



CONCEPT NOTE

National Consultation and Process Validation Workshop for Skills Assessment and Certification mechanism for departing and returning migrant workers (Construction Sector)

1. Background

The ILO Project on “Enhanced Recognition of skills and reduced vulnerability of Sri Lankan Construction workers in selected GCC countries (Migration Skills Project)” is a sub component of the International Organization of Migration’s (IOM) Regional Project on “Strengthening Labour Migration Governance through Regional Cooperation in Colombo Process Countries, funded by the Swiss government. One of the main objective of the project is to strengthen the skills testing and recognition mechanisms for departing and returning migrant construction workers. In order to implement this component the project collaborates with Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC), relevant ministries and institutions in Sri Lanka.

Migrant workers, as the Guidelines for Recognizing the Skills of Returning Migrant Workers, ILO 2010 (ILO Regional Guidelines for Asia-Pacific) stipulate, gain skills and experience in line with their occupations during their period of employment; however, a common issue for most returnee workers is that although they have the practical knowledge acquired through years of experience, many are still considered as unskilled labour since their skills are not properly recognized in a formal manner¹. As a result they settle for whatever employment opportunities available, often compromising with a lower salary and corresponding to their skills and experience overseas.

ILO Guidelines further identifies that migrant workers lack support services that can help them find training and certification to meet National and International standards. In order to address this ILO developed a Regional Model Competency Standards (RMCS) for Manufacturing, Tourism, Construction, Agriculture, Generic or core work skills and Mechanical Repairs sectors that provides guidelines to describe new skills and knowledge acquired abroad in local context.

The Sri Lankan government in pursuit of its commitment to have a standardized skill assessment mechanisms in place for departing as well as returnee migrants, the Ministry of Foreign Employment with the technical support of the ILO, launched The Sub Policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration of Migrant workers, Sri Lanka in December 2015. Specifically under Sub Policy Area 2: it states that “*Economic reintegration of returnees improving quality standardization and certification of skills of migrant workers; at pre-departure and upon return*” reiterating commitment to enhancing skills assessment mechanisms.

In order to review the current system of skills assessment the project conducted several individual and group meetings with assessors and representatives of authorities such as TVEC, NAITA, VTA, DTET, CIDA, UNIVOTEC and SLBFE. Further State Ministry of Skill Development and Vocational Training and Ministry of Foreign Employment was consulted to identify existing opportunities. It was identified that the current system of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in assessment of competencies leads

¹ Reintegration with Home Community: Perspectives of Returnee Migrant Workers in Sri Lanka, ILO, 2013



to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) irrespective of employment in the foreign market or local job market. However The RPL system is somewhat scattered and the process is not clearly known and conversed for departing and returning migrant workers as well as the local workers. Therefore a need for a structured intervention for information sharing, awareness, and obtain the services is required to strengthen the current system. This approach was also recommended by the study “Mapping of the Skills Assessment procedures, Certification Standards and Equivalencies (Sri Lanka, UAE & Kuwait) conducted by the Migration Skills Project in 2016.

The Divisional Secretariats that come under the Ministry of Home Affairs play a pivotal role within this context. The DS is positioned in a strategic position between the line Ministries of Foreign Employment (MFE) and Skills Development and Vocational Training (MSDVT). It is under the leadership of the DS that the Development Officers from the MFE (DO-FE) and the Skills Development Officer (SDO) from the MSDVT and several others of similar rank, function. Thus the DS has the greatest potential to reach the village level especially through the Grama Niladhari’s (GN), Samurdhi Officers (SO). At the same time in the context of RPL the Divisional Secretary on the recommendation of the GN is able to certify service experience of construction sector occupations with Own Account Workers.

2. Objective of the Workshop

The main objective of this National Consultation and Validation Workshop is to present the current RPL system and generate ideas that can be consolidated into a streamlined process to enhance or strengthen the RPL system. This will lead to strengthened skills testing and recognition mechanisms for potential and returning migrants that contribute to productivity gains for employers and reduced vulnerability, and promote decent work outcomes for migrant workers. Additionally all workers in general will be able to enhance their skill level and be more competitive in the local market as well.

2.1 Enabling Objectives

- To present the current RPL system, assessment conducted in (February/March, 2017) and generate ideas that can be consolidated into a streamlined process that will strengthen skills testing
- Share local and regional experiences and good practices on skill assessment (Recognition of Prior Learning)
- Consensus building on thematic areas proposed for discussion
- To develop a mechanism through Divisional Secretariats or for information sharing, awareness, and obtain the services of Divisional level officials in promoting the enhanced RPL system including guidance, training, assessment and certification

3. Thematic Areas Proposed for discussion at the workshop

Coordination of RPL Awareness and Training for PMW² and RMW³

The main focus will be to identify how PMWs and RMWs can be made aware of skills training, assessment and certification process that has been established within the vocational education and training system. Awareness that can be handled by Divisional Secretariats to develop a system of information sharing, awareness, and obtain the services of Divisional level officials in promoting the enhanced RPL system including guidance, training, assessment and certification. It was found that many Migrant Workers (MWs) are not aware of the existing assessment and certification opportunities available for the benefit of MWs and Employers alike.

Assessment and Certification (Assessors and Assessment Centres)

The focus will be to revisit the training and certification process of assessors. Look into possible steps that could be taken to strengthen the process and quality of assessment. The assessment centres and/or venues used for assessment and their equipment and materials to carry out assessment. The assessors and assessment centres are the fundamental factors that address the quality and relevance of assessment.

Assessment and Certification (Candidates)

Review the overall assessment and certification a candidate goes through in the RPL system. Conclude with a process guide that can be practically used and understood by candidates. The assessment and certification process has a scattered view and there is no clearly defined process guide available that can be communicated to promote the RPL process.

4. Methodology of the workshop

1. Sharing background information on current skills assessment mechanism for departing and returning migrant workers based on? A flow diagram of the currently followed process will be presented that will cover the aspects from creating awareness at division and village level to certification by RPL. The presentation will highlight observed areas that may need attention to streamline the skills assessment process that will be taken in the group discussions.
2. Sharing regional experiences: ILO Skills experts will share the regional RPL models and impact study done on RPL mechanisms in India practiced by other countries within the region. This will help the working groups discuss possible elements that can be adapted to improve the certification using RPL in Sri Lanka.

² Potential Migrant Workers (PMW)

³ Returning Migrant Workers (RMW)



3. Working group discussions on proposed thematic areas will focus on the current systems and the shared regional practices (above) in comparison to the local context in the construction sector. Groups will discuss and summarise their recommendations to complement the overall RPL process in Sri Lanka. Each group will share their recommendation and conclusion in the plenary.
4. Consensus building on proposed mechanism incorporating the working group recommendations will be facilitated in conclusion. The final outcome will present the complete process in RPL within the construction sector. (through a flow diagram)

5. Invitees and participants

- Representatives of Ministry of Home Affairs
- Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Employment
- Representatives of the State Ministry of Skill Development and vocational training
- Representative of the Ministry of Labour and Trade Union Relations
- Representative of Ministry of Construction and Housing
- Representatives of Ministry of Samurdhi
- Representative of SLBFE
- Representative of NAITA
- Representative of VTA
- Representative of DTET
- Representative of CIDA/ICTAD
- Representatives of Trade Unions
- Representative of EFC
- Representatives of ALFEA
- Representative of UNIVOTEC
- Representatives of Jayalath Training Academy – Construction
- Academics
- Representatives of Construction Industry Chambers
- Representatives of Constructions Skills Council
- Representatives of Divisional Secretaries
- Representatives of Migrant Development officers
- Representatives of Skills Development Officers
- Representative of SDC
- Representative of IOM
- Representatives of ILO

6. Venue, Date and Time

Friday 21st April 2017 at 9.00 -15.00 at Hotel Renuka, Colombo



7. Agenda

08:30 – 9:00 Registration

09:00 – 09:20 Welcome Address

Professor Rajiva Wijesinha, Chairman, TVEC

Ms Simrin Singh, Country Director, ILO

09:20 – 09:30 Introduction

Ms Thilini Fernando Focal Person for Migration Skills Project, ILO

Ms Masako Ueda, Programme Manager, Regional CP Project, IOM

09:30 – 09:45 Introduction to the workshop process by *Mr Jay Seneviratne, Consultant*

09:45 – 10:30 Presenting the current RPL system and Challenges - *Mr Jay Seneviratne, Consultant*

10:30 – 10:45 Tea break

10:45 – 11:00 Regional models on RPL - *Mr. Gabriel Bordado, Skills Specialists, DWT – Delhi, ILO (via online)*

11:00-11:05 Q&A

11:05 – 11:20 Good practices on RPL within Sri Lanka - *Mr. Sivapragasam, NPC, SKILLED Project, ILO*

11:20 – 11:30 Q&A

11:30-12:30 dealing with challenges to establish an efficient and effective RPL process. (working groups on thematic areas)

12.30-1.15 Lunch

13.15 – 14.15 Group Presentations

14.15 – 15.00 Presentation of draft Overall mechanism

Q & A (Summarizing and validating - *Mr Jay Seneviratne, Consultant*)

15.00 Closing remarks by ILO

Followed by Tea