



Concept Note

Shaping Narratives, Changing Lives: The Role of Media in Labour Migration

8 February 2024

Elilly Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

► Background & Justification

Migration in the East and Horn of Africa is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. It has always been part of its socio-economic landscape. The flow of people in, between and from countries in the region is best characterized as mixed migration flows that encompass refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrant workers. According to the African Union 2019 report on labour migration statistics (third edition), East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) holds the second largest share of Africa's population with an estimate of 357 million. Similarly, the region also hosts the highest number of migrant populations (7.7 million). The report further highlights that the East and Horn of Africa region has registered the highest growth rates in international migration population (7.4 per cent) and migrant labour force (7.5 per cent), despite the low population growth and labour force rate (each 2.6) from 2010-2019. The EHOA is also one of the regions with the largest increase in the number of migrants and refugees globally. The East and Horn of Africa region faces significant social and economic challenges that is also a pushing factor for migration, namely, persistent poverty, inequality, high levels of informality in labour markets, and vulnerability to various shocks such as conflicts, natural disasters, and health emergencies. The men, women and children making up these migrant flows frequently resort to unsafe modes of transportation and smuggling networks during their journey, exposing themselves to injury, violence, detention, exploitation and abuse.

With hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians embarking on unsafe routes each year in search of better opportunities, there has never been a greater need for an in-depth understanding of labour migration. Media, as an essential influencer of public opinion and awareness, plays a critical role in illuminating the challenges and opportunities associated with labour migration. Thus, it is imperative for the media to look further into the issue of labour migration, understand its complexities, and highlight the human stories behind the statistics. By doing so, they not only give a voice to those often marginalised and unheard but also provide a platform for constructive dialogue. This enhanced understanding will enable journalists to report more accurately and

comprehensively on labour migration issues, focusing on the direct circumstances of migrant workers and returnees. Such media coverage can serve as a drive for change and advocacy, compelling governments, civil society, and the private sector to take meaningful actions, advocate for the protection of labour rights, and foster safe and orderly migration.

In light of this, the Better Regional Migration Management (BRMM) programme is organising a workshop dedicated to raising awareness on labour migration dynamics among local and international media outlets, as well as to emphasise the importance of providing adequate coverage on labour migration issues, in recognition of International Migrants Day, December 18. This event serves as a unique platform to directly engage local and international journalists, correspondents, editors-in-chief, media house owners, photojournalists, bloggers, media ethics experts, migrant workers and returnees, representatives from governments, NGOs, migration experts, workers and employers' organizations, CSOs, as well as human rights activists.

The event seeks to emphasise the importance of media in shaping narratives, changing lives, and ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and informed society in which labour migration issues are not only understood but actively addressed through meaningful engagement. Accordingly, the media can become a driving force for positive change in the context of labour migration.

► Objective

To enhance the understanding and capacity of media professionals, and content creators in Ethiopia to report comprehensively and accurately on labour migration issues in the East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) region, ensuring that the voices and human stories of migrant workers, and returnees, are effectively conveyed to the public.

Specific Objective:

1. Equip media professionals with in-depth understanding about the complexities and challenges of labour migration, including the legal frameworks, labour rights, and humanitarian aspects, to enable them provide insightful, sensitive, and balanced coverage.
2. Foster a constructive dialogue between media, governments, civil society, and the private sector in order to promote safe, regular and orderly labour migration, and protection of migrant workers.
3. Encourage media professionals to prioritise labour migration issues in their reporting, focusing on the firsthand experiences and conditions of migrant workers, and returnees in order to raise awareness and advocate for necessary actions and essential changes.
4. Establish a network of informed and motivated media practitioners who can serve as advocates for labour migration issues, promoting positive policies and practices at the local, regional, continental, and global levels.
5. Advocate responsible and ethical reporting on labour migration issues, while adhering to media ethics and standards to ensure that stories are conveyed accurately, professionally, and without bias.

► Methodology

The methodology for the event will follow a multi-faceted approach designed to equip media professionals with the necessary understanding and skills to comprehensively and accurately report on labour migration issues in the country, as well as the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) region. The programme will be tailored to the region's particular context and will include a wide range of activities to facilitate maximum engagement, sharing, and exchange among participants.

The methodology will incorporate presentations and panel discussions by experts on labour migration, sharing best practices, insights, and practical experiences in reporting on labour migration issues. Case studies will be reviewed to provide real-world examples of challenges and opportunities. Group activities and discussions will promote active participation and critical thinking, enabling media professionals the opportunity to look further into the complexities of labour migration, legal frameworks, labour rights, and humanitarian aspects. These discussions will emphasise on the importance of portraying the human stories behind the statistics, giving voice to migrant workers, and returnees. Additionally, the event will feature sessions focusing on professional and ethical reporting, adhering to media ethics and standards. Practical exercises will be a key component, allowing participants to apply the concepts acquired firsthand experience in crafting accurate and unbiased reports.

Furthermore, the methodology will foster peer-to-peer exchanges among participants, allowing them to learn from the practices, challenges, and triumphs of other countries. The participatory and interactive approach aims to empower media professionals with a comprehensive understanding of labour migration, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and informed media landscape where these crucial issues are given the priority coverage they deserve.

► Expected Outcomes

Upon completion of the workshop, participants are expected to achieve several key outcomes:

Enhanced Understanding: Media professionals and content creators will gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges related to labour migration, including insights into legal frameworks, migrant workers' rights, as well as the BRMM programme.

Comprehensive and Accurate Reporting: Media professionals will be equipped with the skills and knowledge required to provide insightful, sensitive, and balanced coverage of labour migration issues in the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) region, with the focus of Ethiopia, ensuring that the voices and human stories of migrant workers and returnees are effectively conveyed to the public.

Constructive Dialogue: The workshop will foster constructive dialogues between media professionals, government representatives, civil society, and the private sector. This dialogue will focus on promoting safe regular and orderly labour migration, and protection of migrant workers.

Prioritising Labour Migration: Media professionals will be encouraged to prioritise labour migration issues in their reporting, with a specific focus on sharing the firsthand experiences and conditions of migrant workers, returnees, and potential migrants. This emphasis aims to raise awareness and advocate for necessary actions and essential changes.

Network Building: The event will establish a network of informed and motivated media practitioners who can serve as advocates for labour migration issues. This network will actively promote positive policies and practices at the local, regional, continental, and global level.

Professional and Ethical Reporting: Participants will advocate for professional and ethical reporting on labour migration issues while adhering to media ethics and standards. This will ensure that stories are conveyed accurately, professionally, and without bias.

► Participants

A diverse group of 55 local and international participants based in Ethiopia will attend the workshop, including journalists, correspondents, editors-in-chief, media house owners, photojournalists, bloggers, media ethics experts, migrants and returning migrants, representatives from government, international NGOs, migration experts, workers and employers organizations, civil society organizations, human rights activists, migration experts from the EHoA region, as well as representatives from the AU and RECs, such as IGAD. This diverse group of participants ensures a multi-stakeholder approach to addressing labour migration issues in the East and Horn of Africa region, fostering informed dialogue, and a more inclusive media landscape in which the complexities and challenges of labour migration are effectively conveyed to the public.

► Date & Venue

Date: 8 February 2024

Venue: Elilly Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia