

Decent Work for All

Work is central to people's well-being. In addition to providing income, work can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement, strengthening individuals, their families and communities. Such progress, however, hinges on work that is decent. Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives.

Each year, millions of women and men leave their homes and cross national borders. Many seek higher wages and better opportunities, but many others are forced to migrate because of famine, natural disasters, violent conflict, persecution or simply a lack of decent work in their home country. At the same time, in major destination countries increased demand for skilled workers, reluctance of local workers to accept certain low-skilled jobs, population decline and population ageing act as strong drivers.

ILO estimates that some 105 million of the total 214 million people living outside their countries are economically active, engaged in the world of work³. Despite the positive experiences of migrant workers, a significant number face undue hardships and abuse in the form of low wages, poor working conditions, virtual absence of social protection, denial of freedom of association and workers' rights, discrimination and xenophobia, as well as social exclusion.

Migration poses a number of significant development and governance challenges along with opportunities, including labour and skills mobility, retention and training of skills, employment generation, provision of social protection and social security. Migrant worker issues should be seen in the context of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which applies to all workers. Decent jobs are jobs which have fair and acceptable conditions of work. The ILO decent work agenda is put into practice in four interlinked categories: rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue, all of which apply to migrant workers just as any other workers.

The ILO is the United Nations agency with constitutional mandate to protect migrant workers. It has been dealing with labour migration issues since its inception in 1919 and has pioneered international Conventions to guide migration policy and protection of migrant workers. ILO adopts a rights-based approach to labour migration and forges its action on a tripartite dialogue, involving governments, workers' and employers' organisations. Implication of workers' and employers' representatives as well as of migrant workers' transnational associations and the civil society is especially important to the development of sound and fair labour migration policies and their effective implementation.

³ ILO: International labour migration: A rights-based approach, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2010

The development of indicators measuring the impact of international migration

Statistics are vital to generate relevant and meaningful data on international migration, to assist in formulation and analysing of migration policy as well as measuring the impact of international migration in countries of origin and destination. Such data provide meaningful information for the analysis of the social, demographic and economic impacts of migration in both origin and destination countries⁴.

Relevant indicators for measuring the impact of international migration are, to mention a few, foreign participation in the work force; gender distribution in sectors of the work force, distribution of foreign born workers in occupational sectors; employment and unemployment rate among foreign born; temporary or permanent residence and/or citizenship; precarious (ie short term) employment; integration indicators such as access to citizenship; education levels of foreign born; social protection/social security coverage; education levels of foreign born and discrimination rates.

Household surveys can provide important data on the determinants and consequences of international migration. The ILO has developed a module on international labour migration, which can be included in household surveys, and are currently working on developing a module focussing on access to social security.

Policies to maximise the development benefits of international migration requires joint responses. Labour migration takes place between developed and developing countries, and among developing countries, with similar as well as different challenges.

The countries from which the migrants come and those in which they work, have a shared responsibility to protect the labour and human rights of migrant workers. Development gains from migration are shared by both origin and destination countries. It is the responsibility of both origin and destination countries to protect the labour and human rights of migrant workers.

Policies on labour migration in countries of destination will have an effect on the development potential in countries of origin, and vice versa⁵. At the overall policy level, origin countries can enhance benefits from migration by integrating and mainstreaming migration into national employment, labour market, development and poverty alleviation plans and policies; ensure coherence and coordination of policies among different ministries and agencies, and engage in consultative processes involving all stakeholders, including social partners and migrant associations and Diaspora communities. Countries of destination can support capacity of origin countries to integrate migration into development plans and frameworks; ensure policy coherence between migration, aid and trade policies; document and disseminate the contribution of labour migration and migrant workers to host countries; expand avenues for admission of developing country nationals, especially low-skilled, with adequate safe guards for their protection.

Below are two specific examples of policy measures that can enhance the development impact of international migration:

Remittances are one relevant policy area related to migration and development. Countries of origin can provide an enabling policy environment for financial inflows and their use and provide incentives for migrant savings and utilisation of remittances for productive investments. Countries of destination can ensure good working conditions,

specifically points out that “the contribution of labour migration to employment, economic growth, development and the alleviation of poverty should be recognized and maximized for the benefit of both origin and destination countries” (Principle 15).

Targeted labour market policies are likely to produce positive effects on local development, especially if they take into due account the actual and potential degree of population mobility and the specific national and international labour markets needs. Active labour market policies in countries of origin - such as vocational and skills training and education programmes and job search assistance, targeted at prospective as well as returning migrants, are if administered through solid and well-resourced public employment services likely to produce positive development effects.

Recent capacity building initiatives on international migration and development, including training programmes

ILO has provided capacity building to its constituents on issues related to labour migration for decades. In collaboration with the ITC ILO Training Centre in Turin, Italy, ILO is conducting training courses on labour migration in English, Spanish and French, with plans of expanding to Arabic. These include 2 week courses on international labour migration, as well as more specific courses, such as the extension of social security to migrant workers and their families, labour migration statistics and reintegration of returning migrant workers. ITC ILO also designs training activities to suit particular requests, such as region-specific courses for developing and transition countries.

The objective of the courses is to help build the capacity of officials from various institutions dealing with labour migration, such as representatives from workers' and employers' organisations, NGOs, migrants' associations,

Any other major initiatives on international migration and development

One example of ILO's major initiatives on international migration and its positive impact on development currently being implemented is the MIGSEC Project titled "Strategies for extending social security to migrant workers and their families from and within Africa" (2008-2011). The project aims to assist governments, in consultation with the social partners, namely employers' and workers' organizations, to map out national and regional social security strategies for migrant workers and their families. As part of its activities, MIGSEC is working with the Micro Insurance Innovation Facility (a joint initiative of the ILO and the Gates Foundation) on examining mechanisms for extending social security coverage to migrant workers' families left behind in origin countries, through health micro insurance initiatives financed by remittances from Senegalese and Malian migrant workers abroad.

In order to extend social protection to African migrant workers, the ILO is also providing technical assistance to the EAC Secretariat in developing a legal instrument (directive or regulation).