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## STRENGTHENING PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES IN INDONESIA, NEPAL AND THE PHILIPPINES

By Maruja M. B. Asis and Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias

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### Executive Summary

Pre-departure orientation programmes have emerged as an important tool for the protection of migrant workers, especially when abroad. These educational programmes provide basic information to departing migrant workers to ease their transition into the country of destination and empower them to maximize the benefits of their overseas employment. Pre-departure information programmes are premised on two ideas: (1) that the protection of migrants begins at home, and (2) that information builds a foundation for migrant empowerment and protection.

Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines have implemented their government-mandated pre-departure programmes in different ways, choosing to involve different actors and assigning different roles to the government agencies in charge of these programmes. This Issue Brief presents the strengths, limitations and areas for improvement of this intervention, based on findings from field research conducted in the three countries. Poor implementation compromises the intent of pre-departure orientation seminars to promote the protection of migrant workers. Cooperation among different stakeholders, the need to supplement pre-departure orientation seminars with other information programmes as well as to involve destination countries in the initiative are among the recommendations provided.



## I. Introduction

The state plays a strong role in overseas employment programmes in Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines, which are leading labour exporters. In the Philippines, and to a lesser extent Indonesia, these policies date back to the 1970s, when many Asian states initiated labour-migration programmes in response

to the increasing demand for workers in oil-rich Gulf countries.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the pressure to generate jobs (and remittances) has made overseas employment a more permanent feature of the employment and development strategies of these countries. As Table 1 shows, in 2009 alone, 2.018 million workers left Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines, on formal temporary contracts.

Table 1: Annual deployment of migrant workers and share of female migrants, 2006–2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Indonesia	680,000 (79.7%)	696,746 (78.1%)	748,825 (74.3%)	632,172 (83.7%)	575,804 (78.4%)
Philippines <sup>1</sup>	788,070 (60.0%)	811,070 (47.7%)	974,399 (48.3%)	1,092,162 (52.8%)	1,123,676 (54.5%)
Nepal	204,533 (0.2%)	249,051 (1.9%)	219,965 (3.9%)	294,094 (3.4%)	n.a.

Notes: <sup>1</sup>Percentage of female migrants in the Philippines refers to new hires among land-based overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). The Philippines collects and reports deployment data for land- and sea-based workers; other origin countries typically report data for land-based workers only. For comparability, the annual deployment data reported for the Philippines refer only to land-based workers, both new hires and rehires. Total deployment from the Philippines (that is, both land- and sea-based workers) is as follows: 1,062,567 in 2006; 1,077,623 in 2007; 1,236,013 in 2008; 1,422,586 in 2009; and 1,470,826 in 2010. From 2006 to 2010, on average, sea-based sector deployment accounted for 23.6 per cent.

n.a. Not available.

Sources: For Indonesia, Bachtar, 2011; for the Philippines, POEA, 2010; for Nepal, Social Science Baha, 2011. Data are current through November 2010.

Although the three countries have different migration histories, and the use of migration as a tool for economic development has been institutionalized to varying degrees in each, they share a common goal of increasing migrant deployment levels. The Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004–2010 set a target of deploying 1 million workers overseas every year (which it has accomplished since 2006) (POEA, 2004). Although the target number was dropped from the Philippine Development Plan 2011–2016, the deployment of workers continues to be the centrepiece of the country's labour migration policy (POEA, 2011). In 2006 Indonesia also announced a goal, which was not achieved, of sending 1 million workers overseas every year until 2009 (ILO, 2006). Acknowledging the contributions of overseas employment to generating jobs and reducing poverty, Nepal is exploring further avenues to deploy more workers abroad.

At this point in time, all three countries have passed laws to promote the protection of migrant workers. In the case of Indonesia and Nepal, these laws relate to the placement or employment of their workers abroad and to migrant protection.

Aware of the pitfalls and perils of migration, these countries are taking steps to reduce the costs of migration. The first step is at home, preparing migrant workers for departure through training and educational programmes (Morgan and Nolan, 2011). Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines have introduced the pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) as an essential component of worker protection.

The Philippines stands out among the three countries in terms of its robust (and successful) efforts to disseminate information on migration (ILO, 2006). This success is in large part due to the country's long experience with labour migration, better-developed media infrastructure (including greater media coverage of migration issues)<sup>2</sup> and higher literacy levels. Frequent references in the news suggest that migration is an integral part of life in the Philippines. The major English broadsheets have specific sections devoted to the Filipino diaspora – the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* has a section called "Global Nation," the *Philippine Star* has "Pinoy Worldwide" and the *Manila Standard Today* has an occasional section called "Diaspora." Various public service programmes on radio and television regularly feature or specifically focus on migration issues. Films, songs, plays and other popular culture products also touch on migration themes.

Disseminating information about migration is a bigger challenge in Indonesia and Nepal, in part due to their geography: Indonesia is a vast archipelago and Nepal is a landlocked country. Key informants from the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in both countries acknowledge that migration information is mostly confined to urban centres. NGOs have tried to fill the knowledge gaps in rural areas through capacity-building and community-based information programmes, but much more needs to be done.<sup>3</sup> In Nepal, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Migrant Resource Center (MRC) was established in Kathmandu in 2010 to provide aspiring and current migrants information on safe migration through counseling (either face to face, by e-mail or by telephone). MRC partnered with a migrants' organization, the Pravasi Nepal Coordinating Committee, to establish foreign employment centres in several districts, which offer pre-departure orientation among other services. At the time of a research visit in late June 2011, MRC had been turned over to the government.

While aspiring migrants have traditionally relied on their networks, relatives and friends for information about working abroad (Battistella and Asis, 2011; Asis, 2005) some migrants are beginning to turn to official sources. Recent research among departing Filipino domestic workers suggests that migrants consider certain government agencies such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the Office of the Undersecretary of Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) to be trusted sources.

Many aspiring migrants – especially those with lower educational attainment, limited knowledge of migration and limited resources to travel to the capital city to apply for overseas deployment – turn to the services of middlemen or brokers. Ideally, brokers facilitate the migration process but in some cases are exploitative, which is why Filipino migrants' relative autonomy is an advantage (as discussed above). In Indonesia and Nepal, it is said that brokers exercise undue control over applicants, and in Nepal even sexually abuse female migrants.

In Indonesia *calos* (brokers or sponsors) perform multiple roles in the recruitment process, ranging from giving information to providing services to aspiring migrants during the application process and even lending them money to encourage them to work abroad. In the absence of community education programmes on safe migration, brokers' services are in

high demand. A representative of an agency and *calos* in Mataram (in West Nusa Tenggara [NTB] Province) stated that migrants recruited for work in the Middle East are accompanied by their brokers from Mataram in NTB to Tangerang in Java to apply for passports. While their passport applications are being processed, the applicants undergo training in accredited training centres in Jakarta.<sup>4</sup>

Brokers sometimes give workers or their families an allowance, a practice that critics view as tantamount to bribing people to migrate. The amount depends on the supply of potential workers. In areas where only a few workers are interested in going to the Middle East, such as Cianjur, the allowance could reach Rp 5,000,000 (about USD 526). In areas where many are keen to work abroad, such as Sukabumi, sponsors either do not provide any allowance or offer a considerably smaller amount, for example, Rp 1,000,000 (around USD 105).<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes, to expedite the completion of requirements, applicants may pay brokers. Sponsors and agents interviewed by the authors' research partners in Indonesia acknowledge that some sponsors commit irregularities, such as falsifying documents or charging fees to applicants. Interestingly, an owner of a recruitment agency in Jakarta complained about the excesses of informal labour brokers and recommended that the government regulate their operations.<sup>6</sup> A recent study offers another perspective – that the *calos* have become indispensable in the recruitment process because government policies do not allow the active recruitment of domestic workers (to discourage domestic worker migration and the potential for abuse) (Palmer, 2010). However, domestic worker migration is permitted if applicants approach the agencies. The establishment of provincial-level placement and protection boards in selected areas does not seem to have eliminated the middlemen. In fact, the provincial boards are seen as operating in the same way as the *calos*.

In Nepal deficiencies in the current system, including a lack of accurate information on job opportunities, insufficient capacity in rural areas and a cumbersome application process create opportunities for brokers to insert themselves into the process. Brokers, for example, facilitated the migration of Nepalese women to the Gulf countries during the period when it was not permitted. However, in general, brokers in Nepal do not seem to have as much control over applicants as in Indonesia.

Key informants representing government, civil society and recruitment agencies agree that the reach of migration information needs to be extended. If migration information were more widely available and easier to access, it would aid aspiring migrants' decision making, allow them to potentially rely less on brokers, guide them toward safe migration channels and raise awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

## II. Three models

Each country has implemented its government-mandated pre-departure programmes in different ways, choosing to involve different actors and assigning different roles for the government agencies in charge of these programmes (see Table 2).

Table 2: Pre-departure information programmes, by country

	Philippines	Indonesia	Nepal
Name	Pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS)	Pre-departure briefing (PAP)	Pre-departure orientation training
Launch	1983	2003	2004
Initiated by	NGOs; migrant workers do not pay	Recruitment agencies; migrant workers pay	Not known
Implementing agency	OWWA (since 2003; previously POEA)	BNP2TKI	FEPB
Provider(s)	OWWA, POEA, NGOs (for vulnerable workers), recruitment agencies (58), industry associations	BNP2TKI, BP3TKI (in 16 provinces)	Recruitment agencies (50)
Fee	Government – none; others – PHP 100 (USD 2.30)	None	NR 700 (USD 10); reimbursable for women
Length of programme	6 hours	8 hours	12.5 hours for women; 11.5 hours for men

Notes: BNP2TKI = National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers; BP3TKI = Agency for the Service, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers; FEPB = Foreign Employment Promotion Board; OWWA = Overseas Workers Welfare Administration; NGO = non-governmental organization; POEA = Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.  
Source: Authors' analysis.

### I. The Philippines

The Philippines has developed a multi-stakeholder pre-departure orientation programme, with the government (OWWA and POEA), civil society and the private sector as implementers. To ensure that the curriculum emphasizes the protection of migrants, the responsibility for providing PDOS to domestic workers and entertainers was given to NGOs in 1992. Since then, the private sector has ceased to be the sole provider of PDOS for agency hires.<sup>7</sup> However, the PDOS programme provided by the private sector still covers the largest share of departing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) (Achustegui, 2010). Presently, the programme is conducted by OWWA and POEA, and 260 accredited private sector and NGO providers.

The PDOS curriculum has remained largely unchanged over the years, with the exception of the addition of "health and safety" and "financial literacy" as topics.

The present-day PDOS is divided into seven modules covered during a one-day seminar:

- Migration realities – code of conduct for OFWs, possible challenges when working abroad, "Buhay OFW" (life as an OFW)
- Country profile – laws, culture and customs of the host country
- Employment contract – rights and responsibilities of OFWs per contract, what to do in case of contract violations
- Health and safety – HIV and AIDS education
- Financial literacy – managing earnings
- OWWA programmes and services and other government programmes, such as the Social Security System (SSS) and PhilHealth
- Travel procedures and tips.

The eight-hour programme has been reduced to six hours, upon the request of PDOS providers who

argued that six hours is sufficient to discuss the modules. While the PDOS programme provided by POEA and OWWA is free (likewise with the Comprehensive Pre-Departure Education Program, CPDEP), non-government providers charge PHP 100 (approximately USD 2.30), which is supposed to be shouldered by the agencies.

The current curriculum and manual were developed for OWWA by the Development Academy of the Philippines in 2008, with contributions and inputs from PDOS providers as well as former OFWs and OWWA officers. To ensure that vital information is conveyed to participants across all types of providers, in 2009 OWWA developed a discussion outline for each module and made it available to all providers in PowerPoint format. OWWA regularly sends advisories and important information that would benefit migrants.<sup>8</sup>

Since 1983 the PDOS programme in the Philippines has expanded and been supplemented by two other information programmes: the pre-employment seminar (PEOS), which precedes PDOS; and the post-arrival orientation seminar (PAOS), which is a follow-up to PDOS and takes place in the migrant's destination country. Unlike PDOS, the two programmes are not mandatory and their implementation is less standardized.

NGOs have raised concerns about private sector actors in the role of educators and advocates of migrants' rights, questioning how they can promote migrants' rights while in the business of recruitment. Outsourcing PDOS to non-government providers makes OWWA's monitoring of the seminar critical to ensure that PDOS is implemented properly and effectively.

## 2. Indonesia

In Indonesia the *Migrant Worker Placement and Protection Law of 2004* states that all migrant workers must complete what is known as the Final Pre-Departure Briefing, or Pembekalan Akhir Pemberangkatan (PAP), which is offered to migrant workers free of charge.<sup>9</sup> Attendance became mandatory in 2003. The National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (BNP2TKI), which manages the pre-departure briefing, hires some 200 instructors, usually government personnel or retirees. In Jabodetabek (Greater Jakarta) the briefings are usually offered daily in two venues, Cawang and Bekasi. Similar briefings are offered in 16 provinces that are major

sending areas and are coordinated by the Agency for the Service, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (BP3TKI), which is a provincial branch established by BNP2TKI in these provinces. This arrangement enables the government to manage and implement the programme without having to deal with other entities. The pre-departure briefing is offered for free, which is guaranteed by a regulation. In 2008 BNP2TKI developed the curriculum for PAP, which covered the following topics (IOM, 2010):

- Terms of deployment and work contracts (including rights and obligations of labour migrants and their employers)
- Laws (including criminal laws), regulations and customs of destination countries
- Arrival and departure procedures
- The role of Indonesian diplomatic missions vis-à-vis Indonesian labour migrants, and how to access assistance
- Insurance claims
- Safe banking and remittance channels
- Health tips
- Raising awareness of issues such as human and drug trafficking
- Self-confidence coaching to deal with culture shock, stress, loneliness and professional issues
- Procedures to return home.

The one-day briefing consists of the following four two-hour sessions:

- Working conditions, regulations and laws, culture and customs of destination countries
- Work contract (includes discussions on remittances, insurance and the overseas worker ID card KTKLN)
- Mental and psychological issues, personality (includes tips on how to be assertive and how to develop positive attitudes)
- Drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and trafficking.

## 3. Nepal

In Nepal the implementation of pre-departure orientation is exclusively in the hands of accredited recruitment agencies. The agencies charge NR 700 (about USD 10) for the orientation session. In this configuration, the Foreign Employment Promotion Board (FEPB) functions mostly as manager and overseer. The programme, known as Pre-Departure Orientation, was made mandatory for departing migrant workers in 2004. Chapter Six of the Foreign Employment Regulation 2064 (2008), which deals



with provisions relating to training, specifies that the orientation should cover the following:

- Foreign employment law of Nepal
- The geography, culture, lifestyle and the economic, social and political context of the destination country
- Language of the destination country
- Labour, immigration laws and traffic rules of the destination country
- HIV/AIDS, communicable diseases and sexual and reproductive health
- Occupational safety and health
- Easy and safe travel
- Conduct, treatment and security of workers
- Repatriation of earnings made abroad to Nepal in a simple, easy and safe manner.

The FEPA is charged with (1) registering institutions to provide foreign employment orientation training, (2) developing and approving the curriculum and (3) monitoring orientation trainings. The actual implementation is entirely in the hands of accredited recruitment agencies. There are 50 orientation centres that are licensed to conduct the two-day pre-departure orientation – a total of 12.5 hours and 11.5 hours of instruction for female and male migrants, respectively. Male migrants pay NR 700 (about USD 10) for the orientation, while female migrants are reimbursed by MRC. The fee is highest among the three countries in this study.

As in the Philippines, NGO informants were critical of the private sector's role as an orientation provider. There have been reports that some agencies do not provide the seminar and just issue certificates. The problem of commercialization raised by Philippine respondents is already surfacing in Nepal, where the pre-departure orientation programme is still in its early years.

Each country's arrangement has its pros and cons. In the Philippines the multi-stakeholder approach provides for broader participation, although the opposing views of the private sector and civil society make it a tough balancing act for the government. The Indonesian model is a more streamlined approach – its major advantage is the offer of a free pre-departure briefing as a service to migrants, but this set-up does not encourage the participation of other stakeholders. The Nepali arrangement, in which the private sector is tasked with providing the orientation to departing workers, is the most expensive for migrants, and NGO informants have raised concerns about the quality of these orientations.

### III. Key challenges

The research on which this brief is based has exposed several challenges, questions and barriers that have yet to be answered or overcome, including the following:

#### **1. It is unclear whether migrants acquire necessary and relevant information from pre-departure information programmes**

While migrants acknowledged learning valuable information from pre-departure orientation programmes, they also commented on the significant limitations of the sessions. Key informants, especially those from the NGO sector, questioned the effectiveness of the intervention. Proposals designed to deepen and expand the coverage have been suggested, such as extending the length of orientations and including family members. The temptation to add more time and/or topics must be weighed against the fact that the pre-departure information programme is not the only means to reach migrant workers (and their families for that matter) – mass media, social media and community-based information programmes, among others, can also be suitable channels, although these are far less interactive and participatory.

#### **2. Pre-departure information programmes tend to have a one-size-fits-all design**

There is an increasing need for country-, skill- and gender-specific programmes. This is especially challenging for the Philippines because of the variety of migrant destinations, the range of migrant occupations and the participation of both women and men in international labour migration. The migration backgrounds and experiences of OFWs are similarly diverse (first timers vs. rehires, long-term migrant workers, returning migrant workers and so on). These different profiles must be taken into account when developing materials and curricula to support OFWs in a more meaningful way. An inventory of customized materials produced by government agencies and NGOs, and a system for reproducing, updating and sharing these materials, can be discussed to pursue the goal of a more targeted approach to pre-departure information programmes.

#### **3. Different stakeholders hold irreconcilable views about the division of labour in pre-departure information programmes**

In the Philippines key NGO informants expressed the view that the private sector should not be involved in

the delivery of PDOS. A key informant representing the private sector, however, believed that NGOs should be involved in providing pre-employment orientations, while PDOS should remain the responsibility of private agencies and government.

In Nepal the government engages recruitment agencies only in the implementation of the pre-departure orientation or briefing, while in Indonesia, the government deals with recruitment agencies in connection with training centres' operations.

In Indonesia NGOs expressed their belief that the private sector should not be involved in pre-departure information programmes. A key private sector informant thought agencies should participate in such programmes, and the government should focus on the protection of migrants. In Indonesia and Nepal, both NGO and private sector representatives expressed interest in holding a conference/workshop of key stakeholders to discuss and formulate an action plan integrating the perspectives and experiences of NGOs into pre-departure information programmes for migrants.

#### **4. There is a vacuum of reliable migration information beyond urban centres**

In Indonesia and Nepal, stakeholders cited a need to intensify the dissemination of migration information beyond the capital cities. In Indonesia, for example, potential migrants from outlying provinces rely on brokers to connect them with Jakarta-based recruitment agencies. National government agencies and their regional and local counterparts must forge links to facilitate the transfer of information and provision of services to the areas in which potential migrants live.

#### **5. There is a lack of coordination among government agencies and between different levels of government**

There seems to be a lack of coordination between agencies that design policy and those that implement it. In Indonesia the activities of the Ministry of Manpower and BNP2TKI appear disconnected. The same can be said of FEPB and the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management in Nepal. The importance of linking the national government with subnational units to provide better-targeted information and services is discussed below.

## **IV. Good practices**

Several good practices, which are potentially replicable, are also worth highlighting. These include:

### **1. Involving local governments as partners in pre-departure orientation programmes**

In the Philippines POEA has stepped up its efforts to get local government units to cooperate in its anti-illegal-recruitment and anti-trafficking campaigns, paving the way for closer links between communities and national migration policies and programmes. This partnership has been formalized in a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between POEA and interested local government units. While policies and institutions related to labour migration are well established at the national level, few local government units have established a migration desk, and international labour migration has not been considered in local development plans and policies (Asis and Roma, 2010).

### **2. Involving civil society organizations in information programmes for migrant workers**

The participation of NGOs in the Philippines has contributed to the inclusion of a rights perspective in PDOS and other information programmes for migrants. NGOs have also developed materials, resources and strategies for awareness-raising campaigns and migrant workers' education.

### **3. Supplementing pre-departure orientations or briefings with other information programmes**

In the Philippines two additional information-dissemination programmes have been developed to supplement the current PDOS programme. The PEOS programme covers decision making in general, the process of legal application for overseas employment job opportunities and the risks of illegal recruitment. This course is designed to be completed before migrants attend PDOS. Once at the destination country, the government also offers PAOS at embassies and consulates. Neither programme is mandatory. The curriculum, implementation methods and administrative framework have yet to be fully developed. POEA has developed a syllabus for PEOS and has taken the lead in cooperating with local government units to introduce PEOS in local communities. PAOS appears to be an ad hoc activity taken up by some foreign service posts. These additional programmes reinforce pre-departure information programmes, and can be considered part of a comprehensive education programme for migrant workers.



#### 4. Creating orientation programmes aimed at recruitment agencies

The Philippine government also provides orientations for the general management and staff of recruitment agencies, to professionalize the labour migration industry and promote ethical practices. These promote the protection of migrant workers.

#### 5. Establishing migration information centres in local communities

In Nepal the Women’s Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) and Youth Action Nepal cooperated to establish migration information centres in a number of districts outside Kathmandu. NGOs pooled their resources to provide community-based information and advice on safe migration. WOREC contributed its network of women-oriented NGOs, while Youth Action Nepal brought its network of youth organizations to the initiative.

## V. Conclusions and key recommendations

Pre-departure orientations and briefings are necessary but insufficient as effective mechanisms to provide the scope and breadth of general information that migrants need. Considering the diversity of the migrant populations in the countries studied, migrants’ varying positions in the migration cycle and the range of issues and challenges they face, it is clear that a much broader range of interventions is needed. It is important to define the focus of pre-departure orientations and seminars so they do not overburden migrants with concerns that can be better dealt with by other stakeholders or via media. The orientation programmes must be supplemented and complemented by other information programmes, including the use of mass media and social media.

Pre-departure interventions are essential for protecting the rights of migrants, but they are not sufficient on their own. Efforts to protect migrants must begin at home, yet various types of interventions need to occur at every stage in the migration cycle – when individuals make the initial decision to go abroad, before their departure, while in transit, in the destination country and upon their return.

To improve the effectiveness of orientation programmes designed to protect migrant workers, origin governments should consider taking the following three steps:

#### 1. Seek the cooperation of receiving countries in migrant workers’ orientation programmes

To date, countries of origin have been the strongest advocates for improving migrant workers’ education, but the cooperation of receiving countries would help strengthen and expand these programmes. Receiving countries can provide input about their laws, culture and working and living conditions; develop country-specific materials and resources to be used in pre-departure information programmes or migrant workers’ education programmes on site; involve local institutions to support migrant workers’ education and potentially conduct employer orientations. (Singapore has such a requirement for employers hiring foreign domestic workers.) Relevant government agencies responsible for workers’ education across origin and destination countries are encouraged to meet to discuss the design, content and flow of information programmes from origin to final destination. The Colombo Process provides a venue for discussing initiatives along these lines.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2. Build technical knowledge by learning from others

In the planning and design of pre-departure orientation programmes, the Philippine, Nepalese and Indonesian governments need not start from scratch. Although many orientation programmes are new, others, especially those managed by the private sector and the international community, have a long record. For instance, as Box 1 highlights, IOM has experience that offers critical lessons for today’s policymakers.

#### Box 1: Sixty years and a million migrants later: Lessons from IOM’s pre-departure orientation programmes

Over the past 60 years, IOM has provided pre-departure training to over 1 million migrants from 56 countries. Although these programmes vary from country to country and have continuously evolved through the years, they are driven by a constant and single underlying assumption – that significant steps toward integration can be taken well before the migrant arrives in the country of destination. IOM’s experience points to a number of lessons and best practices that governments in Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines may find relevant as they think of ways to improve their training programmes, including:

- *Develop curricula and supporting activities with destination countries.* Key priority messages need to be identified in close consultation with receiving countries, and must take into consideration the cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic challenges which specific groups may encounter upon arrival.



- *Link pre-departure and post-arrival activities, recognizing the transitional continuum.* Information needs to be shared through the most effective means with stakeholders at both origin and destination to ensure that all parties are aware of both training content and methodology, as well as potential challenges identified pre-departure which may need additional attention and follow-up post-arrival.
- *Make use of cross-cultural or bi-cultural trainers.* Trainers who share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds with the migrants they work with are often considered more effective than those who do not share the language and have a less complete understanding of the migrants' culture.
- *Schedule orientation sessions as close to departure as possible, without interfering with the departure process itself.* This maximizes retention of new information and ensures that the new information is as relevant as possible.
- *Develop training that is participatory and learner centric.* Migrants learn best, and the lessons learned are more meaningful, when the pre-departure training methodology is highly experiential and participatory.
- *Help migrants teach one another.* IOM training helps participants learn different facets of a training topic, then allows them to teach these to one another encouraging migrants to learn the topic in-depth, and also helping them to develop self-confidence as they become teachers and not just students.
- *Identify what the learners already know and then move to what they want or need to learn.* This can be done by drawing on examples from what migrants already know whether about public transportation, housing, health and social services, education, laws or cultural adaptation and extrapolating or bridging from that existing knowledge to new information.
- *Address the needs of not only the individual migrant, but also those of the entire family.* Whether migrants' families remain behind or accompany them, there are myriad issues that need to be addressed during the course of any orientation, including communication, cultural adaptation, changing family dynamics, cross-generational issues, money management and financial literacy.

Source: Adapted from IOM.

Using the Colombo Process, countries may also consider embarking upon a collective project to share and exchange lessons learned, good practices and the resources of existing pre-departure orientation programmes for migrants. As a group, origin countries can also lobby destination countries to both support pre-departure orientation programmes and help formulate information programmes for migrant workers on-site.

### **3. Provide support to consular services to forge ties with migrants and relevant destination-country government institutions**

Part of the preparation for staff deployed in foreign service posts should include training in

communication with migrants and community relations. These skills would help staff to develop and conduct post-arrival orientation seminars for migrant workers, engage migrants' associations to promote the protection of migrant workers and build networks and communities and establish relationships with relevant government institutions in destination countries. It is especially important to build partnerships with local institutions in the Middle East given the myriad challenges migrant workers face in the region and the relative absence of local institutions that can provide support to migrants. The involvement of local institutions in the promotion of migrants' rights would also serve to convey the message that the responsibility to uphold migrants' rights is everybody's business.

Indeed, the growing scale and interconnectedness of labour migration in Asia has created new and unanticipated challenges for both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries as well as for migrants themselves. Pre-departure orientation programmes have emerged as one mechanism to mitigate some of the challenges and abuses migrants face when employed overseas, some of which stem from lack of information about their rights and about what they can expect in the host country. Pre-departure information programmes are critical though imperfect tools. The design and implementation of programmes in Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines – many of which are in their infancy in the former two countries – should be further evaluated to maximize their potential toward contributing to safe migration and empowering migrant workers in general.

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## Endnotes

1. Revenues generated by the oil price increase in 1973 led oil-producing countries to start massive infrastructure projects, which gave rise to labour needs that could not be met by local workforces.
2. Key informants, however, observed that media reportage tends to be sensationalized. There is a great deal of interest in controversial issues and cases of extreme abuse. The educational component is not well developed.
3. In Indonesia the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (SBMI) ran a project that included the training of trainers to conduct pre-departure information activities in five districts. In Nepal the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), under its safe migration project, aimed to increase access to information on safe migration by establishing migration booths in selected communities and the development of information, education and communication materials. An NGO formed by women migrant workers, Pourakhi-Nepal, offers pre-departure psychosocial counseling through its hotline services and through direct contact with prospective women migrant workers. Aside from psychological preparation, the counseling programme also provides practical information on the application process, recruitment agencies and job market information in destination countries. It has also produced *An Easy Handbook for Women Migrant Workers Going for Foreign Employment*. For details about Pourakhi and its programmes, see [www.pourakhi.org.np](http://www.pourakhi.org.np).
4. Migrants who will engage in domestic work in Malaysia do not have to go to Java for their passports and for training; instead, they can leave directly from Mataram. According to the sponsors who participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted by the research team in Indonesia, many of the migrants who leave for Malaysia are not trained.
5. Exchange rate used: 1 USD = 9,510 IDR. According to key informants in Indonesia, women migrating to become domestic workers in the Middle East (mostly Saudi Arabia) do not pay a placement fee as per the regulations of these countries. This was confirmed by women

migrants who participated in focus groups in Cianjur and Sukabumi. However, the monthly salary is low (800-1,000 riyal, or about US\$213-267). Those who are in an irregular situation — for example, those who went to Saudi Arabia on an umrah (pilgrimage) visa and then stayed on to work, or workers who ran away from their employers — earn more (around 1,700 riyal or US\$453) and may have a day off. This information was provided by one such facilitator or organizer in Sukabumi. Migrants going to other destinations have to pay a placement fee to their recruitment agencies.

6. Interview conducted by the research team with a Jakarta recruitment agency owner, 18 May 2011.
7. The earliest documents concerning the participation of NGOs as providers of pre-departure orientation seminars (PDOSs) were covered in Memorandum Circular No. 82 Series of 1992 (“Guidelines on Accreditation of Pre-departure Orientation Program of NGOs for Disadvantaged Workers”) issued by POEA on 29 October 1992, and Memorandum Circular No. 18 Series of

1993 (“All Agencies and Entities Concerned, NGOs with Accredited PDO Program and OCW-New Hires”) issued by POEA on 29 October 1992 and 25 May 1993 respectively.

8. PDOS for sea-based workers added a component on anti-piracy awareness training for departing seafarers, effective 1 February 2010.
9. This requirement was already in place before the law was enacted in 2004. At the time, it was under the Ministry of Manpower (interview by Ari Aryani with Lisna Yoeliani Poeloengan, Deputy of Protection, BNP2TKI, 14 September 2011).
10. The Colombo Process is a Regional Consultative Process on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour for countries of origins in Asia. Started in 2003, the process involves informal and non-binding recommendations and commitments on relevant migration issues; member states meet periodically to review and report on progress. See Colombo Process, “Welcome to the Colombo Process,” [www.colomboprocess.org/](http://www.colomboprocess.org/).

## About the Authors



**Maruja M. B. Asis** is Director of Research and Publications at the Scalabrini Migration Center and co-editor of the *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*. Dr. Asis has a background in Sociology (BA, 1979) and Demography (MA, 1984) from the University of the Philippines. She holds a PhD in sociology (1989), with specialization in population studies and social change from Bowling Green State University.



**Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias** is a Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). Her areas of expertise include temporary and circular migration, particularly between Asia and the Middle East; diaspora policy; and the migration-development nexus. She holds a master’s degree in foreign service with honors from Georgetown University, where she concentrated in international development, and a bachelor’s degree in political science, cum laude, from the University of the Philippines.

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International Organization for Migration  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor Rajanakarn Building  
183 South Sathorn Road  
Sathorn District, Bangkok 10120  
Thailand  
+66 2 34393 00 (tel)  
<http://publications.iom.int/bookstore>



Migration Policy Institute  
1400 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036  
United States  
+001 202 266 1940 (tel)  
[www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

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