

GFMD Mauritius 2012

Concept Note

RT 1.1: *Beyond-the-Border Skills and Jobs for Human Development*

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Team members: Bangladesh, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland; ILO, IOM.

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1. The Session

1.1 Rationale and scope

Session RT 1.1 will continue earlier GFMD debates on labor and skills mobility in globalizing economies and the policies to protect and improve the conditions of migrant workers to enable such mobility. It will pursue the assumption that employment abroad can accelerate human development if, in addition to assuring protection of basic human rights, it allows mobile workers to acquire new skills, use their skills productively, and return with enhanced potential for successful re-integration and upward social mobility.

This addresses a gap in policies on labor mobility, where even if migrants' rights are fully respected, there are often mismatches between their skills and jobs, which can lead to brain waste, lower earning capacities, higher costs to employers, possibly irregular migration status; and generally lower human development gains from working abroad. These mismatches can occur in both the country of destination and the country of origin upon return from work abroad; and can be a result, inter alia, of the high costs of training and skills/qualifications recognition. Mismatches between labor demand and the available workforce can be a challenge for employers in countries of destination and affect the economic development of these countries. Where foreign qualifications/skills are not recognized, there can be high costs for re-training. Skills and jobs are key planks in any development strategy, regardless of whether the country is receiving or sending mobile workers: education and income are key indicators in the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI).

Training migrants so that their skills align with real job needs (both in the origin and destination countries) is a way of both empowering the migrants and protecting them. Training and education for available jobs, and occupational standards that are agreed and recognized between countries, can be critical for standard contracts and fair remuneration, and can help minimize the incidence of irregular or exploitative forms of labor migration. The process of acquiring new or upgraded skills often starts in the country of origin itself, with further possibilities presenting themselves in the country of destination. Recognition of acquired or enhanced skills of returning workers by the country of origin can be an important factor for making circular labor mobility work for the migrants, their families and the countries of origin and destination. On-the-job training in the destination country could be complemented by investment in skills recognition and job opportunity schemes. Responsibility for this can be shared by governments and the private sector.

The session will seek to better understand the individual and joint roles that countries of origin and destination can play in these areas, in particular recruiters, employers, diaspora and other private sector and international players in both countries. It will also look at how standard-setting tools such as the

International Standards and Classifications of Occupations (ISCO) may or may not be helpful, depending on the country of origin or destination perspective.

The session will examine and compare policies and strategies by public and private sectors at origin and destination points to enable the acquisition, enhancement and utilization of skills, knowledge and competencies required for the performance of labor and the production of economic value both at home and abroad. It will discuss how these may better integrate the legal migration frameworks that can facilitate empowering forms of temporary or circular labor mobility. Examples and models may be drawn from traditional migrant-receiving countries such as Australia and Canada; and solutions sought from existing temporary and circular overseas worker programs, such as among the Abu Dhabi Dialogue countries, or between Mauritius and Canada or France, Caribbean/Mexico and Canada etc. The session could look at how such successful models may be adapted to South-North and South-South migration contexts.

A special focus could be on mitigating the risks and costs inherent in women's migration, in particular where women seek job and income enhancement abroad and return to limited prospects back home. Skills training and enhancement can improve access to alternative job opportunities for lower skilled women.

The session could take forward the proposals of GFMD 2011 for governments in destination countries to invest in workforce training and job generation schemes in countries of origin, or to offer incentives for businesses interested in investing in those countries to help train the local workforces, for example by engaging country of origin and destination governments and employers in identifying innovative solutions to finance upfront and continued investment in training and skills development. The training could also be aligned with the requirements of the local job market in the countries of destination.

The session could also help set some tracks for a multi-annual, multi-agency program of labor mobility policies/strategies and agreements for the African region, with the potential to scale it up for better labor mobility on the African continent. This could include in the longer term some pilot labor exchange programs within and outside Africa, and regional frameworks for managing these (e.g. like the Abu Dhabi Dialogue model), an African clearing house for cross-border skills matching and labor exchange, and strengthened partnerships among governments, RECs, private sector and civil society on labor mobility management.

1.2. Objectives of the Session

- a) To identify effective models (or strategies to create them) of vocational training, skills enhancement and skills recognition, both for purposes of human resource development and employment opportunities at home and to assure better job-matching abroad.
- b) To contribute to the wider Roundtable 1 debate about how to enhance human development potential in countries of origin, transit and destination through skills and job-matching strategies and support to diaspora as potential agents of development; and the larger debates on the legal migration frameworks to support this.
- c) In the longer term, to improve the knowledge, skills and employment prospects of persons seeking to work abroad, including when they return home, particularly in the context of temporary and circulatory forms of overseas contract work.

1.3 Questions to guide the session

- i) Why are so many mobile workers engaged in occupations below their skill level or outside their skill set, and thus not able to realize their full earning powers and human development potential, both while abroad and when they return home?

- ii) How can governments and non-state stakeholders empower overseas contract workers to increase their potential performance of labor and production of economic value both at home and abroad?
- iii) What policies and practices have worked best to train workers, certify and recognize their skills, and match the skills to available jobs, both in countries of origin and destination?
- iv) How can the legal frameworks and programs for labor migration, specifically circular labor mobility, make provision for the development, certification and recognition of persons working abroad?

1.4. Possible outcomes of the Session

- a) Strategies and facilities that support learning to improve human capital in countries of origin, both as a development strategy and a business strategy for cross-border labor exchange.
- b) Skills upgrading mechanisms in countries of destination and origin.
- c) Skills recognition models in countries of destination and origin; and policy mechanisms to maximize the benefits of upgraded and recognized skills.
- d) Effective methods of matching migrant skills with available jobs abroad; as well as with jobs in the country of origin upon return; and
- e) Models of legal and policy frameworks for forms of circular labor mobility that include the above empowering features.

All above outcomes should specify as far as possible their applicability to women migrant workers.

2. The Background Paper

The RT 1.1 background Paper could research strategies for skills development, certification and recognition over the life of a foreign worker contract cycle, along the lines of the above concept. An expert (experts) in the subject could be commissioned, but inputs would also be drawn from Mauritius and the United Arab Emirates experiences with their respective labor mobility programs, as well as any other relevant experiences of the Session team. (See the outline of the Background Paper in the attached *Guidelines for RT Preparations*). The paper may also draw on the practical outcomes and data to emerge from workshops planned for Africa and Asia in support of this session. These will involve the Chair, team member governments, and international and regional agencies in creating workable partnerships to manage cross-border labor flows for higher human development gains.

3. Role of the Co-chairs and Team members

(See attached *Guidelines for RT Preparations for GFMD 2012*)

4. RT 1.1 Workplan

Early March	Co-chairs and Coordinator complete the draft RT 1.1 Concept Note and share with team members
Mid March	Team members comment on the RT 1.1 Concept Note. Meeting or teleconference of the team
End March/	

Early April Finalize and post the Session Concept Note.
April–August Co-chairs/expert/Coordinator prepare the RT Background Paper; plan the RT session.
26 April Team meeting on the margins of the 2nd FOF meeting in Geneva.
19 June Team meeting on the margins of the 3rd FOF meeting in Geneva.
13 September Final Team meeting on the margins of the 4th FOF meeting in Geneva.
By end September Team reviews, finalizes and posts the Background Paper.
October Translation of the Background Paper into French/Spanish.
21 November RT Session 1.1 at the 6th GFMD meeting in Mauritius.

I.O./16 April 2012