

**TENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division
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**INPUT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA
AND THE PACIFIC TO THE TENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATION¹**

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

¹ The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

A. OVERVIEW

International migration has become a mainstay of societies and economies in Asia and the Pacific. The most prevalent type of international migration in the Asia-Pacific region is temporary labour migration, with increasing numbers of people migrating to work abroad. Remittances sent in 2010 to countries in the Asia-Pacific region exceeded \$206 billion, improving the quality of life of millions of poor households and sustaining national economies, financing balance of payments and increasing foreign exchange receipts. While the benefits of international migration are apparent, its costs cannot be ignored. For example, the consequences of indebtedness due to high recruitment costs, the impact of migration on family members left behind and inequitable gender impacts remain significant challenges requiring the attention of policymakers. The protection of migrants is particularly challenging, yet the issue remains on the margins of discussions on migration.

Migration from the Asia-Pacific region often takes place through quite specific pathways and in quite particular forms. The vast majority of labour migrants from Asia and the Pacific, particularly from South Asia, migrate to the oil-rich countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Other important hubs for labour migrants are the more affluent regional economies of East Asia, namely Japan; Hong Kong, China; Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China as well as South-East Asia, especially Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore. In recent years an estimated 65 to 70 percent of Asia's labour migrants migrated to work in West Asia, while around 10-15 per cent migrated to South-East Asia and another 10-15 per cent to North-East Asia. The fourth migration hub is migration from Central Asian countries to the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, facilitated to a great extent by a visa-free system. Migrants from the Pacific islands mainly migrate to settle permanently in Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America, though in recent years Australia and New Zealand have initiated temporary seasonal labour schemes oriented in great part to alleviating rural poverty and a lack of wage opportunities in the Pacific region.

A notable feature of international migration in the Asia-Pacific region is the significance of South-South migration. Emerging areas of interest in the region include the impact of environmental disasters in the region and of environmental change. Though primarily addressed through internal migration flows, there are important international dimensions.

B. PRESENT ACTIVITIES THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2013 HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

1. Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia

The Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking, co-chaired by ESCAP and IOM has drafted a comprehensive report covering international migration in South and South-West Asia. The Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia further extends analysis of migration in the region, building upon the earlier publication on East and South-East Asia. Taken as whole, these reports provide a comprehensive overview on migration trends in 26 countries of the Asia-Pacific region and analysis on issues of concern to the region, such as labour migration, remittances, gender, migration and development and others.

The Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia focuses on the political, social and cultural dynamics which shape migration patterns in the sub-region through both country overviews and thematic chapters. It contains the migration situation of 10 countries in the region, namely: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey. The thematic section provides an analysis of regional migration trends and issues including: environment and climate change, gender, health, labour migration, policy and international cooperation, protection of the rights of migrant workers, refugees and stateless persons, and remittances.

The report has been written by practitioners and experts drawn from academia, civil society and participating United Nations and international organizations in cooperation with relevant ministries and departments of the member governments in the subregion. In order to raise awareness among policymakers and initiate a dialogue, the report will be officially launched through an interactive seminar with Government officials, academia and civil society on 5 April 2012 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

2. *Information base on international migration*

Comprehensive reference material gathered through the Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia together with a database on labour migrant outflows from selected countries in Asia and the Pacific will be published as a comprehensive web-based information base on international migration. The information base is expected to go online in April 2012.

3. *Awareness-raising on international migration in Asia and the Pacific*

ESCAP, in cooperation with the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking will publish an awareness-raising report on international migration in Asia and the Pacific, covering all the sub regions. The 'Report on International Migration in Asia and the Pacific' will draw from existing data and material collected by the Thematic Working Group and its members and will focus on key messages and policy-oriented recommendations. This has been recently approved as part of the Work Programme of the TWG-Migration for 2012.

Also in association with the TWG-Migration, the 'Saphan Siang' ('Bridge of Voices') campaign aims to improve understanding on the lives of migrant workers living in Thailand. The campaign provides a public forum to discuss issues on the protection of the rights of migrant workers to increased public awareness on the contribution of migrant workers to economy and society in Thailand. Through television broadcasts, information materials, and the development of a Facebook page, the 'Saphan Siang' project invites people to share a video on their views on the contribution of migrant workers and the collection of stories on migrant workers. It is intended that in the future the campaign be developed as a regional platform for promoting positive images and stories on international migrants.

4. *Publications related to international migration published by ESCAP*

In 2011 the secretariat also produced and published on its website a number of research papers on migration and development issues, including "Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Development Impacts of International Migration in the Pacific", "Linking Migration and Development in Asia" and "Social Impact of International Migration and Remittances in Central Asia". These papers provided a welcome focus on particular migration issues and trends in Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries. Through the publication of *The Asia-Pacific Population Journal* ESCAP also published two further articles on migration in Central Asia and the Pacific Islands in 2011.

5. *Preparations for the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC) (2013)*

In 2013 ESCAP will convene the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference. Held every ten years the APPC has been recognized as forums vital to the forging and strengthening of partnerships across the region in the field of population and development. The Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference will consist of a senior officials meeting, a ministerial segment, a parliamentarians forum, an NGO Forum and side events. In the lead up to the Sixth APPC a series of preparatory meetings and events will be held.

C. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GLOBAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN 2011 and 2012

1. *Establishment of a database on labour migration – Migration Information System in Asia (MISA)*

In order to closely monitor migration outflows from countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the secretariat established a database on labour migration outflows from selected countries in the region in partnership with the Scalabrini Migration Centre, Philippines. The database comprises the official statistics made available from respective countries. It includes annual migrant outflows and to the extent possible data disaggregated by destination country, sex and skill level of migrants. The database will be made available to the public online in the first half of 2012.

2. *Development Account Project: Strengthening National Capacities to deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact*

The Population and Social Development Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Social Policy and Population Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) jointly organized a Workshop on Strengthening Dialogue between ESCWA and ESCAP Countries on International Migration and Development in Beirut from 28-30 June 2011.

The Workshop was held as part of the two-year Development Account (DA) project entitled “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impacts”. In line with the objectives of the project, the Workshop aimed to (a): enhance national-level skills and capacity to design and implement policies and programmes which maximise the gains and minimize the challenges of international migration for development, manage labour migration from the perspective of countries of origin and destination, and increase understanding of the policy options that could be taken to manage international migration to maximize its positive impact on development while benefiting migrant workers; and (b) develop recommendations to feed into future international consultative processes on migration, and contribute to increasing the availability of data and information on international migration.

The Workshop addressed issues of migration and protection, migration and gender, and interregional cooperation. It provided participants with the opportunity to understand the current situation in relation to the labour migration of 26 million people between countries of the ESCAP and ESCWA regions, discuss activities within the framework of global best practice, and consider how cooperation on migration issues could be maximized for the benefit of all concerned.

In particular, the Workshop focused on national experience and discussed ways forward in terms of (a) identifying areas of concern for countries of origin and destination relating to the protection of migrants, and discussing good practice in that area; and (b) cooperation on migration management issues between countries of origin and destination.

A series of supporting research papers were commissioned for the meeting which will be published online in the first half of 2012.

D. FUTURE PLANNED ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

1. *Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting to the High-level Dialogue (March 2013)*

ESCAP, in cooperation with the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking plans to organize an Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting to the High-level Dialogue, tentatively scheduled for March 2013 in Bangkok. The Preparatory Meeting will bring together Government representatives from the Asia-Pacific region as well as civil society and resource persons in order to formulate a regional position which would serve as an input to the High-

level Dialogue to be held in 2013. The themes of the Preparatory Meeting will be in line with the themes of the High-level dialogue.

2. Migration at the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (2013)

In mid-2013 the Sixth APPC will be held. At the Conference, held every ten years, a special session will be held on migration. Background materials, including those written by regional specialists, will be developed for this session of the conference. Furthermore, in 2013 the APPC will serve as the intergovernmental forum for the regional review of the ICPD Programme of Action, which contains a chapter on international migration.