



ACCESSING INFORMATION FOR SAFE AND INFORMED MIGRATION

Objective:

Local level Government officers have the information and capacity to provide adequate information to migrants and families of migrants at local levels

Process of developing the Safe Migration Information Package

The following were included in to the ToT group:

- Officers in Charge of the Kandy and Kurunegala Regional Centres,
- Officers in Charge of Jaffna and Galle District Centres,
- Assistant Manager Gampaha
- Development Officers attached to Divisional and District Secretariats of Chillaw, Nuwara Eliya, Batticaloa, Kalmunai, Kandy, Ampara
- Administrative officers from the SLBFE head office in Battaramulla
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) civil society partners representing Helvetas working in Galle District, Swiss Labour Assistance (SAH) working in Mullaithivu District, SWOAD in Ampara, PREDO in Nuwara Eliya, Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)
- 1 senior official from SLBFE
- 2 officers from ILO

The mix of participants supported learning among experienced officers of the SLBFE, newly recruited

Development officers and SDC partners who had varied experience and knowledge of the labour migration process.

The ToT was conducted in July 2013 and split in to 2 segments - 19-21st July (3 days) and 27th and 28th July (2 days) 2013 in Kandy.

How the Training of Trainers programme helped

- Facilitated a platform for a thorough 'walk-through' of all the important aspects of overseas employment, selecting a job, registration, preparation and travel overseas, rights and responsibilities while in- service and preparing for short and longer term return and reintegration

“Thank you to ILO for this opportunity, it helped to improve my knowledge. I have been involved in the sector for 11 years but there was no opportunity to discuss the full migration cycle like this. When we meet its mostly issue specific discussions”

OIC ILO intervention District

- Clarification of all services provided by the SLBFE such as welfare services and conciliation to address migrant workers grievances
- A better understanding of the risks of HIV and AIDS, human trafficking and child trafficking within the labour migration process
- Ensured uniform understanding of service delivery among the SLBFE officers
- An opportunity for all SDC partners to clarify and confirm facts at the very beginning of the Safe Labour Migration Programme in Sri Lanka
- An opportunity to meet and get to know each other as SDC partners
- A space to learn and practice effective training delivery methods and skills for onward sharing



“We developed a 3 day training for Migration Development Officers based on the safe migration information package. During these trainings we received requests to conduct further training on psychosocial aspects through a 3 day training session...”

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Sri Lanka

CONTENTS OF THE SAFE MIGRATION INFORMATION PACKAGE

1. Safe labour migration information guide book (S&T)
2. Safe labour migration flip book (S&T)
3. Leaflet on human trafficking (S&T),
4. Rights and Responsibilities in Recruitment for prospective migrants and recruitment agents (S&T)
5. Leaflets on HIV and migration - Pathuma, Get to know about HIV, Suba Gaman (S)
6. Posters on human trafficking - 2 (Awareness on adult trafficking, Awareness on child trafficking in S&T)
7. Posters on HIV - 3 (How is HIV transmitted, How is HIV not transmitted, STD clinic locations in SL and contact numbers)
8. Audio Visuals - Video Documentary on Pre-departure decision-making (S&T), PipenaKekulu, HarimKadathura, Suba Gaman, Madhara, Apeksha, Awareness about the service contract, SiyalloSathuthin,

S - Sinhala T - Tamil

CASCADING OF SAFE MIGRATION INFORMATION

- ToT Group identification:
- 5 day Capacity building for ToT Group
- Formulation of the content for the Safe Migration Information Package
- Conducting sensitizations sessions on the package to Heads of SLBFE District centres and related officers who were not part of the ToT group - 2 sessions; 1 in Dambulla and 1 Colombo
- Feedback from sessions fed in to Safe Migration information package
- Finalization and endorsement of the content of the Safe Migration Information package by SLBFE officials
- Design and publication of Safe Migration Information Package
- Conduct of 5 District level Sensitization Programmes based on a 1 day agenda in collaboration with the respective SLBFE District/Provincial Offices
- Conduct of 20 DS level Sensitization Programmes covering 5 DS divisions each from Gampaha, Kandy and Kurunegala, 3 DS divisions from Anuradhapura and 2 DS Divisions from Puttlam Districts.
- Conduct of 5 additional Programmes for each District to cover all MDOs
- Conduct of additional DS level programmes in Nuwara Eliya and Ampara based on requests from ToT group members
- Conduct of Safe Migration sensitizations for Trade Unions working on migrant worker issues
- Conduct of Safe Migration sensitization sessions for other CSOs working on migrant worker issues
- A total of 39 Safe Migration Sessions Conducted.
- Feedback from Pre and post session questionnaires and evaluations fed in to a Database
- Obtain feedback from the field on Safe Migration guide book, revised and updated the Safe Migration guide book and published 2 nd edition in Sinhala and Tamil.
- Internal review of District and DS level Safe migration sensitization programmes and tools to obtain feedback from local level government officers
- Independent review of safe migration component for selected ILO intervention areas and SDC CSO partner intervention areas
- Recommendations for further improvement



KEY FINDINGS FROM INDEPENDENT REVIEW*

- MDOs who received safe migration awareness and training reported increased knowledge and awareness of the migration cycle, yet their ability to communicate and convey safe migration information depends on individual capacity and level of commitment of officers;



“ Sometimes it's not just useful work-wise it is also useful in our personal life to know this information. Among friends, families and general gatherings we talk about migration and then it becomes an opportunity for us to give this information to others ”

GramaNiladari, Kandy District



- Improved coordination and collaboration among local Government Officers at the Divisional Secretariat level
- The Family Background Report (FBR) preparation process has galvanized other government officers into working on migrant workers issues, using their knowledge to spread safe migration information and facilitate services for migrant workers and families in the intervention areas
- Officials who benefitted from the sensitization have increased awareness of each others' duties, roles and responsibilities contributing to their increased interaction and coordination in contrast to officials who were not exposed to such a programme
- Officers without safe migration knowledge had a general idea of migrant workers issues from various sources, a vague knowledge of the existence of MDOs and lacked clarity and understanding of the specific roles and functions of different officials in their divisions.

“ We had a different attitude towards women who sought employment in the Middle East, after the session our attitude is different we think every officer at this level should get this sensitization to better serve the migrant community ”

MDO Dankotuwa DS

- Grama Niladaris (Village headman), Economic Development Officers, Social Service Officers based in DS Divisions who had benefitted from the sensitization were aware of the magnitude and nature of migrant worker issues and felt now they were better informed to advice or refer to relevant officers



“ The knowledge we received, actually enabled us to go to schools and talk to principals and even form small committees at the community level. We also know how to be cautious of sub-agents ”

MDO Narammala DS

* Independent review conducted in August-September 2015 in 6 project intervention districts; Kandy, Kurunegala, Gampaha, (ILO) Nuwera Eliya, Ampara, Galle (SDC Partners) and Colombo, a non-intervention district

MIGRANT WORKER AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING:

- Migrant workers were familiar with key information, such as importance of family well-being, child safety and care, education; the need for family discussions and joint decision-making when considering overseas employment. Some migrant workers decided to postpone going after receiving safe migration awareness, while returnee migrant workers are advising younger women not to rush into decisions to leave particularly those with young children.
- Awareness has been raised on economic goals/financial planning linked to their primary objective/reason for work migration;
- Most local people were aware of the importance of using registered agencies for their protection, those with migrant worker husbands have been able to advise them, follow up on complaints in Sri Lanka, and reported less dependency on brokers/sub-agents because now they are aware of pre-departure processes and can function independently;
- Knowledge of migrant health, HIV & AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

WAS THE INFORMATION HELPFUL?

- Safe Migration knowledge has been helpful for reporting claims, both personal and employment related problems. Migrant workers are now contacting their families back in Sri Lanka and in some cases informing their respective MDOs to inform SLBFE regarding difficulties faced, in anticipation of quick resolution.



“At the Ministry/SLBFE training we got a lot of administrative knowledge but at the ILO sessions we got more practical knowledge of how migration takes place and to work on the field ”

MDO Kurunegala DS

GENDER DIMENSIONS OF ACCESSING AND SHARING SAFE MIGRATION INFORMATION:

- Indications are that fewer unskilled male migrant workers have access to and benefit from the safe migration information program. Very few male migrant workers were observed in the field, during group discussions.
- MDOs have contact mostly with females during FBR preparation process and there are very limited ways of tracking prospective male migrant workers because they typically do not approach the MDOs;
- There were very few male MDOs in contrast to female ones that were interviewed and the numbers of male MDOs across all districts is low in comparison to respective females in that role.

ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS FROM MAIN BENEFICIARIES:

- Government Officers tend to think that migrant workers issues will resolve if they only support men migrant workers instead of women workers.
- Underlying attitudes may be manifested in a culture of entrenched hierarchies where poor, female domestic workers are given low priority in society, internalized gendered notions of male and female roles where women breadwinners was not the norm however gradual changes taking place.
- Lack of understanding of rights of migrant workers as citizens and human rights-based thinking in connection with migration.
- A better balance of male to female ratio of MDOs could enable wider outreach in the communities and a greater balance of women and men in community outreach programmes
- Discussions with spouses of migrant workers should be conducted to assess how joint decision-making is having an effect on gender roles within the household or if decisions are actually being made jointly, based on consultations between spouses and extended family members
- Government officers sensitized in safe migration need more direction and guidance in their method of dissemination and communication with the communities.
- Weak communication between government officers and migrant workers, the authoritarian approach of some local level government officers and dismissive attitudes resulted in distancing of migrant workers and limiting their access to safe migration information at times
- The Language of the information guide needs to be simplified and made user friendly for sharing at village and community level; a more simple version will enable access to and reach wider communities;

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES:

- (a) political interferences.
- (b) lack of facilities, office space, transportation issues in accessing wide geographic locations, access to computers.
- (c) Poor coordination among the MDOs in the field;
- (d) Language barriers and inability to communicate with communities in the local language in certain areas;
- (e) Community's difficulties in accessing information, communicating with SLBFE headquarters and a lack of translators, and translation services;



MONITORING MECHANISMS

There is no effective system of regularly coordinating among the MDOs or a monitoring system in the intervention districts. There were Coordinating MDOs from the original ToT group at District level and SLBFE regional offices in the ILO intervention Districts.

A monitoring mechanism at DS level and village level will further strengthen information sharing, service delivery and follow-up and contribute towards future sustainability of interventions.



LOOKING AHEAD..... TOWARDS INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The Project has activated local structures and mechanisms and paid close attention to enhance and continue activities.

Structures are in place to enable sustainability of interventions through the MDOs, along with Grama Niladaris and other government officers at DS and village levels.

Continuity of the safe migration information sharing component and its further strengthening will depend on certain factors;





- (1) **Policy Environment:** Practical application and clear policy decisions of the government and support to address issues and gaps in the foreign employment sector will ensure sustainability of achievements so far and benefit the wider society
- (2) **Strengthening Government Structures:** SDC and partners have made significant investments in safe migration information development and sensitization for MDOs in particular, Grama Niladaris and other government officers at national and divisional levels. These are steps in laying the foundation for gradual change in attitudes toward safe migration concepts that have currently begun taking place. These officers need motivation to maintain and strengthen their level of commitment and continue their work. Follow up trainings, coordination and monitoring mechanisms and access to basic facilities are essential
- (3) **Strengthening stakeholder partnerships with local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)/ community groups/organizations:** The establishment of partnerships with NGOs as implementing partners and with networks of local community groups have increased the level of local participation in implementing the safe migration program at local level. ILO's tripartite work approach with government, Trade Unions, employers as well as NGOs lends further support for continuity which should be further mobilized. The potential for sustainability is strong when community-based networks and groups mobilized are from the community themselves and identify closely with migrant workers issues and have a vested interest in the protection of their communities;
- (4) **Utilizing the Media:** The role of the media can make a tremendous contribution to the sustainability of the safe migration information component's key concepts, and goals. By providing increased coverage on migrant worker issues in the broader context of social, implications, the engagement of the media will go a long way in sustaining interest in public awareness and contributing toward increased level of understanding and internalizing notions of the safe migration process.

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