



GENERAL REPORT ON ROUNDTABLE 1

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Madam Chairman, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Roundtable No. 1 looked at Human Capital Development and Labour Mobility and how in the pursuit of both goals, we may maximize opportunities and minimize risks. This translated into four major topics which included skilled migration and the fear of brain drain in developing countries; the temporary labor migration of perceived lower skills; the role of the private sector and other non-state agencies in the migration process and circular forms of migration and skills sharing.

We all know why people migrate. Like everybody else, we want a better life. If we think that we will not achieve it where we are, then we will move to where better wages and/or working conditions can be had; where career prospects can be better or where we can avoid economic, political or personal instabilities. But to make this movement as safe and orderly as possible, we must all learn to manage opportunity and to make full use of partnership. Opportunity and partnership is what Roundtable 1 is all about.

Skilled and professional people are more likely to move than most others. They have opportunity, they have risk-taking behavior which is characteristic of mobile persons and they are able to access information that makes moving easier for them than for others. However, the movement of skilled and well-trained professionals put countries of origin at risk, particularly if they have not reached their optimum development level. This is probably most apparent for those who work in the health sector—nurses, midwives, doctors, therapists and allied professionals. To ensure a balance between personal rights and the national interests, a number of recommendations were made by the first group for Roundtable 1.

There is the need to collate good policies and practices that will allow countries to better manage human resource and to ensure effective partnership between source and destination countries.

Over the next six to 9 months, it is recommended that best practices be put in a matrix which allows joint and coordinated action by states and other stakeholders as to how health and other personnel can be retained, retrained and recovered,

It is also recommended that an evaluation of ethical codes of recruitment practice be undertaken such that lessons can be learned as to how to make them more effective. Codes are, by their very nature, persuasive and we need to get people and institutions to honor the code of ethics that has been set up to promote the welfare of people in a particular system or industry. It was reported that the Global Health Workforce Alliance is doing such a study and they may be requested to share their findings in the GFMD forum in 2008

The Session on Temporary Labor Migration and Responsibility Sharing looked at how temporary labor migration can be a flexible way of meeting surplus and shortage in manpower across countries. In the absence of a functional multilateral system, bilateral as well as unilateral rules have been found to operate in certain jurisdictions, some of which are persuasive at best while others are enforceable through private or contractual agreements. Specific concerns have been raised relative to cross-cutting issues such as protection of migrant rights, specifically those for women, assuring access to a varied labor market and the concern about the temporariness of temporary migration. Good practices have been noted in UNIFEM projects in Indonesia, regional consultative processes such as the Colombo Process, Migration handbooks, bilateral programs between Morocco, Ecuador and Colombia with Spain, the Philippine regulatory framework and other similar localized interventions.

Again, it was stressed that good policies should be put in place but must at the same time be enforced. Specific concrete actions include the development of a good practices checklist that may be completed and disseminated to Friends of the Forum in the coming weeks.

Session 3 took on the role of non government partners in the migration process. This pertained to intermediation in the recruitment and financial concerns of migrants as well as the advocacy of better terms and conditions of work for workers

Three findings were deemed important for the session discussions i.e. limited and sometimes distorted information on opportunities, rights and obligations; the prohibitive costs of migration, up front and in the earlier part of the process and the inadequacy of multi-stakeholder engagement to help migrants in their various concerns and problems.

Suggested concrete actions include: the establishment of a migrant resource center between source and destination countries to ensure timely and linked-up services to migrants. This may be a real MRC or one that is virtual or internet-based. It would also be useful to document the progress of the Guatemala-Canada seasonal worker model and to use this for non-agriculture movements to other countries along a specific temporary worker corridor. Finally, it may be useful to look at and make available financial intermediation services that allow workers to borrow at market or if possible at concessional rates for their up-front expenses prior to migration. *(Also a workshop of interested parties to look at recruitment and employment practices.)*

Session 4 looked at the new concept of circular migration.

Migration, like all human phenomena evolves with time. We are presented with the circular migration model that looks at the skills need of the source country and factors this into the skills requirements of a destination country. On mutual agreement, these needs become the subject of further enhancement in the new country and are used to the benefit of the mother country upon the workers' return. This is seen as a "co-development" effort and should loom larger as a mutually beneficial scheme in the days to come. The concrete proposals for this session include the further development of the model through a sharper definition of the model that will bring forward the opportunity and partnership it holds for both source and destination countries. A workshop on this is proposed prior to the next forum to lay the groundwork for future partnerships. Further research is also called for by building upon earlier models that include the Migration for Development in Africa program, or MIDA, and an earlier TOKTEN model for successful migrants who wish to contribute to their homeland. A possible example is the Mauritius framework (prepared by the Mauritian Government) that seeks to operationalize circular migration in a program with European or other partner countries.

Migration has its own detractors and nay-sayers. It is, after all a political issue fraught with implications not just for the migrants themselves but also for the people and institutions that form the support infrastructure for out-migration and in-migration. Migration can be the tide that raises all boats, but we may all sink with it if we don't harness the available opportunities through the partnership of both source and destination countries. Opportunity and partnership may be the keys to a successful migration process.