



## Meeting the Development Challenges of Migration

*Project led by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) – Sri Lanka*

### ***Abstract***

In recognition of the importance of labour migration for the Sri Lankan economy and the need to strengthen IPS' capacity to contribute to developing national policies on labour migration, TTI Opportunity Funds were used to carry out the "Meeting the Development Challenges of Migration" project (MED-MIG). Through the project, several activities were carried out, aimed at both strengthening IPS' capacity to carry out high quality research on migration and improving the Institute's policy engagement on these issues. The project has helped to establish the Institute as the go-to centre for research and analysis on migration in the country, helping to fill a critical knowledge gap.

## WHAT THEY DID AND WHY

In recognition of the importance of labour migration for the Sri Lankan economy and the need to strengthen IPS' capacity to contribute to developing national policies on labour migration, the Institute initiated research into migration in 2008 and has since organized several conferences on the subject. It has also engaged with the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare (MFEPW) by participating in the National Advisory Committee on Labour Migration (NACLM). These activities, however, were carried out in a piecemeal basis with limited human and financial resources devoted to them. To address this gap, TTI Opportunity Funds were used to carry out the MED-MIG project.

The project was aimed at: 1) strengthening the research capacity and quality of research work undertaken by IPS on migration; and 2) improving policy engagement in a holistic manner, thereby establishing the Institute as the go-to centre for migration research. The project therefore helps to fill an important knowledge gap within the country.

The following activities were carried out, aimed at strengthening capacity and quality of research on migration:

- Training of 5 IPS junior researchers through online migration courses conducted by the United Nations University (UNU) and Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (MGSoG)
- Research studies were carried out using quantitative, qualitative and/or mixed methodologies.
- An advisory committee was established to ensure the policy relevance and quality of research outputs
- A Labour Migration Resource Centre (LMRC) was established within the IPS library
- An annotated bibliography on migration was compiled

With regards to improving policy linkages and dissemination of research, IPS:

- Held a consultative meeting with key stakeholders to get feedback on IPS' draft medium term Research Programme on Migration and Development
- Organized an International Conference entitled "Policies for Mainstreaming Migration into Development in Sri Lanka", which was attended by 70 key local and international stakeholders.
- Prepared policy briefs based on migration research results
- Enhanced IPS' use of social media (Blog, Facebook and Youtube) to reach out to a larger audience

## RESULTS

Through this project, IPS was able to complete three research studies. The first, entitled "Returning Home: Experiences and Challenges - The Experience of Returnee Migrant Workers of Sri Lanka," was published on the IPS website. The results were also used to produce a short 5 minute video entitled 'Migrant Voices – Returning Home' posted on YouTube, a blog entry and a policy brief.

The results of the second study, "Female Domestic Workers in the Middle East: Does Recruitment Through an Agent Minimize Vulnerability?" were used to produce an IPS publication, a policy brief and an article. The article was submitted to a peer-reviewed international journal, International Migration Review.

Finally, the third study, "Accessing New Employment Markets Abroad" was disseminated as an IPS publication, and a policy brief.

As a result of the visibility gained through the project, the MFEPW invited IPS to partner with them to conduct research on foreign employment. MFEPW has proposed setting up an institutional arrangement with representation from both organizations to build on the IPS migration research programme.

The MED-MIG project has further strengthened IPS research capacity to undertake quality research on migration by developing its human resources as well as its library collection on the topic while the various dissemination activities have raised the public profile of the Institute in migration research, namely the International Conference which received wide publicity. The establishment of the Advisory Committee for the project not only provided useful guidance and access to information and stakeholders but also ensured the policy relevance of the research outputs of the studies. The stakeholder consultations carried out also helped to establish connections with institutions beyond the MFEPW, such as the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, the Department of Immigration and Emigration, and the Ministry of Economic Development.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The MED-MIG project has helped to streamline the migration research theme of the IPS research programme focusing on international migration, internal migration and urbanization. This medium term programme will be used to raise funds and carry out future migration-related research at IPS. The studies carried out in the context of this project revealed the absence of nationally representative data on migration as being a major impediment to migration research and policy making in the country. In this context, IPS is currently seeking funds from donors to carry out such an activity and build on the research work undertaken so far. As the MED-MIG project was wrapping up, the MFEPW invited IPS to train its research officers, which will provide another avenue to engage and influence migration policy in the country.