



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
Office

Evaluation  
Office

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

### *Final evaluation*

#### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Philippines, India, Viet Nam*

**Mode of Evaluation:** *Independent*

**ILO Administrative Office:** *CO-Manila*

**ILO Technical Backstopping Office:**  
MIGRANT

**ILO M&E Regional Officer:** *P. Pringsulaka*

**Evaluation Consultant:** *Elaine McGregor,  
Maastricht University; and Dr. Arijita Dutta,  
University of Calcutta*

**Project End:** *30<sup>th</sup> November 2014*

**Project Code:** INT/09/11/EEC

**Donor & Project Budget:** European Commission  
(€2,000,000), ILO (€500,000)

**Keywords:** labour migration, health professionals

#### Background & Context

This report presents the results of the final evaluation of the Decent Work Across Borders: A Pilot Project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers (INT/09/11/EEC).

In 2011, the European Union awarded the ILO funds to work on circular migration. The ILO *Decent Work Across Borders project: A Pilot project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers* seeks to better understand schemes concerned with the circular migration of health professionals. The project focuses its attention on two of the main health professional sending countries, the Philippines

and India, and Viet Nam who, for the moment, is not sending a significant number of health professionals abroad.

The project had an official starting date of 1 February 2011. However, the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) of the project was hired and started her assignment in September 2011. The project was due to be completed on 31 January 2014. The European Union (EU) granted ILO two no-cost extensions meaning that the project was extended first to the 31 July 2014 and then to 30 November 2014.

The overall objective of the project is to promote the circular migration of professionals and highly skilled personnel in the health care sector through the development of specialized employment services and a system of skills testing. This is to be achieved through three specific objectives:

1. Strengthened mechanisms of policy dialogue on circular migration.
2. Strengthened employment and education services for healthcare professionals and skilled workers
3. Enhanced Labour Market Information System (LMIS)

#### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

The final evaluation will assess the extent to which the project achieved its stated

objectives. The objectives of the final evaluation are to:

- a) Determine the extent to which the objectives and outcomes of the project have been achieved, what kind of changes produced, what are the intended or unintended effects of the project;
- b) Obtain feedback from the national partners: what is working, what is not and why;
- c) Provide suggestions, recommendations to better target the next steps, future strategies and new areas of technical cooperation.

The final evaluation was conducted in accordance with ILO standard policies and procedures. The ILO adheres to the United Nations system's evaluation norms and standards as well as to the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

The methodological approach was qualitative in nature: primarily comprising of 1) desk research and 2) qualitative interviews. The evaluators conducted fieldwork Manila between 13 and 17 October 2014 and in New Delhi between 10 and 13 November 2014. Skype/telephone interviews took place between 6 October 2014 and 13 November 2014. In total 64 individuals representing a variety of stakeholders were interviewed for the evaluation.

## **Main Findings & Conclusions**

### **Relevance and strategic fit**

The mobility of health workers is not a new phenomenon but it is rapidly changing and is situated at the juncture of three basic human rights: the right to health, the right to mobility and the right for decent work placing it clearly within ILO's mandate. Particularly given the ethical concerns relating the health worker migration and the prevailing view that the promotion of circular migration could be a panacea to the problem of brain drain, the project clearly addresses a topic that is of

global concern.

For the ILO, the DWAB project represents a good strategic fit, reflecting the MLFLM and other relevant principles and guidelines. Globally, the project feeds into ILO's P&B outcome on labour migration (Outcome 7), supports the Decent Work Country Programmes and for India is ILO's first TC project on labour migration. It also promotes collaboration between different departments within ILO, seeks synergies with other ILO projects in the region and builds relationships with non-traditional government partners. It addresses recruitment as a cross cutting theme of ILO's portfolio. The project builds on ILO's comparative advantages, notably knowledge generation and the promotion of social dialogue.

For project partners the project presented a timely opportunity to pursue work that reflected existing priorities. It was timely in the sense the monitoring of the WHO Global Guidelines was being conducted and, for Philippines, the curriculum being redesigned in the context of ASEAN integration. The project provided the opportunity to research understudied areas and to strengthen the evidence base on circular migration.

### **Validity of intervention design**

Several issues with the design of the project were flagged in the mid-term evaluation. The primary concerns related to: 1) the wording of the overall project document – in terms of the promotion of circular migration; 2) the focus on Europe where the majority of circular migration of health professionals, specifically for the Philippines, is to the Middle East; and 3) the inclusion of India and Vietnam in the project given that they do not have surplus health workers and thus the promotion of circular migration in this context raises serious ethical questions; and 4) the indicators developed to measure whether the project had achieved its objectives. The inclusion of India for only one year of the project and the lack of staff in Viet Nam was also questioned. While some minor changes were made to the project

document when requesting the no-cost extension, only limited changes could be accepted given the competitive nature of the tendering process. Given the limited changes made, a full discussion of design is not repeated in the final evaluation.

### **Intervention progress and effectiveness**

The majority of the project has been implemented in the Philippines and each objective has been covered to a greater or lesser extent. Specific objective 1 remains the most developed through the plethora of research, policy dialogues and trainings that have been implemented. Specific objective 2 has been implemented to a large extent and expected outputs have mostly been implemented. Specific objective 3 remains the weakest area of the project.

For India, none of the objectives have been fully achieved. Due to concerns relating to the project design (promoting circular migration in a context where there are shortages in the supply of health workers) as well as dealing with a new government, the process of policy dialogue has been slow. It is clear that the time allotted to India for the project was too short. Nevertheless, DWAB has very effectively taken initial steps towards meaningful advocacy placing the issue of the migration of health professionals on the agenda.

The project had limited activities in Viet Nam, owing largely to a lack of project staff on the ground. The project has focused primarily on building ties with the ILO GMS TRIANGLE project conducting work in the area of ethical recruitment (specific objective 1).

### **Efficiency of resource use**

The administration of the budget has been challenging because of project delays. By the end of January 2014, the project had utilised 69 percent of the projects funds. As of October 2014, this rate had increased to 94 per cent, and with the number of activities planned for November 2014, disbursed its allocated funds.

In terms of cost-efficiency, DWAB has

pursued synergies with existing ILO projects and programmes (such as the GMS TRIANGLE, ASEAN TRIANGLE, SALM, and the ITC-ILO in Turin). DWAB has also actively sought out opportunities for collaborations with other international organisations such as WHO and IOM. The project has supported existing government projects (for example the Philippines Foreign Labor Operation Information system while developed by the International Labor Affairs Bureau, received support from DWAB in developing the training and piloting the system in Europe). It has also received support from the government to pursue further activities based on government requests (for example the training implemented by the ITC-ILO on return and reintegration and bilateral and multi-lateral labour arrangements). In seeking to build on existing priorities and to fit into the existing landscape, the project has thus been able to efficiently manage resources.

### **Effectiveness of management arrangements**

There have been a lot of factors that have made DWAB a difficult project to manage. Firstly, the project was affected by a lot of delays. While Typhoon Haiyan had tremendous impacts on the Philippines, its impact of the project, while evident, was minimal. The time allocated to implementation in India was too short. The lack of staff in Viet Nam seriously impacted what could be achieved there. Additionally a lack of presence in Europe made it hard to get EU partners on board. The project also had to deal with changing patterns of mobility in the EU after the financial crisis and EU enlargements. Finally there were paradigm shifts in the debate on circulation which required significant efforts to re-establish buy-in to the project among several of its partners.

Despite all of these challenges, the project has managed to achieve the majority of its objectives and orient these activities towards long-term impact. This, for a great part, can

be attributed to excellent staff selection and the determination of staff to see the project succeed. Communication between the project and its partners were rated particularly highly and the use of a multi-stakeholder PAC was a meaningful way of ensuring the project remained relevant.

### **Impact orientation and sustainability**

By focusing on needs, the project has been orientated towards long-term impact and sustainability. DWAB has been successful in establishing ownerships through regular consultations. This was very much confirmed by the project partners. The project has several legacy components: the modules on Decent Work and Migration to be inserted in the tertiary health science programme in the Philippines, the support to the core competencies for Nursing and two documentaries. Through DWAB's cooperation with other ILO projects in the region, there is continuity on some activities implemented by the project. The training for the project has been transferred to ITC-ILO. In total 17 policy briefs, 10 dealing with lessons learnt through the project and seven dealing with the concept of the circular migration have been prepared ensuring that the knowledge generated is accessible to a wide audience. The project staff have also prepared concepts notes for new projects and already gained the interest and support of several potential funders and project partners.

### **Recommendations & Lessons Learned**

#### **In light of the evaluation, the following recommendations are made:**

*Future Project Design:* ILO projects that include a bi-lateral dimension and require the cooperation of destination countries should allocate staff accordingly. Having their buy in at the design phase would increase the likelihood of cooperation. Thorough research

and consultations should form a standardized part of project design to ensure that the project makes sense in different contexts.

*Future Work Areas:* DWAB has facilitated discussions around some key topic areas: skills recognition, ethical recruitment, and promoting decent work both in domestic labour markets as well as abroad. Each of these represents areas in which further work could be pursued. Return Data is needed if circular migration is to be better understood.

*Future Evaluation:* The project has implemented a lot of activities and facilitated dialogues on a wide range of topics. The EU has flagged the project for ex-post evaluation in 12 months but it would also be interesting for ILO to reflect on the expected impacts of the project. This could facilitate the development of indicators that could be used as baselines for an ex-post evaluation or as indicators in any new projects that may follow DWAB.

#### **Key lessons:**

*Embedding Training:* The DWAB project developed and delivered several trainings. In doing so the CTA enlisted the support of the ILO-ITC in Turin facilitating a two-way exchange of training materials. The sharing of training materials can both encourage efficiency, through the avoidance of replication, and ensure the sustainability of project outputs through their inclusion in the ILO-ITC portfolio of activities.

*Project Design:* The main concerns highlighted by the mid-term evaluation related to the design of the project and as such it was suggested that future projects focus on consultation, having an inception phase, having an exit strategy and adequate human resources. In addition to these areas of consideration, the importance of including partners in destination countries in the consultation phase of project design should be underlined.