

## SRI LANKA COUNTRY PRESENTATION

Sri Lanka is a small Island of 65,000 Sq. Kilometers with a population of 21 million. In terms of world comparisons, Sri Lanka is densely populated.

Sri Lanka has a short term migrant population of 1.7 million, which is 25% of the labour force. This migrant labour force contributed USD 6.6 Billion in foreign exchange, which is 33% of the country's export income. The remittance income forms 8.3% of her GDP. Nearly 25% of our population is impacted by migrant labour.

The composition of the migrant work force is heavily weighted to women, which in 1997 was about 75%. In recent years, the proportion has changed from 75% in 1997 to a lower level of 45% in 2013. This has been achieved both by the reduction of whole numbers, and in relative numbers, where male migrant workers had increased substantially. Sri Lanka has consciously followed a policy of reducing the percentage of female domestic workers, fixing a maximum target of 35%.

There is an absence of an adequate mechanism to capture global labour market information and identify foreign employment opportunities. In addition, there is no mechanism to match labour demand and supply, so that facilities could be arranged for adequate numbers to acquire skills and to choose the destinations offering the highest returns. The absence of such a mechanism and non-sharing of existing information are critical issues that hinder human resource planning for foreign employment sector.

There is a high concentration of overseas labour migration in low-skill job categories and to a few destinations. The high percentage of low skill migrants lead to poor working conditions, hardships encountered due to harassment and abuse and low average levels of remittances. The high dependence (about 80 per cent) on the Gulf countries creates vulnerabilities. High social costs of migration of unskilled female migration are also noted through negative impacts on families, especially on spouses and children.

There are institutional and legislative constraints: The prevailing institutional framework, with the main state institutions responsible for labour migration at the top, is inadequate to address the complex problems emerging in this field.

Sri Lanka has followed a policy of skill up-gradation. It is a policy that female domestic workers get a NVQ qualification. By all these means, Sri Lanka will restructure her migrant labour people to make her labour semi and skilled.

Sri Lanka believe that for the benefit of all member countries it will be very appropriate if the Colombo Process could develop standard guidelines to foster ethical recruitment and manage the immigration process in a more orderly manner. These guide lines could be adopted by the member states if they so wish.

In one of the sessions a discussion on a self-funding mechanism has been planned. A self-funding mechanism, if adopted, will be very useful to provide the much required sustainability and stability to this important RCP. This also leads to a solution to the present problem on lack of follow-up action in the CP resolutions. To ensure a proper follow-up action on consensus reached at CP meetings, it will be necessary to have a secretariat with a continuity of operations. A self-funding mechanism will most certainly facilitate this much needed follow-up as well.

Lastly, it is seen that there are new countries in Asia that have become countries of origin in the recent past. It is strongly recommended that if these countries wish to join the CP, their requests should be favourably considered so that the CP can be made more meaningful.

Sri Lanka wish that this SOM will be highly successful.

Thank you.