

Promoting Decent Work Across Borders: A Philippine-based Project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers



International Labour Organization

Challenge

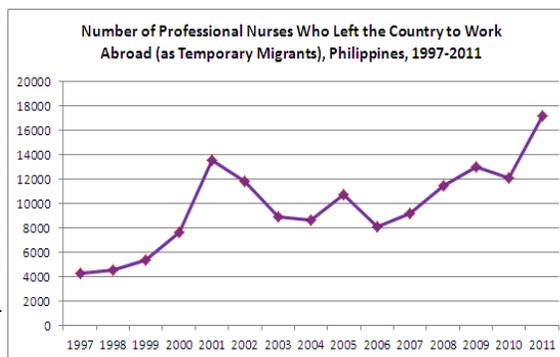


Migration trends have shown that skilled nurses and other health professionals while vital, are also globally scarce. Demand for Filipino professional nurses given temporary work visas has been increasing since 1997 with the highest nurse deployment in 2011. The second highest peak was seen in 2001 which largely accounted for recruitment of nurses to the United Kingdom. With the decline in Filipino health professional recruitment in Europe and North America, the recruitment trend in the recent years shifted to countries in the Middle East.

The brain drain of highly skilled nurses and nurse medics or the doctors who opted to become nurses to migrate was observed in the last decade. Overtime these migration experiences showed that unplanned human resources for health can lead to massive inequities and significant losses of

health workforce. International migration of health care professionals directly impacts on the achievement of health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which relies upon national health care systems that are built on sufficient, quality and competent health professionals benefiting decent work.

Other challenges related to the migration of health professionals involves the recruitment process. A study by Pittman et al (2012) showed that foreign educated nurses, though skilled and expected to not be vulnerable as other types of migrants, experienced vulnerabilities while going through the recruitment process. Among the irregularities experienced were modification of the contract without consent, payment of recruiter fees, no contract received, immigration documents withheld by the recruiter and lack of familiarity with the position recruited for and workplace prior to arriving in their country of destination. There is a wide international consensus around ethical recruitment and the fact the international recruitment of health professionals should balance diverse interests of workers, employers, government and recruitment agencies in sending and receiving countries. This requires social dialogue and commitment among stakeholders at the national and international levels.



Sources: POEA, 1997-2011: New Hires

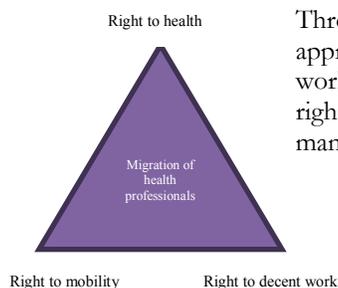
Response

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 management.

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.



Key Statistics

- Worldwide, 2 420 medical schools, 467 schools or departments of public health and an indeterminate number of postsecondary nursing educational institutions train about 1 million new doctors, nurses, midwives and public health professionals every year. (Source: Frenk J et al, *Health professionals for a New Century* [The Lancet, 2010] p. 27)
- These medical schools train around 389 000 medical graduates every year for a world population of 7 billion people and about 541 000 nurses graduate every year. (Source: Ibid.,p.23)
- Estimated unit cost per medical graduate's education is US\$122 000 and US\$ 50 000 per nursing graduate's education. There are higher costs in developed countries reaching up to US\$ 300 000 and more critical when publicly funded (Source: Ibid., p.27)
- It was estimated that by recruiting Ghanaian doctors, the UK saved about £65 million in training costs between 1998 and 2002, while their contribution to service provision is estimated at around £39 million a year. (Source: Mills et al, *Should active recruitment of health workers from Sub Saharan Africa* [The Lancet, 2008] p. 687-88)

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 Achievements

- Completed multi-stakeholder approach on the monitoring of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel and shared at the international level;
- Completed online photo competition to capture in images the circumstances around migration of health professionals from the perspective of young health professionals;
- Completed assessment of the effectiveness of the existing services available to healthcare professionals in the Philippines;
- Completed feasibility study for raising migrant workers' voice through their assessment of their own recruitment experience;
- On-going case studies on the realities of migration from health professionals' point of view and documentation of good practices of recruitment agencies;
- On-going 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;
- On-going assessment of the working conditions of foreign trained health professionals in Europe;
- On-going assessment of the Professional Regulation Commission's online registration system;
- On-going development of training materials and training of master trainers on the Philippine Nursing core competencies;
- On-going union-to-union dialogues and activities on the portability of social security entitlements;
- On-going review of POEA recruitment agencies award system;
- On-going training course for labour attachés and recruitment agencies on ethical recruitment;
- On-going development of an entrepreneurship course for health professionals as an App and via the web; and
- On-going pilot installation and training of labour attachés in Europe on the computer-based Foreign Labour Operations Information System.



Sources

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Components

Donor: European Union
Acronym: DWAB
Start Date: 1 February 2011
End Date: 31 January 2014
Budget: €2.5 million
Partners: Ministries of Labour, Health and Education, Trade Union, Employers' and Health Professional Organization and Research Institutions in the Philippines, India, and Viet Nam
Project Sites: Manila, New Delhi, and Hanoi

Updated: May 2013

