

Regional Fair Migration Project in the Middle East (FAIRWAY)

Senior Consultation on Labour Migration in the Media

Amman, 6 December 2016

Background

The Regional Fair Migration Project in the Middle East (FAIRWAY) supports broader efforts by the ILO's Regional Office for Arab States to implement the adopted ILO Fair Migration Agenda in the Middle East. The complicated and expensive processes associated with migrating for work, and a sponsorship system under which employers have a high level of control over migrant workers, have created a regime which lends itself to exploitative recruitment and often poor working conditions. Low skilled workers in particular – often from Asia and Africa – face multiple decent work deficits. The FAIRWAY project works to promote fair migration (including fair recruitment) and the elimination of forced labour and trafficking for labour exploitation. The project operates at the regional level and offers country-specific assistance and support (in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates), with particular focus on the sectors in which low-skilled migrant workers predominate – construction and domestic work.

The project strategy is three-fold:

1. promote policy change for fair migration, informed by evidence-based research;
2. support improved implementation of laws and policies by strengthening institutional mechanisms and operational modalities in target countries; and
3. build a more conducive environment for decent work of migrant workers by addressing discriminatory attitudes and actions.

The FAIRWAY project addresses discriminatory attitudes and actions towards migrant workers by sensitizing the public on the rights of migrant workers, potential issues of abuse and fair migration solutions through partnerships with the media. Alongside the Senior Consultation on Labour Migration in the Media (see below), key media engagement activities include the development of an Arabic Migration Glossary for the Media, to ensure the use of accurate and balanced terminology informed by international standards and regional context; and training of local journalists on ethical and fair reporting on labour migration.

This work builds upon the ILO-Panos partnership, which organized an inter-regional meeting of editors from South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East in Jordan in January 2014, three national workshops for journalists in Jordan, Bahrain and Oman, a global workshop with the Al Jazeera Network in September 2014, and a concluding regional workshop on fair migration in Lebanon in June 2015.

Reporting on Labour Migration in the Middle East

Labour migration is a highly sensitive and politicised topic in the Middle East. Journalists face numerous challenges in reporting on the issue in the region, including difficulty accessing sources and reliable statistical information, as well as a lack of press freedom. Typically migration stories are published within the frame of economics or crime, focused on government legislation, reports on 'illegal' migrant workers, human trafficking and domestic workers 'absconding'. Personal stories about migration and the more complex issues around the labour market, recruitment and kafala are not adequately addressed. When reporting on migrant workers, terms such as foreign, illegal, or unauthorized may be used. Domestic workers are often referred to as helpers, maids, or servants.

Improving reporting on labour migration to ensure balanced, accurate perspectives that recognize the contributions that migrant workers make can play an important role in reducing negative public

attitudes and perceptions. This can have a further positive impact on legislation, policy and practice.

Senior Consultation on Labour Migration in the Media, Amman, Tuesday 6 December 2016

A one-day consultation will be convened with senior journalists and editors from the region.

The objectives of the meeting are to:

- Examine challenges and opportunities for reporting on labour migration in the Middle East, including perspectives from the ILO and senior editors and journalists;
- Critically review the migration terminology used by media in the region. Introduce and discuss, with a view to adoption by constituents, the 'Arabic Migration Glossary for Media';
- Provide inputs to the design of the ILO's media engagement and training strategy for 2016-18; and;
- Build an alliance of senior editors and journalists who are actively committed to improving reporting on labour migration the region.