

This statement is for Roundtable Session 1.1

Tools and Safeguards for Policy Coherence

Finding the right policy mix to balance different interests and objectives

Statement submitted by:

Country : **Sri Lanka**

Organization : **Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
Ministry of Foreign Employment**

Statement Title: **Horizontal and Vertical Policy Coherence in Sri Lanka**

Horizontal Policy Coherence in Action

The National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) was developed in 2008 based on the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration and spells out various roles to be played by its tripartite constituents in its 3-part action plan focusing on governance of the labour migration sector, protection and empowerment of migrant workers and linking migration to development. The policy was developed by a multi-sectoral group of government representatives, employers' organizations such as the Employers Federation of Ceylon, recruitment agencies and agency bodies, trade unions working on migrant worker issues, academics and civil society.

This multi-sectoral group continues to monitor the implementation of the policy through the National Labour Migration Advisory Committee headed by the Minister of foreign employment. With the funding support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Corporation (SDC) to the ILO for implementation support for priorities of the NLMP, since December 2010, a smaller representation of these stakeholders met on a quarterly basis to steer the ILO project management. Now in its 6th year of support to the government and tripartite constituents, the scope of the project has expanded to a **Programme Advisory Committee** of the overarching Safe Labour Migration Programme of the Government of Sri Lanka, strengthened through an MoU signed between the Swiss Federal Government and the Ministry of Foreign Employment in 2014. Apart from UN agencies, employers and worker organizations, civil society partners supported by SDC, sharing their contributions, representatives of national Ministries handling

subjects of Labour, Justice, Women and Child Affairs, Health and Skills Development also hear progress and share their inputs based on areas of complementarities. This has been a slow process to catch on, however it has provided the opportunity for other sectoral Ministries to be informed of what is happening in the labour migration sector and offer opportunities to link up and collaborate.

Similarly, the labour migration/foreign employment sector is one of 9 sectors included in the **“National Framework on Prevention of Sexual and Gender based Violence”** developed through support of the United National Development Programme under the leadership of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. This NAP, approved by the Government of Sri Lanka in June 2016, has chapters on child affairs, foreign employment, disaster management, economic development and employment, education, empowerment and prevention of violence, health, justice and law reform and media. This is one of the best examples of multi-sectoral policy coherence at the national level in Sri Lanka and has created interest among the donor community.

Through a Ministry of Foreign Employment-appointed technical committee, priorities that contribute towards reducing sexual and gender based violence were identified and areas of work that already have resources through various sources were highlighted. The priorities of the foreign employment sector were included in the chapter on foreign employment. These priorities are part of the NLMP, the migrant health policy of 2012, and the sub-policy on return and reintegration of Sri Lankan migrant workers of 2015.

The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs conducts periodic progress meetings of each sector where the foreign employment sector through the Ministry of Foreign Employment and the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment provides updates.

Vertical Policy Coherence in protection of migrant workers' children

The NLMP implementation in Sri Lanka is monitored through the National Advisory Committee on Labour Migration, chaired by the Minister in charge of labour migration and through the Programme Advisory Committee, chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Employment, the monitoring mechanism of the **Safe Labour Migration Programme** supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The NLMP has a strong emphasis of ensuring protection for children of migrant workers left behind and the government was continuously looking at ways to make this happen. After having explored several options, in 2013, the government brought in a specific regulation at the sub-national level, to ensure greater protection of children of migrant workers, especially of women migrant workers seeking employment as domestic sector workers. Known as the **“Family Background Report”** this regulation had its merits and demerits argued by both the women’s rights supporters and child rights supporters in the country. Over the years the regulation evolved in to one where a multi-sectoral mechanism was set in place to ensure the protection of children above 5 years of age of migrating domestic-sector-female workers.

This since the start of February 2017, a smaller group at the sub-local level, known as the Divisional Secretariat (DS) (a level higher than the smallest unit of administration which is the village level) are required to assess the situation of each family and be satisfied with the protection, guidance and care for the child or children (above 5 years) prior to making a recommendation for the mother’s overseas employment request. This now applies to all women seeking foreign employment.

This committee could include DS level officers such as the child rights promotion officer, early childhood development officer, women development officer, child protection officer, divisional health officer or family health officer. The participation of the Divisional Secretary, the development officer of the Ministry of Foreign Employment, and a development officer from the Ministry handling child affairs in this committee is mandatory.

This is a good example of policy coherence in action at the local level to ensure the protection of migrant worker’s children and despite several loose ends that still need to be addressed is an effective way of engaging other government agencies locally towards national practice implementation.

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Thank you very much!