

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE 2006 HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

A. INTRODUCTION

As a follow-up to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has convened a series of inter-governmental forums where members and associate members engaged in discussions and the exchange of experiences on migration and development.

The third session of the Committee on Emerging Social Issues of ESCAP, held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 12 to 14 December 2006, considered regional challenges in managing migration for development as one of its agenda items and examined key issues of international migration in the Asian and Pacific region. The Committee recognized international migration as an emerging issue and requested ESCAP to coordinate regional follow-up to the High-level Dialogue. It urged ESCAP to provide a forum for regional dialogue and to facilitate discussions on the multidimensional aspects of international migration and its linkages with development.

The ESCAP Commission, at its sixty-third session held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 17 to 23 May 2007, considered the challenges and opportunities of international migration and development, with particular emphasis on the situation of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. The Commission adopted resolution 63/7 which provided further mandate for the work of ESCAP in this particular area, and called on the Secretariat to compile and analyse information on international migration, continue to provide a forum for dialogue among members and associate members, and to convene a high-level meeting on international migration and development, preferably in 2008.

In response, ESCAP, in collaboration with the Government of Thailand, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Population Division, organized the Asia-Pacific High-level Meeting on International Migration and Development in Bangkok, Thailand, from 22 to 23 September 2008. The meeting was attended by 22 representatives from ESCAP members and associate member states. While providing a forum for dialogue, the meeting also served as a regional preparatory meeting to the second Global Forum on Migration and Development, which was held in Manila, the Philippines, from 27 to 30 October 2008.

During the Asia-Pacific High-level Meeting, four round tables were held that focused on: (a) remittances for development; (b) social dimensions of international migration; (c) migration in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small islands developing states, and (d) data and research on migration. Countries participating in the meeting recognized the need to better ensure the rights and welfare of migrants. Some countries of origin also shared their experience in providing protection for migrant workers living abroad. Concern was expressed about the large number of undocumented migrants in the region. It was noted that international migration was an intrinsic part of development, resulting from economic and demographic disparities between countries. It was also stated that international migration was a growing phenomenon in Asia and the Pacific. Participants adopted a summary of the major outcome presented by the Chair of the meeting.¹

B. RECENT ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING THE MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

ESCAP has undertaken several activities to advance the understanding of migration and development, including its linkages, in the region.

As a preparatory activity for the *Situation Report on International Migration in East and South-East Asia*, ESCAP organized a policy dialogue on international migration and development in East and South-East Asia in Bangkok, Thailand, from 8 to 9 November 2007. Resource persons delivered lectures on a wide range of migration issues. In addition, government representatives gave country-specific presentations. Attended by government officials from 12 countries in the subregion, the workshop enhanced the understanding of migration issues, promoted constructive dialogue and provided an effective venue for the exchange of good practices.

The social dimension of international migration receives marginal attention in the migration debate. In order to fill this research gap, ESCAP produced a report entitled *Looking into Pandora's Box: The Social Implications of International Migration in Asia* (ESCAP, 2008a). The study highlighted the increasing scale of female migration and migration of highly-skilled professionals in the region. It also addressed the protection of the rights of migrants and the provision of access to basic social services by looking at both countries of origin and destination.

Most recently, ESCAP and the United Nations Population Division jointly organized an Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, Thailand, from 20 to 21 September 2008. During the meeting, experts from academia and practitioners from non-governmental institutions and organizations of the United Nations system discussed regional migration trends and patterns, migration policies and cooperation mechanisms, labour migration, and the link between international migration and development. Participating experts also examined the availability of migration data and concluded that coverage, comparability and timeliness of migration data needed to be improved in order to better understand international migration flows and their links to development. Participants emphasized that these links were not straightforward. The management of migration flows, in particular of labour migration, was also debated.

Together with other regional commissions of the United Nations and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), ESCAP will participate in the Development Account project Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact. The project aims at strengthening national capacities by: (a) improving data quality and availability on international migration; (b) increasing institutional and human capacities to design and implement migration policies, and (c) promoting cooperation through an effective intra- and inter-regional network for the exchange of information, studies, experiences and best practices among countries of destination and origin.

In order to monitor migration flows within the region, ESCAP established a database on labour outflows from a selected group of countries. Depending on data availability, attempts will be made to compile similar data, classified by sex and skill level of migrants and destination country.

C. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

ESCAP continues to coordinate its activities on international migration with relevant United Nations agencies and bodies in order to avoid duplication of efforts and promote cooperation of activities at

workers. Furthermore, employers may take advantage

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