RAS/05/M14/JPN)

Quick Facts

Mode of Evaluation: Interim Independent Cluster Evaluation, Jan 2009

Technical Area: Labour Migration

Evaluation Management: Camorra Pringsulaka Regional Office –Bangkok.

Evaluation Team: Niall O’Higgins

Project Start:

- 1). ILO/UNIFEM/EC project: January 2006
- 2). ILO/Japan project: January 2005

Project End:

- 1). ILO/UNIFEM/EC project: March 2009
- 2). ILO/Japan project: December 2010

Project Code:

- 1). ILO/UNIFEM/EC project: RAS/05/M02/EEC
- 2). ILO/Japan project: RAS/05/M14/JPN

Donors:

- 1). ILO/UNIFEM/EC project: European Union (Donor’s contribution: Euro 1,955,335)
- 2). ILO/Japan project: Japanese Government (Donor’s contribution: USD 2,900,000)¹

Keywords: Labour migration

¹ The donor has committed to the yearly funding but not necessarily to the total anticipated amount of USD 2.9 million. The amount of annual contribution could thus be less than USD 580,000 a year.

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Labour migration is now a major global issue. It is estimated that there are around 90 million migrant workers globally, and in Asia the number of migrant workers is estimated at around 25 million with around 3 million more Asian workers leaving their home countries to work abroad every year.

The two projects are concerned with contributing to the promotion of rights and gender-based governance of labour migration and the protection of Asian migrant workers from exploitative and abusive treatment.

The immediate objectives of the two projects are as follows:

i) RAS/05/M02/EEC

1. **Knowledge Base:** At the end of the project, the information and knowledge-base on labour migration in Asia will have been improved, and awareness and understanding among key stakeholders of the need for a more organized, and mutually beneficial labour migration regime will have been increased.
2. **Policy:** At the end of the project, countries in Asia will have taken steps to follow the principles and guidelines for a

regional framework on rights-based labour migration management, developed through multilateral dialogue, for governance of labour migration.

3. **Capacity Building:** At the end of the project, the capacity of labour administrators, social partners, other duty bearers, and civil society, including migrant women groups, will have been strengthened for broad-based dialogue and cooperation and effective participation in management of labour migration based on ILO principles and good practices.

ii) RAS/05/M14/JPN

1. **Knowledge Base:** Countries will have improved information and knowledge critical to formulation, implementation and evaluation of national migration policies and practices.
2. **Policy:** Governments will have formulated and implemented coherent labour migration policies and programmes, which respect the fundamental rights of migrant workers and beneficial to employment, economic growth and development in both origin and destination countries.
3. **Capacity Building:** Capacity of the governments, social partners and other specific target groups for good governance of migration processes will have been strengthened.
4. **Remittances:** Countries will have established efficient, safe and low cost remittance system and new initiatives for supporting services on micro-enterprise development in migrant workers' communities.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to consider the strategic contribution of the two projects to the overall regional and country strategies and priorities to address labour migration issues.

The evaluation takes into account all interventions, geographical coverage, and the whole period of the two projects from the start

up to the time of the evaluation. The scope of the evaluation also takes into consideration the scope of the following frameworks:

- Asian Regional strategies on labour migration.
- Asian Regional Plan of Action.
- The ILO Multilateral Framework on labour migration.
- ILO relevant DWCP priorities at regional and country level.
- Relevant country priorities and strategies to address migration.

The principal clients for this evaluation are the project management, SRO-Bangkok, ILO-ROAP, Donors and the ILO HQ technical unit.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation presented here is based on:

- A desk review of documentation relevant to the two projects. This included the original project documents and the relevant progress reports, the relevant strategic documents produced by the ILO and other national and regional agencies. It also included a review of other relevant documentation on labour migration in Asia.
- Direct interviews with project stakeholders in Cambodia, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand. These included:
 - Internal ILO staff - project staff, ILO-ROAP and SRO Bangkok management, other relevant staff and specialists of ILO-ROAP and SRO Bangkok, staff and Directors of the ILO in Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand.
 - ILO constituents and other partners including UN agencies such as UNIFEM, ESCAP and IOM.
 - Direct recipients and beneficiaries of the projects at the country level.
 - Telephone interviews and/or e-mail questionnaires with internal ILO staff - including the ILO HQ Unit MIGRANT - and national constituents in countries not visited during the evaluation mission.

Main Findings & Conclusions

- The overall evaluation of the work of the two projects is very positive. They are both playing a very useful role in supporting the process of developing a rights and gender based approach to labour migration governance in countries in the region. The feedback from national and regional stakeholders is positive and there is evidence of the impact of the projects on the approach to labour migration governance in participating countries. Both projects have made a significant contribution to the ILO-ROAP's Regional Outcomes, as well as to the implementation of the PALMAP and the MFLM.
- Some issues have arisen regarding the uncertainty, and above-all, the progressive reduction of *RAS/05/M14/JPN* project's funding. These have thus far been partially mitigated by the ability of the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project to co-finance activities. Since the latter project is now nearing conclusion issues to do with financial support for activities under the ILO/Japan project are likely to become more acute.
- There are some issues with the design of the *RAS/05/M14/JPN* project. In practical terms these are relatively minor, but it is felt that a review and possibly an appropriate revision of the PRODOC may help in clarifying the outputs and goals to be achieved by the project particularly as regards Immediate Objective 2.
- The relationship between the projects has been managed effectively and the projects have proved to be useful complements to each other as well as being well-integrated with other ILO initiatives related to migrant workers and labour migration governance.
- Although both projects have made useful contributions thus far, it is clear that much work remains to be done.

For example, as noted above, there is still a tendency amongst, in particular, receiving countries to see the problem of undocumented and/or irregular migration as one of 'better' security and policing rather than one which can be much improved through sensible labour migration governance measures inter alia by making legal migration cheaper and simpler.

- In working with the Social Partners, a far greater emphasis has thus far been placed on support and capacity building for workers organisations in comparison with employers' organisations. This is particularly true of the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project and this is largely the consequence of a well motivated strategic choice made by the project. However, it may be advisable in future to make efforts to tackle the problem also from this angle. The *RAS/05/M14/JPN* project has had notable success in promoting the establishment of a recruitment agency association in Cambodia. Such initiatives may be worth pursuing also in other countries.
- Overall, the objective importance of issues concerned with labour migration is growing and will undoubtedly continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Political recognition of this fact is also growing – in part as a result also of ILO activities in the area. Thus, for example, in October 2008, the 2nd ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers meeting held in Bali adopted the 'Bali declaration' on "More and Better Jobs – Strategic Cooperation and Partnership to promote decent work and global labour markets to our mutual benefit," within which the Ministers resolved to "promote decent work for all by ... [*inter alia*] ... protecting and promoting the rights of migrant workers taking into account

relevant guidance...”². The ILO needs to take advantage of this window of opportunity and build upon the work thus far carried out in Asia and ensure that it play a determining role in the evolution of labour migration management policies in the region in future.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations

- 1) Labour migration in Asia is a phenomenon which is growing in importance as is the political recognition of the need for adequate governance systems to allow the benefits of labour migration to be felt by all. The development of such management arrangements for the appropriate governance of labour migration is a long process. In this context, it is highly desirable that given its Mission, its competencies and its previous experience in the field that the ILO continues to play a leading role in helping countries move towards rights and gender based labour migration governance. Thus, **it is recommended that the work thus far undertaken by the two projects evaluated in this report – as well as other ongoing ILO work on labour migration in Asia – be built upon and extended.**
 - a. In this regard the establishment of a new position of migration specialist in the ILO-ROAP is to be welcomed.
 - b. As the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project is coming to an end whilst there remains much work to be done by the ILO at the regional and sub-regional levels, it is important that the ILO-ROAP finds ways to build

on what has already been achieved. Specifically, one priority for the new migration specialist should be finding donors to continue the type of work which has been thus far been undertaken by the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project.

- 2) The ASEAN Declaration and more particularly the follow-up activities to the declaration represent a window of opportunity for the ILO to increase its influence and promote rights based labour migration management in line with the PALMAP and the MFLM. Specifically, the ASEAN Committee on the follow-up to the Declaration has established a working group comprising representatives of two sending (Indonesia and the Philippines) and two receiving countries (Thailand and Malaysia) with the brief of developing an instrument for the practical implementation of the Declaration. **The ILO should seek to engage one or other of the sending countries involved in the working group** (more probably the Philippines with their greater experience and capacity in managing sending labour abroad) **in order to seek to influence the development of the instrument so as to ensure that its principles take into account the MFLM.**

- 3) Given that the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project is now coming to an end and the level of resources currently available to the ILO/Japan project for the funding of project activities is extremely limited, **the *RAS/05/M14/JPN* project possibly in collaboration with the ILO-ROAP should urgently seek additional financial resources to fund future project activities.**

- 4) Some issues were identified with the project design of *RAS/05/M14/JPN*

² ASEM Bali Declaration para. 7. The declaration makes many references to the ILO and its work and indeed is framed in terms of ILO terminology – ‘Decent Work’, ‘more and better jobs’ and so on.

particularly as regards Immediate Objective 2 and its associated outputs. At this mid-term point in the project implementation, it suggested that **the PRODOC should be reviewed and possibly modified, above-all, in order to clarify the specific outputs to be produced under Immediate Objective 2 and specific meaning to be attached to this Immediate Objective itself.**

5) Broadly speaking, both projects' activities have mainly been focussed at the governmental level with a significant amount of support also being devoted to capacity building and networking amongst workers' organisations. Thus far, **relatively** little attention has been paid to employers' organisations. In particular, both registered and unregistered recruitment agencies play a *de facto* central role in the labour migration process. It may well be desirable that in the longer run, governmental agencies largely take over this role, as is the case in Korea; however, in the shorter term this is unlikely to occur. Consequently, **it is desirable that in the immediate future, the RAS/05/M14/JPN project continues and extends its engagement of employers' organisations in general and recruitment agencies' associations in particular.** In this regard, it is worth noting that the ILO-ROAP has been engaging with the organisation Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) which counts amongst its members the largest global corporations. This complementary avenue might be explored by ILO-ROAP, and in particular, by its new migration specialist, to investigate whether this or similar organisations concerned with socially responsible business practices may play a useful role in improving business practices amongst recruitment agencies.

6) As noted in the text, a significant proportion of labour migration from Asia concerns the Gulf States and there are numerous concerns expressed by Asian sending countries concerning the (lack of) application of basic protections for migrant workers. The *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project has made several attempts to engage with countries in that sub-region with limited success. Given the importance of the Gulf States as receiving countries and the concerns expressed, **future ILO initiatives should make renewed efforts to engage with Gulf States in order to improve governance of labour migration and promote the application of ILO principles on the protection of migrant worker rights in the area.**

7) As the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project nears termination, it is important that useful project initiatives - undertaken either as specific steps towards Immediate Objectives, such as the creation of the MISA data base, or as more general support activities, such as the establishment of the project website - which will require ongoing support, do not disappear once the project itself comes to an end. **It is desirable that, before the project is concluded, commitments are sought a) from national and/or (sub-)regional counterparts to take responsibility for the maintenance and updating of the MISA database once it is up and running; and, b) from the ILO-ROAP to incorporate and maintain the project website which might reasonably become the website for labour migration activities under the auspices of the new Migration Specialist.**

Follow-up

i) **Engaging Employers organisations** – as suggested above, ILO activities on labour migration should further engage employers'

organisations. In Cambodia, the association of recruitment agencies was established as a direct result of the *RAS/05/M14/JPN* project and the project is providing technical assistance on the development of a code of conduct. Both the ILO's MFLM and the PALMAP make explicit mention of the establishment of recruitment agency codes of conduct as a useful intermediate steps towards better labour migration governance. Once established in Cambodia, the project might seek to also adapt the code of conduct for application by other countries covered by the project and, in the longer run, on a wider scale. In Indonesia, the project might also consider, in the first instance seeking to promote contacts between APINDO (the Employers' Association of Indonesia) and recruitment agencies in the country.

ii) **Standard employment contracts** - another area which it might be worth looking at, either for action by the ILO/Japan project, or possibly by the new Migration Specialist at ILO-ROAP, concerns the development of standard employment contracts – or more realistically, standard clauses in employment contracts – for migrant workers. Again this is an area where the ILO has a specific comparative advantage as well as being requested by constituents.

iii) **Pre-departure training** – another area where there are requests for support from constituents regards pre-departure training for prospective migrant workers. More generally, there are various areas of training and/or information provision for prospective migrant workers which might be developed more in future work. In general, in discussing issues with constituents, there was a generalised concern both by returning migrants but also from governments and recruiting agencies that prospective migrants would benefit from more training and or information before departure. The *RAS/05/M14/JPN* project, in particular, has made a contribution towards establishing and/or improving pre-departure training and information provision, however, this line of work might be explored further.

iv) **Cross border communication and co-operation** – the general area of cross country dialogue strongly emphasised in the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project has been very useful in helping countries learn from the experiences as well as facilitating direct dialogue on substantive issues between sending and receiving countries. The *RAS/05/M14/JPN* project has also facilitated dialogue in particular between Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR. This area of work should be continued.

v) **Specific groups of migrant workers** – another way of building on the work already carried out would be to focus on specific groups of migrant workers (e.g. women, or young people) looking at their specific needs in the migration process and so to tailor the intervention of governments and the social partners to better meet those needs.

vi) **Pensions and social security** – An important area which might receive greater attention in the future concerns the pension and social security rights of migrant workers in receiving countries and the possibilities of establishing agreements for the transference across countries of such rights and accumulated benefits. This is naturally contingent on the prior establishment of cross-country MoU or other forms of basic agreement between countries on migrant workers, and as such has not figured prominently in the work of the two projects thus far. As noted above, the *RAS/05/M02/EEC* project contains a component on social security, but this area is a fairly natural next step to develop future work on cross-country agreements and as the period of time which migrant workers spend in the host country tends to increase – as it no doubt will – will tend to take on an ever increasing importance.