



# Evaluation Summary



International  
Labour  
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Office

## *Promoting Decent Work through good governance, protection and empowerment of migrant workers: Ensuring the effective implementation of the Sri Lanka National Labour Migration Policy - Phase III*

### *Independent Final evaluation*

#### Quick Facts

<b>Countries:</b>	<i>Sri Lanka</i>
<b>Final Evaluation:</b>	<i>February 2020</i>
<b>Evaluation Mode:</b>	<i>Independent</i>
<b>Administrative Office:</b>	<i>ILO CO Colombo</i>
<b>Technical Office:</b>	<i>DWT New Delhi</i>
<b>Evaluation Manager:</b>	<i>Rattanaporn Poungpattana</i>
<b>Evaluation Consultant(s):</b>	<i>Sten Toft Petersen (International consultant) and Rachel Perera (National consultant)</i>
<b>Project Code:</b>	<i>LKA/15/02/CHE.</i>
<b>Donor(s) &amp; Budget:</b>	<i>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); US\$ 1,500,000.</i>
<b>Keywords:</b>	<i>Labour Migration, Decent Work, Gender, Skills development and recognition, Return and Reintegration, Sri Lanka</i>

#### Background & Context

##### **Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure**

The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) estimates that approximately 1.8 million Sri

Lankans are currently working overseas. According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka's annual report in 2018, remittances accounted for 7.9% of the country's GDP, down from 8.3% in 2017, when it accounted for 63% of export earnings. It is estimated that approximately 2.8% of the country's labour force migrates annually, although the number of registered migrants, especially women, has been declining, since 2015.

The overall developmental objective of the Labour Migration (LM) Project was to promote effective implementation of the National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) resulting in better protection of women and men migrant workers and their families as well as increasing development benefits. This development objective was pursued through four objectives, relating to the policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks that govern labour migration in Sri Lanka; promoting rights at work; optimizing benefits of labour migration through supporting return and reintegration; and increasing contribution to national, regional and global discourse on migrant workers.

##### **Present Situation of the Project**

The evaluation covered the period between April 2016 and February 2020. The projects ended by March 2020.

##### **Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation**

The main purpose of this final, independent evaluation was to assess the extent to which the project objectives had been achieved and to assess the impact of the

project, particularly on improving the status of the direct and indirect beneficiaries. The final evaluation also identified lessons-learned and good practices for both accountability and learning for possible similar interventions in the future.

The focus was also to assess the impact, and emerging impact, of the interventions and the sustainability of the project's beneficiaries and the local partners' strategy and capacity to sustain them. It also examined the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges and external factors that might have affected the achievement of the immediate objectives and the delivery of the project's outputs. The final evaluation assessed the extent to which the project had responded to the Recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation, from Oct 2018.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were the following:

- Assess the partnership and level of collaboration and cooperation with the ILO's tripartite constituents, local government agencies and other local partners and stakeholders, to ensure quality control and the contribution towards strengthening the impact, sustainability and relevance of such collaboration
- Assess the extent to which the activities, outputs and outcomes were monitored by the project and the results communicated with the project stakeholders
- Articulate the lessons learned clearly
- Make recommendations, based on the lessons learned, to inform other related labour migration projects and programs, and future programming approaches

In an effort to ensure as much validity and reliability as possible, the findings were verified, using multiple methods and multiple sources. Data was collected through a desk review of more than 40 documents, during a country mission to Sri Lanka. A total of almost 100 people were interviewed or participated in discussions on the project.

The overall purpose of this independent, final evaluation was to promote accountability and to strengthen learning among the ILO and the key stakeholders.

The final evaluation focused on the project's entire implementation period and assessed all of the results and key outputs that have been produced, since the start of the project.

The primary clients of the evaluation are the ILO national constituencies and partners, the ILO, and

partners, as well as other relevant stakeholders and the donor.

The evaluation team integrated gender equality as a cross-cutting concern throughout its deliverables and process, with special attention being paid to women workers. Likewise, it assessed tripartite issues and ILS.

### **Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation was implemented with a consultative and transparent approach. It used the following methods and tools: (i) a desk review of project documents, available reports and other relevant literature; (ii) semi-structured interviews with key informants and stakeholders, including returned and potential migrant workers; (iii) focus group discussions with workers (mainly women); and (iv) direct observation, made during field visits.

The evaluation team carried out a desk review and conducted Skype interviews with current and former ILO officers with relation to the project. Field visits to project sites in Sri Lanka included consultations with development partners, government officials and migrant workers, implementing partners, constituents and other key stakeholders.

Delayed effects: Many of the project's results had a mid- to long-term nature and even this was the third phase of the LM project could not be fully observed. The full effect of the intervention will be visible when a scale-up is implemented and ready to go initiatives takes off.

Access to direct beneficiaries: Due to complicated logistics and the implementation structure of the project it was difficult for the evaluation team to meet with end beneficiaries – migrant workers, so some important inputs and perspectives may not have been obtained. However, it was possible to interview a sample of the overall groups of beneficiaries.

As several migration projects are being implemented in Sri Lanka it was sometimes hard for the informants to recall what activity relate to what project.

### **Main Findings & Conclusions**

The project was able to complete almost all outputs and activities that were under the control of the ILO for delivery, whereas some outputs were not completed because of the delays caused by lack of implementing capacity, political environment and many changes among the responsible government officials. It can be

concluded that the most significant outcome of the project, including its preceding two phases, has been its contribution to the recognition of labour migration/foreign employment as an important part of the public and political agenda in Sri Lanka.

### ***Relevance***

As concerns the strategic fit of the project objectives, it was reported that the objectives of the two first phases were developed, based on discussions with stakeholders, whereas the third phase was developed as a follow-up for outcomes that were not fully achieved in the second phase.

### ***Coherence and validity of design***

In Sri Lanka, the ILO delivers its work through a Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). The current project did fit well into the priorities set out in the DWCP, as well as to the broader UN priorities. The project had a large number of outputs and activities with the available human resources the design was overoptimistic.

### ***Effectiveness***

The 4 objectives were achieved to the greatest extent possible, within the given circumstances. One of the main reasons for the project's inability to complete all the activities on time and, hence, to achieve the planned outcomes, was caused by delays within the government system, when implementing some of the activities. Whereas some of these delays were standard procedural delays in the system, further delays were caused by institutional and cadre changes as well as lack of adequate capacity in the project implementing team.

### ***Efficiency***

The project initiatives generally appear to have delivered value for money. The resources and inputs (funds, expertise, and time, etc.) were generally allocated and used strategically to achieve the planned results.

Concerning integrated gender equality, it was assessed that most stakeholders were very aware of the importance of including gender mainstreaming in the project's implementation and made efforts to have women included among the participants in workshops and training courses.

Many of the identified outputs and activities were closely aligned to the Government's policies, as laid down in the NLMP and the SLBFE Act; therefore, the employed methodology was adequate and correct steps

were taken to contribute to improving the implementation of these policies.

### ***Impact***

Overall, the major impact of the program is that it has contributed to review and implementation of the policy on labour migration, promoting safe migration and assisting institutional capacity building in such a way that safe labour migration has become a natural and integrated part of the social, economic and political context in Sri Lanka. It was clearly indicated by the interviewed migrant returnees belonging to pre-NLMP period that the struggle/hardship they had to undergo to return back when the employment conditions in the host country were intolerable, was significantly different from recent returnees who faced similar situations as they were informed prior to their departure about the procedures in case of eventualities and hence their return was better than the former group.

The capacity building of Labour Attaches and the institutionalization of this capacity building can be expected to have a long-term impact on the promotion of safe migration and by this contribute to the minimization of the decent work deficit. It should however be recalled that the mandate of the LAs is limited as they cannot relate to employment and working conditions.

It is the evaluation teams' well-founded expectation that the policies and practices developed, and the enhancement of the capacity building tools and capacities will – for the most part – continue to contribute to improving safe migration and minimize the decent work deficit for migrant women and men, well beyond the project's lifetime.

### ***Sustainability***

Concerning the extent to which the impact of the project is sustainable over the longer term the evaluation has concluded that labour migration has become an integrated part of the political and economical agenda of Sri Lanka, and that it will remain a such for many years to come. The sustainability of the achieved results differs among the various project components. As a whole, the achievements are quite durable, especially because most of them are embedded in the structures and policies of the Ministry and the SLBFE. This also concerns the revision of the SLBFE-Act (1985). The capacity building for recruitment agencies, on ethical recruitment, could become a sustainable result which could be scaled up or replicated by other partners. The revision of the Operational Manual (OP) for Labour Attaches was

completed and is expected to be approved. Monitoring and continued follow up is required. The establishment of a pilot Special Mediation Board (SMB) in Kurunegala marked an important step the project delivered all that was expected for the operation of the SMB.

Overall ownership of the project has been relatively high, at the Ministry, which was oriented towards the implementation of the NLMP. As the SLBFE was very much involved in the implementation of the project, ownership here is substantial.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended to include both in-bound and out-bound migration in a comprehensive long-term employment strategy. Such a strategy should be developed, after a detailed study has been made of the benefits and the challenges of migration and the changes in employment structures for the country in general, and the employers and workers in particular. The strategy should be developed on the basis of tripartite consultations. There is a good momentum for developing this as both foreign employment and labour are under the same Ministry for now.

**Recommendation 2:** The ILO should consider supporting an independent study of the new trends in labour migration, including the issue of women's undocumented migration. Based on this, together with the constituents, it should develop adequate initiatives.

**Recommendation 3:** SLBFE to institutionalise the training for recruitment agencies (ethical recruitment) and also run periodic training programs for personnel in licenced recruitment agencies, to update them about current issues in relation to LM. This should be followed by the establishment of correct monitoring mechanisms, to be put in place by the SLBFE to monitor the process of LM.

**Recommendation 4:** The capacity of the LA's to validate employers should be increased to ensure that both living, employment and working conditions are in compliance with generally accepted standards.

**Recommendation 5:** The evaluation recommends to secure a maximum involvement of the industry in the further development of the CoEC. This is to ensure that it meets the needs of the industry and creates an ownership. The ILO's relevant projects should support this process and technical assistance be provided. The

original idea of linking compliance to obtaining/renewal of licenses should be considered.

**Recommendation 6:** Sri Lanka should continue its active participation in the international fora post project. The ILO should secure continued technical support for the GoSL in their international activities.

**Recommendation 7:** The Ministry is recommended to review the training of FEDOs and to include more training on counselling on socio-psychological issues, as well as on financial literacy for the families receiving remittances.

**Recommendation 8:** The information booklet, safe migration guides and other materials developed by the project should be distributed to all offices, as well as updated and re-printed at regular intervals. It should include more information on the return and re-integration aspects.

**Recommendation 9:** The blacklisting of agencies, which are in non-compliance, will require strong legal procedures and principles and could have some negative consequences. However, a positive listing of those in compliance could have a positive impact on the agencies' behaviour. It is recommended jointly to establish such a positive list. This could eventually be linked to the Migrant Recruitment Advisor developed by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and supported through the two other ILO projects in the country, REFRAME and EQUIP.

**Recommendation 10:** Skills' recognition and certification should be institutionalised by the application of international standards. Market intelligence should be developed to identify the market needs and standards of receiving countries. Long- and short-term requirements should be identified. These initiatives should be seen as a part of a comprehensive national employment strategy.

**Recommendation 11:** The ILO is recommended to strengthen its project budget monitoring system to ensure that there is a timely delivery, as per the implementation plan and by implementing partners.

**Recommendation 12:** The ILO should consider nominating a person from among relevant project staff to be in charge of the LM Unit, to secure coordination and the institutionalization of the Units' work, as per the concept note.