

## POLICY BRIEF 2

# MIGRATION PREPAREDNESS OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: PRE-EMPLOYMENT, PRE-DEPARTURE, POST-ARRIVAL AND RETURN-REINTEGRATION ORIENTATION SEMINARS

### Executive Summary

Access to quality information is vital to preparing prospective and actual migrant workers for safe and productive migration. Current migrant orientation materials and services have been useful but insufficient for migrant health professionals. Ethical and circular migration frameworks emphasize migrants' rights and responsibilities, which benefit them and destination countries and with return service, also benefit home countries. This policy brief highlights the usefulness of updated, relevant and country-specific informative materials prepared by Public Services International, in consultation with multi-stakeholders in the Philippines and other countries. Individual booklets on country-specific destinations (Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway) inform migrant health professionals from the Philippines on how to go about pre-employment, pre-departure, post-arrival and return-reintegration. This initiative calls upon migrant orientation providers - trade unions, recruitment agencies, professional organizations, government and non-government organizations, to collaboratively use the created template for the development of information material to ensure a rights-based approach migration experience.

### Introduction

Difficulties encountered by migrant workers are traced to their lack of awareness about many aspects of migration. Migrant health professionals have working conditions and information needs differentiated from other migrant groups. They need to know their rights and be informed of ethical recruitment (WHO Global Code of Practice on Ethical Recruitment of Health Professionals 2010). Their return to home country, referred to as circular migration, addresses brain drain that may occur when the country's human resources remain abroad.

**While migrant orientation seminars and information have been useful in empowering migrant workers, these currently lack updated, relevant and country - specific information to prepare migrant health workers for ethical and circular migration** (Lorenzo 2012). There is a clear gap in overseas orientation services for information relevant to Filipino migrant health professionals. Access to information is important in ensuring rights-based migration.

This policy brief highlights the usefulness of informative materials on country-specific destinations of migrant

health professionals, such as Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway. A comprehensive template was developed and used in the creation of seven booklets covering pre-employment and pre-departure, post arrival and return-reintegration to the home country. Prepared by the Public Service International (PSI), a global trade union federation, the initiative received support from the International Labour Organization and the European Union funded *Decent Work Across Borders* Project (ILO-DWAB).

Collaboration among migrant service providers in the common use of these materials is a way to widen information access and prepare prospective and current migrant health professionals for migration. Potential future developers and distributors of these booklets include government agencies, trade unions, professional associations, recruitment agencies, civil society organizations and embassies and consulates. When better informed, migrant health professionals can protect and exercise their rights, avoid problems and pitfalls and benefits from foreign employment. The template created provide a solid basis for the future development of country-specific information material.



## Approach and Results

In 2013, PSI worked on the *“Enhancement and Dissemination of Pre-decision, Pre-departure, Reintegration Materials for prospective and current Migrant Workers to selected European Countries”*.

The initiative consulted a range of stakeholders in the Philippines and destination countries in developing a framework to cover all aspects of the migration experience. This template constitutes a solid model to be replicated.

The policy brief describes the seven booklets created. It conveys the aim of engaging multi-stakeholders in developing other such material and disseminating these as widely as possible through various challenges susceptible to reach migrant workers.

## Gaps in Orientation Services for Migrant Health Professionals

Migrant orientation services are regarded as important and helpful to migrant workers in the course of the migration process. Most common means used are the pre-employment orientation seminar (PEOS) and the pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS). Still hardly visible are the post-arrival and on-site orientation seminar (PAOS) in destination countries and the return-reintegration orientation seminar (RROS).

## Development of Country-Specific Information Materials for Health Professionals

The country-specific information material constitute a comprehensive guide prospective and actual migrant workers. Further, the template used for the development of the material also constitutes a model for the development of additional such information guides.

### Pre-employment information

The pre-employment booklet (Box 1) provides an overview of Philippine labor migration and health worker migration. The discussion presents both the positive and negative consequences of health worker migration, the challenges and risks of working

abroad and the social costs of their migration. In making informed decisions, the material raises vital issues for the migrant health worker to consider, including the dangers of illegal recruitment and human trafficking. Health workers are warned of the signs and ways by which these occur, such as forced labor, debt bondage and sexual exploitation; and how to avoid and what to do in such cases.

### Box 1. Philippines Pre-decision booklet – Table of Contents

Migration Realities  
Clarifying Expectations / Motivations  
Illegal Recruitment and Trafficking  
Ethical Recruitment of Health Workers  
Workers' Rights  
Legal Recruitment process  
Employment Contract  
Remittances  
Permanent Migration  
Return and Reintegration  
Frequently Asked Questions  
List of Resources

The booklet also informs health workers about the WHO Global Code of Practice on the international recruitment of health professional. The material elaborates on the rights and responsibilities of workers and trade unionism in the health sector.

On recruitment processes, detailed information covers the Philippine government's procedures handled by agencies such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). The booklet explain the documentary requirements, fees, social security, remittances and other procedures. A section discusses what to look for in an employment contract. The sections on “Frequently asked questions” and the list or directory of resources are useful practical information.

### Pre-departure, arrival and on-site information

For selected destination countries such as Denmark, Finland, Norway and Germany, the informative material presents the most updated country-specific pre-departure, arrival and on-site information (Box 2).



## **Box 2. Pre-departure, arrival and on-site Information booklets – Table of contents**

### **Pre-Departure**

Recruitment Process and Agencies

Legal Recruitment

Information:

History, Geography, Population,  
Language, Economy, Government,  
Holidays, Religion

Checklist

Health and Safety Tips

Travel regulations

### **Arrival and On-site**

Arrival 1st Week

Cost of Living

Food

Transportation

Housing

Healthcare and Insurance

Education

Banking, Finances and Money Management

Taxation, Pensions and Other Social Benefits

Cultural Adaptation

Looking for a Job

Working in (specific country)

What to do if Unemployed

Professional Growth

Rights and Responsibilities

Coping with Stress and Anxieties

Embassy Consular Services

Immigration

List of Resources

Return and Reintegration

The pre-departure booklet informs the migrant health worker on the specific destination country's recruitment processes and agencies, including visa, contract and skills recognition. Information about the destination country includes its history, geography, population, language, economy, government and holidays. There is a checklist on what to prepare, health and safety tips and travel regulations.

Upon arrival, the migrant health worker learns what to do in the first week. Staying on, the information presents the costs of living, food, transportation, housing, education, health care, banking, taxation, unemployment insurance, cultural standards, expectations and climate. Employment information describes the health sector framework, work

opportunities and requirements, workplace culture and ethics and what to do in case of unemployment in the specific country .

Helpful tips deal with how to cope with stress and anxiety, the embassies and consular offices when seeking help and dealing with immigration. The booklet lists trade unions, professional associations, migrants' networks, crises lines and other resources in the destination country.

### **Return and reintegration information**

The return and reintegration booklet is a vital information package since this is a recent and not well-known aspect of ethical migration and circular migration (Box 3). This prepares the migrant worker for a positive migration experience, from home - to destination – to home country.

## **Box 3. Return and reintegration Information booklet – Table of contents**

Reintegration as a process

Integrating back into the family and local community: Questions to ask

What to expect upon return

Dos and Don'ts

Current government services for all return migrants

Other opportunities for reintegration for return migrants and their families

The material discusses the reintegration process, components of a comprehensive re-integration program, issues and challenges upon return home. The migrant health worker is prepared for family relationships, financial concerns and work challenges upon return to the home country.

Opportunities are available through the reintegration services of government agencies. In the Philippines, the key service providers for reintegration are the National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers (NRCO), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD).



## Conclusions

The country-specific and rights-based informative materials address the gaps in the orientation of health professionals for ethical and circular migration. Information has been scant in the post-arrival, onsite and return-reintegration stages.

## Implications and Recommendations

Opportunity exist for collaboration among trade unions, recruitment agencies, professional associations and government agencies in developing additional and using a common set of materials for their migrant orientation services. The booklets developed are complete and professionalize and standardize the information relevant to prospective and active migrant health professionals.

This policy brief calls on the POEA and OWWA to possibly explore the adoption of the templates. These can serve as inputs to ongoing efforts of government in order to improve migration orientation services for skilled workers. These can also serve as guides on other destination countries.

This policy brief also calls on the PSI as the developer of the booklets and through its migration program to continue its advocacies on safe and ethical migration of health professionals. PSI trade union affiliates and partners in destination countries can help Filipino migrant health professionals, upon arrival, while onsite and for return and reintegration in the Philippines.

Since social media and information technologies are available, these may be used as channels for disseminating and broadening the access to migration information among prospective and actual migrants.

## Main Reference:

Public Service International (PSI). 2014. *Enhancement and Dissemination of Pre-decision, Pre-departure, Reintegration Materials for prospective and current Migrant Workers to selected European Countries*. Forthcoming.

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### About the Decent Work Across Borders project

In 2011, the European Union awarded the International Labour Organization (ILO) funds to implement a three-year project on the issue of circular migration. The ILO Decent Work Across Borders project: A Pilot project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers sought to better understand schemes in line with circular migration of health professionals. Through this project, the ILO sought to facilitate an approach to migration that benefits the migrant workers, the source and destination countries within a rights-based framework for labour migration governance. The project focused its activities on three Asian countries concerned with the outflows of health professionals and skilled workers for foreign employment, namely the Philippines, India and to a lesser degree, Viet Nam.

[http://www.ilo.org/manila/info/public/pr/WCMS\\_173607/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/manila/info/public/pr/WCMS_173607/lang--en/index.htm)

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