

# ILO Technical Meeting on Labour Migration Statistics in South Asia

28-29 November, 2017 – Colombo, Sri Lanka

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## Overview of the Meeting

Specialists from Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Maldives, as well as representatives from the SAARC Secretariat, Colombo Process Technical Support Unit, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Sri Lankan Institute of Policy Studies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), convened in a technical meeting hosted by ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for South Asia. The ILO delivered presentations on (1) efforts related to strengthening South Asian labour migration statistics within the relevant national, regional and global migration frameworks; (2) measurement approaches that have been adopted at the international level, and the suitability of said definitions and methodologies at the South Asian level; (3) the SDGs and the indicator framework in relation to migration; and (4) the concept and framework for the proposed **International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) Database for SouthAsia**.

Participants were then asked to gather into country-based groups to discuss suggestions for changes and additional considerations to be made in the proposed ILMS, as well as suggestions for more effective use of data to inform labour migration policies in the region, and suggestions on improving coordination between producers of labour migration statistics in South Asia. Below are the key recommendations/action points emerging from the Technical Meeting:

## Recommendations and Key Outcomes

1. Within each country, focal points should be identified in each department collecting migration data. Until a focal point is formally appointed, the ILO will communicate with the participants at the technical meeting through a mailing list to share information and keep the various actors informed.<sup>1</sup> The group may later be formalized into a country-level coordination committee focused on the collection and reporting of data. Said coordinating committees would also provide a medium through which various agencies can share information, data, and best practices at a country-level.
2. The ILMS database will continue to be populated with data according to the timeline proposed,<sup>2</sup> beginning with Phase 2 of data collection in December 2017. The ILO will work

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<sup>1</sup> The mailing list will also include the representatives from South Asia that participated in the series of meetings in Korea on migration statistics – *KOSTAT-ILO Joint Work Project on ILMS*, <http://www.ilokostat-ilms.net/>.

<sup>2</sup> **Timeline:** November 2017: Phase 1 Data Collection – desk-based data collection and meetings with ILO focal points to collect additional available data. December 2017: Phase 2 Data Collection – send ILMS Questionnaire to statistics agencies in South Asian countries to fill data gaps and cover any discrepancies in definitions and methodologies. January 2018: Review of Phase 2 Data Collection. February 2018 – Possible third round of data

closely with focal points to provide and update data, and will review data submitted in January 2018.

3. Due to the current gaps in data availability and/or reliability, the questionnaire for the first round of the proposed ILMS database will be adjusted.<sup>3</sup> Priorities for future rounds of data collection include data tables on wages, recruitment costs, and repeat vs. first-time migration.
4. The proposal for SAARC endorsement of the ILMS database that has been submitted to the SAARC Secretariat will be updated to reflect the discussion at the technical meeting (e.g. list of tables proposed for collection). A selection of tables, graphs and infographics may also be provided to demonstrate the value of investing in migration statistics at national and regional levels.
5. Beyond the proposed regional database (that deals primarily with outflows from South Asia), linkages will also be made with ILOSTAT's global database. This may help incorporate the unique situation and interests of SAARC Member States such as Maldives, where the statistical priority is on labour migration inflows.
6. Countries will collaborate with ILO to work towards alignment with international statistical standards (ICLS Resolutions or Recommendations) on data collection in the area of labour migration statistics. This includes the development of brief guidance notes on migration modules (including return migration) in labour force surveys and household surveys – including case studies from countries where these questions have already been tested.
7. In addition to SAARC, this regional effort to improve labour migration statistics will be made available to the broader set of countries participating in the Colombo Process (perhaps linking to the online repository) and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.
8. ILO and governments from the region will explore collaboration with particular countries of destination to improve data sharing, including on changes in visa status and irregular migration; on occupational accidents (SDG 8.8.1); etc.
9. ILO will collect and share examples of how government agencies, social partners, research institutions and civil society have effectively informed policy using labour migration data – through high level meetings, advocacy, media, etc.
10. Countries will share updates on how they are progressing in reporting on the most relevant SDG indicators, including 8.8.1 (occupational accidents), 10.7.1 (recruitment costs), 10.c.1 (remittance costs), etc.
11. A tripartite regional meeting will be organized in the next biennium with technical focal points *and* policy makers, as well as representatives from social partners. The objective will be to institutionalize the processes for the collection, sharing and alignment of migration

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collection. February – April 2018 – Liaise with ILOSTAT and relevant partners in Geneva to provide data in an adequate format to be uploaded. Mid-2018: Upload the South Asian ILMS as a special collection hosted on the ILO Statistics Database

<sup>3</sup> The originally proposed Table #8 on return migration will be moved to future rounds.

data; present a more complete set of data tables for clearance; and share other developments, including on SDG monitoring within the sub-region.

**Final list of proposed ILMS South Asia tables following completion of technical meeting:**

*Table 1:* Stock of nationals abroad by sex and country of destination (1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015)

*Table 2:* Permanent immigrant inflows of nationals to OECD countries (2000 – 2015)

*Table 3:* Outflows of nationals for employment abroad by sex and country of destination (1997 – 2017)

*Table 4:* Outflows of nationals for employment abroad by skill level

*Table 5:* Outflows of nationals for employment abroad by economic activity (1997 – 2017)

*Table 6:* Outflows of nationals for employment abroad by occupation (1997 – 2017)

*Table 7:* Outflows of nationals for employment abroad by method of recruitment (1997 – 2017)

*Table 8:* Outflows of nationals for employment abroad by province/state of origin (1997 – 2017)

*Table 9:* Inflows of external financial flows (Remittances/Net ODA/FDI) (1997 – 2017)

*Table 10:* Remittance transaction costs for US\$200 and US\$500 transfers from select destination countries to origin countries (Q3 2013 – Q3 2017)

*Table 11:* Reported fatalities of nationals employed abroad (1997 – 2017)

*Table 12:* Total welfare fund payments to families of deceased nationals employed abroad (1997 – 2017).