 

CONCEPT NOTE

KNOMAD

Workshop on Measuring Migration Costs for the Low-skilled

The World Bank, Washington DC

MC7-100

November 16-17, 2015

1. The World Bank’s KNOMAD (Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development) workshop in Washington on November 16-17 on low-skilled labor migration aims to improve understanding of the costs incurred by low-skilled migrant workers to find jobs abroad. The workshop brings together the researchers, statisticians, and other technical experts who took part in the surveys on migration costs.

**Background and Motivation**

1. Migration affects migrants and their families as well as development in countries of origin and destination. The World Bank-led KNOMAD is a platform to synthesize and generate knowledge and policy expertise on migration and development issues. Its Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Low-skilled labor migration, co-chaired by Manolo Abella, COMPAS (University of Oxford), and Manuela Tomei, the ILO, aims to identify policies to reduce the migration costs of low-skilled labor migrants, and explore mechanisms to facilitate cross-border movements of low-skilled labor, including bilateral labor agreements.
2. To achieve these objectives, the TWG collected migration cost data comparable across migrant corridors. Analyzing how much migrant workers pay and how migration costs vary by corridor provides the analytical underpinnings for a global target to reduce migration costs – e.g. to one month’s earnings.[[1]](#footnote-1) This initiative complements ILO’s on-going efforts to improve recruitment services, including the monitoring and reduction of recruitment costs. Progress thus far includes the following:
   1. Developed a data collection strategy during the first year – i.e., face-to-face interviews with migrant workers in destination countries using a questionnaire and a country-specific sampling strategy. To increase data comparability, interviews were limited to legal migrants in three sectors with relatively high concentrations of low-skilled migrant workers: construction, agriculture and domestic work. This sectoral coverage was expanded to the manufacturing sector in Korea, where most migrant workers are employed.
   2. Undertook pilot surveys of migrant workers in Korea, Kuwait and Spain that demonstrated that the questionnaire was adequate to collect cost data from workers. The survey findings were presented to stakeholders at the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Stockholm, May 2014.
   3. Expanded the surveys to other migration corridors in 2015, viz, (a) returnees in India, Nepal, the Philippines and Ethiopia, and (b) migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras in Southern Mexico. The returnee sample is limited to those who returned from the Middle East region, where potential gains from reducing migration costs are likely to be significant.
   4. Plans for surveys in Russia, Italy and South Africa in 2015/2016.
3. This project has created synergies between KNOMAD and ILO and increased the capacity of researchers in the field. ILO’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has co-sponsored migration-cost related workshops with KNOMAD, and has been undertaking similar surveys, using a version of the KNOMAD questionnaire that includes more questions, such as wages and working conditions, with returnees in Pakistan from Saudi Arabia, workers from Vietnam in Malaysia, and domestic workers from Indonesia and the Philippines in Singapore.
4. The 2015 surveys used the World Bank’s Survey Solutions – the Computer Assisted Personalized Interviewing (CAPI) system, rather than pen-and-paper interviews, to reduce errors and improve the quality of data and analysis. KNOMAD and ILO’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific provided a training course on the Survey Solutions to local researchers in February 2015.

**Workshop objective and expected outcomes/ outputs**

1. The main purpose of this workshop is to discuss findings from new migration cost survey data and challenges and lessons learned from conducting field surveys, as well as plans and strategies for the new surveys in 2015/16. More specifically, participants will discuss practical challenges associated with designing sampling frameworks and survey methods as well as conducting computer-based surveys. Therefore, the workshop will enhance technical knowledge on measuring migration costs incurred by low-skilled labor migrants and help to improve the quality of surveys and survey implementations in 2015/16. KNOMAD will prepare a summary report as a deliverable of the workshop.

**Workshop format**

1. The workshop will be divided into several sessions. Presenters include researchers involved in this project, who will share new findings in 20-minute PowerPoint presentations.
2. The expected number of participants is about 30: 15 from both KNOMAD and ILO, and 15 technical experts.

1. Bearing in mind the relevant international law, such as Article 7 (1) of ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), stipulating, “Private employment agencies shall not charge directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, any fees or costs to workers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)