

## **LABOUR MIGRATION TODAY: THE ORIGIN COUNTRIES PERSPECTIVE**

- Over the last 35 years, the number of persons living outside their country of birth has more than doubled, and today – according to UN /OIM data - amounts to over 191 million people.<sup>1</sup> Migrant workers are estimated over 86 million (ILO)
- The increased mobility across borders is one dimension of globalisation and has been facilitated by improved transportation and communication as well as resulting from global economic and social disparities and inter-country networks based on family, culture and history

Migration today serves as an instrument for adjusting the skills, age and sectoral composition of national and regional labour markets. It provides responses to fast-changing needs for skills and personnel due to technological advances, changes in market conditions, and industrial transformations.

An increasing number of origin countries seek to promote foreign employment for a part of their workforce and thus generate remittances, while providing safeguards to protect their citizens abroad.

All these countries can have several different profiles, developing countries and countries with economies in transition, nevertheless, as countries of origin they all face some common issues.

A priority concern for all labour-sending governments is to ensure the well-being of migrant workers and to secure the payment of decent wages and basic provisions.

Given that, due to structural reasons (including poverty, unemployment and large wage differentials between countries of origin and destination), the supply of workers in lower skill sectors

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<sup>1</sup> IOM, *World Migration 2003: Challenges and Responses for People on the Move*, World Migration Report Series Vol.2, Geneva.

far outstrips the demand and that there are far more workers wishing to work abroad (to earn a livelihood and pursue a perceived better life) than there are jobs, migrant workers can be vulnerable to abuses during recruitment, travel and employment abroad.

However, countries of origin do have a range of policy strategies which can extend the scope and improve the efficiency of their regulatory mechanisms and support services, including:

- Protecting migrant workers from exploitative recruitment and employment practices and in providing appropriate assistance to migrant workers in terms of pre-departure, welfare and on-site services.
- Optimizing benefits of organized labour migration, particularly the development of new markets and increasing remittance flows through formal channels, as well as enhancing its development impact. At the same time mitigating the adverse impact of the emigration of skilled human resources.
- Building institutional capacity and inter-ministerial coordination to meet labour migration challenges.
- Increasing cooperation with destination countries for the protection of migrant workers, access to labour markets and the prevention of irregular migration.

### **IOM perspective**

IOM bases its activities in the realm of economic migration on some key principles, that is to say:

- Identify mechanisms which allow matching between demand and supply. This includes not only selection and recruitment procedures but also information strategies

- Adopt transparent criteria and procedures to assist employers in the recruitment process, and inform the workers on the rights and duties related to working in the EU
- Ensure that all migrant workers have access to a “set of core social and economic rights”, and that the principle of equality with the nationals and absence of discrimination as stated by European and national laws are recognised and that migrant workers benefit from these rights in real terms through adequate enforcement policies
- Ensure that appropriate measures are taken for the smooth integration of migrants in the host society
- Create mechanisms of cooperation with sending countries to prevent migratory detrimental effects, (i.e. brain drain) on the countries of origin’s economies and societies and to strengthen the positive impact of migration.

Working with origin countries on the basis of these principles IOM has developed a set of tools to achieve the goals of the origin countries policy strategies. They include: specific language training modules, cultural orientation schemes, information on entry/residence in the EUMS in countries of origin; vocational training and skills upgrading modules; establishing or supporting databases of potential migrant workers for facilitating the recruitment process; counselling services and integration assistance; researches on facilitating the transfer of remittances and enhancing its development impact in the areas of origin; facilitating the return of highly qualified migrants and the creation of enterprises by returnees in countries of origin; promoting co-development projects to involve hosting and origin communities; facilitating joint ventures, and supporting the role of migrants as agents of development.

Two good examples of IOM activities in this domain are the global pre-departure Cultural Orientation programmes for refugees and

migrants bound to Australia, Canada, Finland, Italy, Norway and the USA.

More specifically targeted to labour migrants are the projects carried out by IOM in the Origin countries of the Mediterranean area, namely:

### **Selective Migration Flows from Albania to Italy**

- Several sets of professional and Italian language tests, used for the selection of Albanian applicants were elaborated, designed for the professional profiles identified through a study carried out by the Italian Research Institute of the Chambers of Commerce, as the most sought-after jobs among foreign manpower in the Italian labour market: (nurses, cooks, waiters, housekeepers, home-based assistants, agricultural and fishery workers, builders, carpenters, machine operators and drivers )
- By 31 December 2002, IOM had selected a total of 6,724 Albanian workers, potentially employable by Italian entrepreneurs selected among a total of 30,000 pre-applications received by IOM Tirana.

### **IMIS - Integrated Migration Information System in Egypt**

The Integrated Migration Information System (IMIS) project started on June 2001 and is the result of a joint collaboration among the Emigration Sector of the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, the Italian Government as the donor partner and the International Organization for Migration as the implementing agency. IMIS is a technical tool and a capacity building mechanism that supports the Emigration Sector of the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Emigration in the management of regular migration flows from Egypt, improving Egyptian migrants' social status in receiving countries and channeling human and financial resources resulting from the phenomenon of migration.

The setting up and launching of a website for job opportunities abroad and the creation of a portal for Egyptian migrants represent the main outputs of the project. The web site is tailored to provide services to employers abroad and Egyptian job seekers. It furnishes an automatic job matchmaking system between demand and offer. Companies abroad, employers, entrepreneurs etc. seeking specific employees' profiles may consult the website roster and, after having identified potential candidates, contact the Ministry. The job matchmaking system does not create a binding relationship between the employer and the potential candidate as the Ministry is in charge of making the validation of the job seekers' profiles and provides support to the foreign employers. The foreign employers can use the service provided by the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration for the short-listing of the candidates. Concerning the final selection of the candidates, the foreign employers can either appoint a local recruitment agency or make the selection directly.

In addition to the job seekers' roster, the website provides the users with practical and comprehensive information concerning the receiving countries (mainly western European). This set of information is gathered in a module called Masriat. Currently Masriat contains information about France, Italy, Norway, and Spain.

The portal for Egyptians abroad is a tool provided to the Egyptian Government to reinforce relationships between the Egyptian Diaspora and the home country. The enhancement of services for the Egyptian Diaspora by the Emigration Sector will require the strengthening of ties with the Egyptian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) abroad and other structures supporting the Egyptian migrants. Further coordination and contacts with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will contribute to the complete accomplishment of this project objective.

The system represents a pilot experience that aims towards self-sustainability. As a matter of fact, the job matchmaking mechanism represents a practical example of the applicability of the system. Full deployment of the system would require the planning and implementation of ad hoc projects.

**Institutional strengthening of migration management capacities of Tunisian trainers for a better socio-professional integration of Tunisian emigration candidates- 1st phase**

was an IOM project implemented by IOM Tunis foreseeing the construction of a multilingual user-friendly web portal linking two Tunisian agencies dealing with labour migration, the “Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi et le Travail Indépendant” and “Agence Tunisienne de Cooperation Technique”). The portal has been set up from a structural point of view. Moreover the following outputs were also achieved:

- A handbook including useful sentences in Italian, French and Arabic specific to various jobs' environment has been conceived by the national coordinator.
- 27 Tunisian trainers were selected: 10 among Italian language teachers of the Bourguiba School of Modern Languages in Tunis, and 17 among trained personnel of the Agence Tunisienne de l'Emploi and the Ministry of Employment have been selected and trained
- Four Tunisian national coordinators of Training of Trainers were assisted each by an international expert who gave the candidates a total of 62 hours orientation courses.
- The development and set up of a **database** pertinent to the supply and demand of labour from origin and destination countries (Tunisia and Italy respectively) was completed. The task was carried out in close cooperation with the ATE – Tunisian Agency for Employment-, by means of a new, updated database available on the internet.

Another example of activities carried out by IOM in the Mediterranean region Origin Countries is the project “**Migration and Return, Resources for Development-MigRessources**” which focuses on the profile of migrant as **potential agent of development**, this pilote programme aims at creating the conditions in Morocco and in Italy for an effective role of the Moroccan migrants in the socio-economic development of their country of origin.

The project’s objectives are:

- ✓ To create a more favourable environment for the qualified migration between Italy and Morocco.
- ✓ To create the conditions for a successful integration and adequate professional insertion of potential Moroccan migrants, before their departure, and of Moroccan immigrants already residing in Italy and underemployed with respect to their qualifications.
- ✓ To identify qualifying return paths, either virtual or real (temporary or permanent), for Moroccan immigrants residing in Italy to contribute to local development and intensified cooperation between the two countries.
- ✓ To identify means to facilitate the channelling of migrants’ remittances for the economic and social development of Morocco.

Through the research of the conditions of a successful migratory experience, the project proposes the definition of guiding principles for the setting up of initiatives which will lead to the achievement of the virtuous circle of migration.

A set of guidelines were compiled for the realization of a training programme providing specific elements for integration and professional insertion of migrants in Italy.

- Another set of guidelines was prepared for the realization of an

intervention programme aiming at supporting the actual or virtual return of Moroccan migrants in Italy and with the goal to better utilize migrants' remittances for the economic and social development of Morocco.

The migrants are trained to emigrate in the best conditions which will lead them to the best possible integration in the country of destination and to virtually return to their country of origin through the investment of their human and social resources or eventually their financial resources in the development of the country of origin.

As a result of the project's first phase:

- 30 potential migrants identified in Morocco have been selected and trained. In the second phase of the project they will be assisted in the access to professional insertion and to social integration in Italy.
- 80 qualified Moroccan immigrants in Italy with a return project have been involved in training, sensitization, and support activities, in Italy and in Morocco. During the second phase of the project they will be assisted in the implementation of their investment or development projects in order to help them to become actual agent of development for their country of origin.
- Over 40 projects involving an actual or virtual return of migrants and finalized to the local development of the country of origin and/or to the creation of companies have been selected and received a first assessment. During the second phase they will receive a limited financial assistance in addition to personalized assistance to set up the business plan of their projects and support in the access to available credit facilities.



In Asia Origin countries IOM implemented the following projects:

In Sri Lanka, the results of the project **“Management of migratory flows from Sri Lanka to Italy in the field of the personal care sector”** can be summarized as follows:

- 250 Sri Lankan workers, potentially suitable for placement according to the requirements of the Tuscany Region, were identified by the SL Gov.
- 85 workers to be placed in the field of personal care sector were selected.
- 60 workers were trained with 60 hours Italian Language Training course and 25 hours vocational training sessions carried out in Sri Lanka
- 60 workers were assisted for visa issuing procedures and recruited by Tuscany families and assisted during their job insertion process and social integration in Italy through an ad hoc 6 months monitoring process.

The project has been replicated in Moldova, where 200 selected workers have attended language and socio-cultural orientation courses in Chisinau in February 2005 and have been recruited by Italian enterprises.

The **Regional Dialogue and Program on Facilitating Legal Migration between Asia and the European Union Countries**, is a project funded by the EC under the AENEAS programme.

The project is carried out in some countries of origin of South and South East Asia (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam) with the following objectives:

- To enhance government and private sector capacity to place workers legally in the EU and in occupations which are in

- shortage there (while in surplus in the country of origin), as well as to foster regional cooperation efforts among major Asian labour sending countries and with the EU in promoting legal labour opportunities and reducing irregular migration.
- To have potential migrants well informed about legal labour migration opportunities and procedures, and the risks of resorting to irregular migration, with regards to the EU member States as a destination.
  - 300 workers are expected to be recruited in 5 EU countries

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

In conclusion, we think that:

- ✓ Legal employment abroad is an alternative for irregular migration.
- ✓ The numbers of unauthorised migrant workers are increasing in virtually every part of the world and ILO estimates that perhaps no less than 15 percent migrant workers are working on an irregular basis.
- ✓ Favours legal migration as well as protecting workers' rights and preventing "brain-drain", or "brain waste" are necessary means not only to promote migration as a leverage for economic development of origin and destination countries, but even for promoting migrants welfare.
- ✓ Beyond the labour migration, IOM already acting in the field of "circular migration" and migration and development nexus : both can be supportive of governments' aim to promote SME growth and create job placements through national projects, aimed at utilizing untapped remittances