MiRPAL: Supporting Migration Reforms in Europe and Central Asia

Making migration policy and remittances a "win-win" strategy through peer-learning.

Overview

Migration and Remittance Peer-Assisted Learning Network (MiRPAL) brought together migration experts and practitioners from sending and receiving countries to discuss analytical work and lessons learned in addressing labor migration management policy by the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Based on this dialogue, countries were able to raise the visibility of migration and start implementing national action plans.

Challenge

Five CIS countries - Armenia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan - are among the nations with the highest emigration rates in the world. Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Moldova are also among the top 10 countries in the world with the highest ratio of remittances to GDP. It is estimated that 11.2 percent of Tajiks (or 791.1 thousand) left their home country in 2010. By various estimates 8-12 million labor migrants were on the move in the ECA region prior to 2009. Yet, despite the significant scale of migration and remittances and their importance to poverty reduction, labor market pressures, and growth in general, the potential benefits of a "win-win" strategy were not on the development agenda in many countries in Europe and Central Asia. The global economic crisis had a negative impact on migration and remittances in the CIS region. A 2009 World Bank Survey of migrants showed that 30 percent of respondents were leaving for home when the economic crisis struck (however, only 10 percent were planning to stay in their home countries for good.) For most major labor-originating countries, remittances have dropped by well over 25 percent, exposing the vulnerability of their economies and adversely impacting poverty rates, budget revenues and household welfare. For labor-receiving countries, increasing lack of tolerance and proper adaptation and integration policies has contributed to worsening the social situation for migrants.

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important institutional changes were introduced by MiRPAL member countries: Tajikistan established a new government migration service and Russia adopted a new law on permits for migrants.

Approach

In response to the emerging needs of the CIS governments, think-tanks and academia, the World Bank has served as a knowledge advisor and, in 2009-2010, successfully carried out a number of initial entry-point activities covering nine CIS countries (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan).

Over a dozen of regional thematic distance learning activities were conducted on the topics ranging from managing migration at times of a crisis to estimating migration flows and remittance, as well as lessons from the support services and protection of migrants. Twelve policy-makers from Russia, Tajikistan, Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic travelled to the Philippines to learn first-hand from the world's best

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action plans - on migration statistics and remittances statistics - are being used by MiRPAL member countries to harmonize data collection, reporting and terminology.

MORE INFORMATION

> Migration in Europe and Central Asia

> MiRPAL website (in Russian)

Results

Through the use of various innovative distance and face-to-face learning methods, MiRPAL has achieved the following results during 2009-2010:

- First policy forum for migrant sending and receiving countries has been created at the request of the governments as a first step in establishing a much needed dialogue on migration policy.

- "Moscow regional migration protocol" was established to institutionalize the commitment of the member countries to implement migration reforms on the national level.

- MiRPAL's advocacy and knowledge sharing work in Russia helped to raise the visibility of migration in the public and policy discourse.

- In Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic, MiRPAL helped establish country-specific migration strategies and action plans. The drafts were ready by September 2010, and are now being approved by the governments. The formal approval by the Tajik government is expected in April 2011.

- In Tajikistan, a new government migration service has been established which will specifically address labor migration issues.

- In Russia, a new law on permits for migrants was adopted to tackle the issue of illegal migration. The law makes the issuance of work permits easier and more transparent.

- A regional remittance estimation Working Group is established and led by the Russian National Bank to implement the regional remittance improvement Action Plan with members from other CIS central banks.

- Three analytical studies on migration have been commissioned (two completed as of March 2011) to analyze migration policy in Russia and provide input to the ongoing development of a new labor migration strategy in Russia.

- Two action plans on migration statistics and remittances statistics are being used now by member countries to harmonize data collection, reporting and terminology.

Bank Contribution

The MiRPAL work has been carried out by the World Bank staff. The task was financed between 2009-2010 by the World Bank and Trust Funds in the amount of US$ 300,000.

Partners

The work of MiRPAL became possible thanks to the generous contribution from the UK Department for International Development (US$ 650,000). At this point the network is

coordinated by the Secretariat based in Moscow and country coordinators in each of the member countries. Each member country can suggest new areas for discussion and knowledge exchange and/or request or provide relevant information to other members. The role of the Bank's team now is to respond to specific knowledge sharing demands of member countries and to facilitate the dialogue between them.

Toward the Future

For the next two years, MiRPAL and the governments of the CIS countries have identified the following key areas for continuing World Bank advisory and technical support:

- Development of joint and country-specific recommendations and implementation of initiatives to improve labor migration policies in MiRPAL member countries, such as support services, institutional development, protection of migrants, pre-departure training and integration/adaptation strategies; improving labor market information systems to better feed existing quota processes, unified migration and labor markets, and other.

- Improvement of remittance estimation practices and policies as well as estimation of international labor migration.

- Knowledge generation in the area of migration policy and remittances through preparation of analytical briefs and thematic research on specific topics of interest.

Beneficiaries

The final beneficiaries of MiRPAL's knowledge sharing activities are migrant workers and their families in nine member countries who are or will be impacted by the policy changes happening as a result of the regional policy dialogue established by MiRPAL.

Direct beneficiaries of the network are policy makers in member countries. Oleg Artamonov, Advisor, Federal Migration Services of Russia, says: "*Although I am an expert myself, a lot of my knowledge about this issue comes from these seminars [The World Bank seminars].The team members come from all over the world. I would say that this is one of the major advantages of these meetings. It is very important to communicate and to find a common language.*"