Overseas labour migration is an essential means to reduce domestic employment pressures, and has been a major source of foreign exchange for the Sri Lankan economy for nearly four decades. The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) reported an annual registered outflow of workers, at 300,703 in 2014, of which 63 per cent were male and 37 per cent female. Female domestic workers account for 80 per cent of the women migrating. 36 per cent of all male recruitments were for low skilled work. Recorded numbers of women migrant workers have been dropping in the last 3 years.

The ILO Office in Colombo has been supporting the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) to implement the National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) since December 2010, through a project funded by the SDC in Sri Lanka. Phases I and II of the Project were implemented from December 2010 to December 2015.

This Phase of the project will build on the work carried out in the past and develop new guidelines, mechanisms and tools under the three overarching NLMP themes of governance, protection and empowerment of migrant workers and harnessing development impacts of migration. The project aims to further improve the policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and processes that govern labour migration in Sri Lanka to reflect and respond to current contextual situations and needs and further safeguard the rights of women and men migrant workers.
“Promoting decent work through good governance, protection and empowerment of migrant workers: Ensuring the effective implementation of the Sri Lanka National Labour Migration Policy” Phase III

MAIN ACTIVITIES

The Project aims to support:

- Policy and legislation review and revision
- Ratification of ILO Conventions related to Migrant Workers (C97, C143 & C181)
- Research on migration costs and remittances
- Ethical recruitment practices by licensed recruitment agents
- Strengthening support to Sri Lankan migrant workers through diplomatic missions
- Strengthening data collection through migrant worker grievances handling processes
- Mainstreaming of labour migration in to other sectors
- Capacity building of key government officials working on labour migration issues
- Effective return and reintegration efforts
- Documenting good practices and lessons, sharing experiences and promoting cross learning among national and local partners
- Building links between national and local implementation experiences and regional consultative processes and global platforms, which include:
  - Sustainable Development Goals related thematic events
  - Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)
  - High Level Dialogue on Labour Migration (HLD)
  - International Labour Conference (ILC)
  - Colombo Process (CP)
  - Abu Dhabi Dialogues (ADD)
  - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
  - and other regional and international fora.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The project expects to facilitate:

Goverance and regulation of labour migration

- Updated National Labour Migration Policy
- Ratification of ILO Conventions related to labour migration
- Updated legislation on labour migration
- Policy guidelines on reduced costs of recruitment for specific job categories
- Self-regulation of the recruitment industry strengthened through a Code of Ethical Conduct and rating system

Rights of women and men migrant workers and their families protected

- Practical safe migration information modules and tools institutionalised
- Monitoring the delivery of information and services to women and men migrant workers and their families
- Migrant workers grievance handling mechanisms strengthened at community, national level and through Sri Lankan diplomatic missions in countries of destination

Benefits of labour migration optimized

- Return and reintegration priorities supported
- Migrant workers and family members included as a target group in other sectoral strategies
- Strategies to reduce remittance costs for women and men migrant workers, facilitate savings, investment

Increased contribution to national, regional and global discourse on migrant workers

- Policy Briefs on experiences, good practices and lessons of the Sri Lankan labour migration experience
- Capacities of GoSL officers, social partners and civil society built to monitor and report on Sustainable Development Goal targets related to labour migration
- Capacities of GoSL officials built to report on international Conventions and Frameworks
- SDC Partner Exchange Platforms sharing experiences, lessons learned and influencing the policy and regulatory environment

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