

ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

*Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations*

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has undertaken the following activities in the field of international migration and development.

An ad-hoc expert group meeting (EGM) on “Migration and Development: Opportunities and Challenges for Poverty Reduction in the ESCAP Region” was organized in 2001. This EGM was held as a preparatory activity for the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC) held from 11 to 17 December 2002, organized jointly by ESCAP and UNFPA. The report and recommendations of the EGM were presented as a background document at the Fifth APPC. The issue of international migration and development was one of the key agenda items covered in the Fifth APPC. The Conference noted that as a result of globalization and disparities in labour supply and demand, there is a considerable diversity in migration flows within the ESCAP region. Broadly, such migration flows are authorized and unauthorized, temporary or long-term and seasonal. Each form of migration has varied impacts on social and economic development at the point of origin and destination. It is widely perceived that some categories of migration have increased significantly and pose particular challenges. These include refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked women and children and unauthorized labour migrants. Furthermore, the proportion of females among international migrants is increasing. The Conference recognized that despite the growing importance of international migration and its linkage with development and poverty, there is a lack of adequate, reliable and timely data on which to base the formulation of effective policies and programmes.

The Plan of Action adopted at the Fifth APPC urges Governments, in cooperation with civil society organizations and the international community to address the issues of international migration and to maximize its benefits while mitigating its adverse impacts. Specifically, the Plan of Action recommends to: strengthen regional cooperation to better manage the flow of all types of migration for the benefits of the sending and receiving countries, and the migrants themselves; combat the practice of trafficking in persons, especially women, boys and girls, while paying attention to trafficked victims with counselling and rehabilitation services; promote research on the interrelationship between migration and other population dynamics, development and poverty reduction as well as the interconnections between internal and international migration; and support training and inter-country workshops to build national capacity of data collection, analysis and research.

In October 2002, ESCAP in cooperation with UNIFEM and Sweden organized a seminar on “Promoting Gender Equality to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children”. One of the key issues was enabling and empowering mobile women and girls, focussing on safe migration of women and girls and highlighting the linkages between migration and trafficking from the perspective of development, gender and human rights. The dynamics of the feminization of migration and approaches to migration management that reduce the vulnerability of female migrants to exploitation and trafficking will be further explored.

As a follow-up to the Fifth APPC, UNESCAP organized an ad-hoc expert group meeting on international migration and development in 2003, with the major objective of understanding the interlinkages between internal and international migration and development with particular focus on gender, poverty and health. The information about the meeting, including the recommendations and background papers, is available at the following website: www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/programme/meetings.