



ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISM THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION INCLUDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Launch of the Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia

5 April 2012

Dhaka

REPORT OF THE LAUNCH OF THE SITUATION REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA

SUMMARY

The Launch of the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia* was held in Dhaka on 5 April 2012. The Launch was organized by the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking, which is co-chaired by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

The objective of the Launch was to share the key findings and recommendations of the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia*, to discuss current migration dynamics in the sub-region and to identify the way forward in implementing the recommendations of the *Situation Report*. This report provides a summary of the roundtable discussions held at the Launch, and the conclusions and recommendations for future action that arose from these discussions.

Participants agreed that the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia* demonstrates the ways in which the sub-region benefits from international migration, while at the same time highlighting many of the failings in the current migration system. Exploitative recruitment practices, high recruitment costs, high debt and push factors in countries of origin such as lack of employment and poverty were among the key factors requiring government intervention. Participants also highlighted that good practices in migration policy formulation were not a substitute for structural reforms or the ratification of international conventions and instruments protecting the rights of migrants. Additionally, it was agreed that more data on international migration was needed for evidence-informed policy making, particularly related to gender. Finally, participants at the event agreed on the need to develop a coherent sub-regional strategy on international migration, including through the engagement of the Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

CONTENTS

	<i>Pages</i>
SUMMARY	
I. INTRODUCTION	2
II. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	2
III. ISSUES CONSIDERED	3
A. Overview of the <i>Situation Report</i>	3
B. Analysis of Thematic Areas of Migration	5
C. Way Forward	6
IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE LAUNCH	7
A. Venue and date	7
B. Opening	7
C. Closing	8
D. Participants	8
ANNEXES	
Annex I Programme of Work	9
Annex II List of Participants	11
Annex III Official Statement by Mr. Alauddin Vuian, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh	15
Annex VI Official Statement by H.E. Mr. Dasho Bap Kesang, Ambassador of Bhutan to Bangladesh	16

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking (TWG-Migration), co-chaired by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, organized the Launch of the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia* in Dhaka on 5 April 2012. The *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia* was the result of a collaborative effort of the TWG-Migration.

2. The objective of the Launch was to share the key findings and recommendations of the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia*, to discuss current migration dynamics in the sub-region and to identify the way forward in implementing the recommendations of the *Situation Report*.

3. The Launch and the roundtable discussions that followed brought together Government representatives of the South and South-West Asian sub-region dealing with migration, experts and practitioners from academia, civil society and migrants' organizations, United Nations entities and international organizations.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The participants agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations:

5. Participants agreed that the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia* demonstrates the ways in which the sub-region benefits from international migration, while at the same time highlighting many of the flaws in the current migration system. Exploitative recruitment practices, high recruitment costs, high debt and push factors in countries of origin such as lack of employment and poverty were among the key factors requiring government intervention.

6. Participants emphasized the need for increased regulation of recruitment agencies and employers at both countries of origin and destination, and the enforcement of measures such as wage protection, recruitment cost regulation and contract validation by Governments.

7. Participants also highlighted that good practices in migration policy formulation were not a substitute for structural reforms or the ratification of international conventions and instruments protecting the rights of migrants.

8. Participants noted the particular needs of women migrants, and stressed the necessity of ensuring the protection of women's rights and adopting measures to reduce women migrants' vulnerability and exploitation.

9. Participants noted that more data on international migration is needed for evidence-informed policy making, and in this context recognized the need for sharing information between countries of origin and destination.

10. Participants expressed an interest in preparing a time-bound sub-regional plan of action on international migration including all thematic issues covered in the *Situation Report*, which would also highlight suggestions for migrant-receiving countries.

11. Finally, participants at the event agreed on the need to form a coherent sub-regional strategy on international migration, including through the engagement of the Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
12. The recommendations arising from the Launch would be shared with Governments in South and South-West Asia to inform future policy and programme efforts to address international migration at the national and regional level.
13. The representatives of the Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka expressed support for implementing the recommendations in their respective countries.

III. ISSUES CONSIDERED

14. The agenda of the Launch comprised three sessions: overview of the *Situation Report*, Analysis of the Thematic Areas of Migration, and the Way Forward.

A. Overview of the *Situation Report*

15. The session was co-moderated by Ms. Latifa Wali Rahimi, Deputy Director-General of United Nations and International Conferences Department, Government of Afghanistan and Ms. Rabab Fatima, Regional Coordinator and Advisor for South Asia, IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

16. Mr. Donovan Storey, Chief, Social Policy and Population Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP, provided an overview of the key messages of the report on behalf of the Co-Chairs of the TWG-Migration. He stated that the report aimed to enhance the understanding of migration issues and encourage more detailed dialogue on key migration issues to support the decisions of policy makers. Mr. Storey noted that the ratification of key international conventions was required for the protection of migrant workers and their families. He highlighted that the report called for gender to be at the center of the migration discussion rather than on the sidelines. Mr. Storey also underlined the need for more regional and international coordination; migration is a multilateral concern and international migration policy and governance should reflect this.

17. The first discussant, Mr. Piyasiri Wickramaseckara, Vice-President, Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA), stated that countries needed to explore innovations that maximize the role of migrants as drivers of economic and social development. There were several good practices in the region, including the sharing of information on the Internet by the Governments of India and the Philippines. Mr. Wickramaseckara also identified wage protection as a best practice, which could be achieved through direct payment of migrant wages into bank accounts. Mr. Wickramaseckara noted, however, that good practices in managing migration in the sub-region were not a substitute for structural reforms or ratification of international conventions and instruments to protect the rights of migrants.

18. Mr. Wickramaseckara also highlighted the need for multilateral cooperation, which was echoed by other participants in subsequent sessions. He stated that migration was an interdependent process in which both countries of origin and countries of destination benefitted. Consequently, receiving countries should treat migrant workers in host countries in the same way they would want their migrant workers to be treated abroad. In the same vein, while much had been done in the area of immigration policies by countries with high out-migration, the sub-region also needed to focus on the development of policies to manage emigration in migrant-receiving countries.

19. The following discussant, H.E. Ambassador Ashfaqur Rahman, Chairman, Centre for Foreign Affairs Studies, stated that the *Situation Report* was a useful reference on international migration in South and South-West Asia. The report highlighted the links between migration and development in a way that could be easily understandable by the general public. Furthermore, by analyzing thematic issues like remittances and development, the report clearly showed that the sub-region truly benefited from migration in ways that had not been previously appreciated. Ambassador Rahman expressed the opinion that the report should be required reading for policymakers in all countries of South and South-West Asia.

20. Ambassador Rahman outlined several flaws in the current Bangladeshi migration system, including that low-skilled migrants tended to pay the highest recruitment costs, that they often lived in debt, and that they were often compelled to overstay their legal period in countries of destination to meet savings goals. Ambassador Rahman noted that the findings of the *Situation Report* underscored the need to encourage policy makers to consider these issues. He concluded by stating that ESCAP and IOM should continue to monitor international migration trends in South and South-West Asia through periodic reports that include best practices and lessons learned in addressing these trends.

21. In the discussions that followed, several issues were raised. Participants noted that a persistent problem for policy makers seeking to address international migration was the lack of accurate statistics on those migrating abroad for work, including data on flows, stocks and return migration. Regarding the financial implications of international migration, participants noted the need for a greater understanding by labour migrants and governments on how to best manage remittances and finances generated by international migration. At the same time, participants highlighted that the migration costs paid by temporary labour migrants tended to be high; reducing the amount of funds that would otherwise be sent to the countries of origin as remittances. Participants stated that countries of origin have little control to reduce the amounts charged to labour migrants given the large role that private sector recruiting agencies, employers and agents in host countries played in determining the costs of the migration process. Although memoranda of understanding (MOUs) had been signed with several Gulf Cooperation Council countries that have been the leading destination for labour migrants from the sub-region, new countries of destination should be explored. Finally, it was highlighted that the issue of trafficking for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation affected both women and men.

22. Government representatives attending the Launch indicated that it would have been useful to have received advance copies of the report for review. The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) highlighted several important policy measures that had been taken to address problems in the recruitment sector. The representative from Bangladesh mentioned that special measures such as comprehensive pre-departure training covering language, culture and law of destination countries had been taken to raise awareness and enhance the skill level of female migrant workers. Measures had also been taken by the Ministry of Finance and the Bangladesh Bank (Central Bank) for better management and channeling of remittances. The Government of Bangladesh also highlighted its intention to sign Memoranda of Understanding with the United Arab Emirates as well as other Gulf Cooperation Council countries in order to increase cooperation on the management of international migration from Bangladesh to those countries.

23. Additionally, the Government of Bangladesh provided specific comments to pages 39, 234, 235 and 241 of the report. The full text of these comments is provided in Annex 2 of this report.

24. The Government of Bhutan indicated *inter-alia* that it should not be assumed that all persons in refugee camps in Nepal were of Bhutanese origin. The details of these comments are provided in Annex 3 of this report.

25. The Government of Sri Lanka, in referring to page 106 of the report, clarified that the Government of India had not granted asylum to any national of Sri Lanka.

B. Analysis of Thematic Areas of Migration

26. The session was moderated by Mr. Tashi Wangchuk, Deputy Chief of Division, Planning and Policy Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bhutan and Ms. Deepa Bharathi, Regional Programme Manager, United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women).

27. In his remarks, Mr. S. Irudaya Rajan, Chair Professor, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Research Unit on International Migration Centre for Development Studies, highlighted the need to consider both successful and unsuccessful policy practices in managing international migration. Mr. Rajan also underlined the need for a more comprehensive dialogue around the provision of social protection for migrants, instead of focusing solely on how best to benefit from remittances. Additionally, he noted that the discussion on the impact of remittances needed to be extended to both countries of origin and countries of destination. This should be in addition to highlighting the positive economic and social impacts of migrants in countries of destination. Mr. Rajan also stated that countries needed to create financial investment projects for the channeling of remittances.

28. Ms. Tasneem Siddiqui, Chair, Refugees and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), University of Dhaka, identified four issues in her intervention. First, multilateral cooperation should be promoted to facilitate labour migration, in order to curb unilateral actions by the destination or sending countries attempting to influence recruitment costs. It was also important to incorporate regional and national migration discourses into multilateral fora to ensure that dynamics involving both countries of origin and destination were covered by these mechanisms. Although countries in the sub-region had advanced bilateral cooperation on migration management, largely through memoranda of understanding (MOUs), frequently the terms of these MOUs were more beneficial to countries of destination, as countries of origin had little bargaining power given the importance of migration and remittances to their national economies. However, Ms. Siddiqui pointed out that countries of destination also had much to gain through taking part in the global labour market in order to address domestic labour needs. Furthermore, there was a need for greater market protection to address practices such as visa trading in countries of destination which were driving up the costs of recruitment. Multilateral cooperation in facilitating labour migration, rather than unilateral actions by sending countries attempting to control the costs of migration, would achieve better results.

29. Second, Ms. Siddiqui highlighted the problem of access to justice by migrants in receiving countries. Several high-profile cases involving the corporal punishment of migrants highlighted the need to address the lack of access to justice from the perspective of the rights of migrants. Third, Ms. Siddiqui underlined the need to recognize migration as an adaptation strategy to address the growing consequences of climate-induced migration, both internally and internationally. She suggested that the Bureau for Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) provide information and skills to both internal and international migrants moving as a response to environmental change, so that these people could migrate from a position of power and choice.

30. Finally, Ms. Siddiqui expressed her appreciation to the organizers for portraying both the successes and challenges of international migration in South and South-West Asia in the *Situation Report*. She added that the report effectively made the case for the management of international migration as a tool for development.

31. A number of issues were raised in the ensuing discussion. Participants noted the need for pre-departure training to equip temporary labour migrants with useful information to make their migratory experience more positive, including sensitizing migrants as to their rights, as well as bringing about a change in the perception of migrants and their contribution to countries of destination. Participants also agreed on the need for training and support for the reintegration of migrants upon return to countries of origin.

32. Participants stated that migration is again increasing after a period of relative decline due to the onset of the global economic crisis, including through student migration. However, policies for managing migration for education have not yet been fully developed. Participants noted that migrants travelling to study abroad increasingly had to pay more for visas and meet more requirements, yet even when these requirements are met, there was no guarantee of employment once the migrant completed schooling abroad.

33. Participants also discussed several issues related to remittances. The importance that the private sector (banks and mobile telephone providers) can play in increasing remittances sent to countries of origin was discussed at length. One participant noted that the social impact of remittances could have also been addressed in the *Situation Report* as there are several tools developed to assess these impacts.

34. The health challenges, risks and particular vulnerabilities faced by migrants were discussed. Sri Lanka noted that it was in the process of creating a framework for migration health management. A participant also emphasised the relationship between migration and fertility, and the demographic impact that might have resulted from prolonged absences of spouses.

35. Participants expressed an interest in preparing a time-bound sub-regional plan of action on international migration covering all thematic issues, which would also highlight suggestions for migrant-receiving countries.

C. Way Forward

36. The session was moderated by Mr. Ilyas Hussain Ibrahim, Minister of State, Controller of Immigration and Emigration, Department of Immigration and Emigration Government of Maldives and Mr. Donovan Storey, Chief, Social Policy and Population Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP.

37. H.E. Ambassador Nihal Rodrigo highlighted pre-departure training, contracts management, remittances, data on migrants and the control of criminal practices around migration as the key issues to be addressed in further developing migration strategies in the region. He noted the need for a combined South and South-West Asian approach to all such challenges. Drawing upon his experience as the former Secretary-General of SAARC, Ambassador Rodrigo offered practical suggestions on how to address migration issues in the regional body. He shared recent developments relating to SAARC, such as the establishment of the South Asia Forum, which could serve as a platform to address migration issues.

38. Mr. Debapriya Bhattachariya focused his comments on issues surrounding remittances. He noted that the research literature is inconclusive on the macroeconomic impact of remittances. On the one hand, remittances had demonstrated a positive impact on the current account balances of sending countries, in a situation where most countries were suffering from balance of payments issues. Additionally, during the onset of the global financial crisis, remittances proved to be a resilient source of foreign income.

39. On the other hand, the long-term impacts of remittances on the economy (compared to capital investment) are unclear. He pointed out that the poorest segments of society do not tend to migrate, and thus do not have access to remittances. Mr. Bhattachariya further noted that remittance-receiving countries were at risk of 'Dutch disease', i.e. an appreciation of the national currency due to the influx of foreign currencies. He noted that transaction costs related to migration were also another important factor in need of Government attention and country-specific analysis.

40. In the discussions that followed, participants noted the need for Governments to regulate and implement programmes to provide oversight and protect the rights of migrants. Key in this area is the need for investing in information, including the digitization of databases. The representative of Sri Lanka noted that this country had been at the forefront of good practices on migrant health, including mandatory health screening.

41. Participants discussed various sub-regional strategies to address migrant issues, including through the engagement of SAARC. It was noted that regional consultative processes such as the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue have limitations, as the burden of action was usually on countries of origin. In response to a specific query to the SAARC government representatives present at the Launch, the representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka expressed support to implement the recommendations that would arise from the Launch, and present them for consideration by SAARC.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE LAUNCH

A. Venue and date

42. The Launch of the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-West Asia* was held at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka on 5 April 2012.

B. Opening

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_7821

