

Promoting Decent Work Across Borders: A Pilot Project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers

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International
Labour
Organization

Challenge



The movement of health professionals has increased significantly in the past decades. More so, the migration of health care workers between developing and developed countries has drawn a lot of attention mainly due to the economic and social effects it has been raising. Along with these issues, skills recognition and qualification have been a major theme of international debates, especially with regard to health professionals migrants.

Education is a science as well as an art. It is a science in that the units of education, in the form of variables such as discrete courses and time on tasks, are quantifiable. It is an art in that the outcomes of learning often defy quantification and the learners give their learning individual expressions in many unexpected ways. Comparing the education of nurses within a country is not an easy task. Even with the presence of a national curriculum, individual differences, contextual variations and socio-cultural expectations all contribute to differences in learning outcomes. Comparing the education of nurses across countries is an even harder task. In general, countries that receive migrating health professionals employ a variety of approaches to ensure that migrating nurses are prepared to practice competently and safely in new, and often unfamiliar, health systems and cultures (Nichols, Davis and Richardson, 2011).

For nurses to take advantage of the opportunities brought forth by migration, mechanisms are needed to compare in a transparent and fair manner, the education and qualifications of applicants against national and global standards. It is widely acknowledged that global standards do not exist today and instead, standards are country specific and designed to meet the needs of a specific society. There are differences in credentialing requirements that include professional licensure, use of titles and accreditation of educational programs (ICN, 2003). Effective and sustained standards and policy interventions are required not just to ensure an adequate supply of nurses worldwide, but also to ensure the initial and continued competency of nurses who practice across borders and the consistent recognition of their skills and qualifications across countries. This is the first sine qua non conditions to ensure the full potential of migration and development. The major challenge in this regard is to develop a system that is more inclusive, flexible, accessible and transparent, yet does not undermine its quality of care deserved by all men and women, all around the world.

Response

The International Labour Organization (ILO), with funding support from the European Union (EU), is implementing a programme called *Promoting Decent Work Across Borders: A Project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers*.

The project seeks to better understand schemes in line with circular migration of health professionals. This is done by engaging governments, trade unions and employers organizations as well as professional organizations into policy dialogues, establishing networks of experts and trained practitioners, strengthening employment services for healthcare professionals and skilled workers, facilitating skills recognition processes, and enhancing labour market information systems.

Through this project, the ILO aims at promoting approaches to migration that benefit the migrant workers, the source and destination countries within a rights-based framework for better labour migration governance. The project focuses its activities on three Asian countries with significant outflows of health professionals and skilled workers, namely, the Philippines, India and Viet Nam.

Facts:

- In Europe, the Bologna Declaration and process is an example of harmonization across many countries, initiated in 1999 by ministers of higher education from 29 European countries. It has now grown to include 46 signatory countries. This agreement was originally designed to make academic degree and quality assurance standards comparable and easily transferable across the European Union (Blythe and Baumann, 2008).
- The European Qualifications Framework is envisioned as a method for comparing educational credentials across all the Bologna Process signatory countries. It is still in development. Many countries have created a qualifications framework as a method for comparing educational credentials within their own country.
- As a result of the Bologna Process, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched in 2010. The goal of the EHEA is to provide lifelong learnings, student-centered learning, quality assurance, transparency, mobility and recognition and international openness (European Union, 2010).

Source: CGFNS, 2013

Objectives

The Project aims to:

- Foster policy dialogue to better understand circular migration schemes that are aligned with the ILO Decent Work Agenda and mitigate the risks of brain drain in a pro-active manner;
- Design and test mechanisms to facilitate online registration, skills testing and certification, preparation and counseling, placement for European employment and upon return, their re-employment in the home country; and
- Improve data collection and analysis of labour market information on the demand and supply of professionals and skilled personnel in healthcare in the EU, alternative destination countries and the employment prospects in the participating countries.

Selected Completed and Ongoing Projects

- Completed Comparative study on competency and equivalency standards between Philippines and Finland, Denmark and Norway.
- Completed case studies on the realities of migration from health professionals' point of view and documentation of good practices of recruitment agencies.
- Completed analysis of the assessment of the effect and impact of the bilateral labour arrangements developed by the Philippines with regards to the migration of healthcare professionals.
- Completed assessment of the working conditions of foreign trained health professionals in Europe.
- Completed development of training materials and training of master trainers on the Philippine Nursing core competencies.
- Completed union-to-union dialogues and activities on the portability of social security entitlements.
- Completed review of POEA recruitment agencies award system.
- Completed pilot installation and training of labour attachés in Europe on the computer-based Foreign Labour Operations Information System.
- Completed Appraisal of the National Human Resources for Health Workforce Projections: Phase 1.
- Ongoing Tale of a Journey: Migrant Health Workers' Voice through Images (A documentary).
- Ongoing Appraisal of the National Human Resources for Health Workforce Projections: Phase 2.
- Ongoing training course for labour attachés and recruitment agencies on ethical recruitment.
- Ongoing development of an entrepreneurship course for health professionals as an App and via the web.
- Ongoing Inclusion of Migration and Decent Work in the Nursing Curriculum.



Sources

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Project Sites: Manila, New Delhi and Hanoi



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