

Event Summary of World Bank and IPS Workshop on “Cross-Border Labour Mobility”

**28-29 May 2009
Orchard Hotel, Singapore**

The World Bank and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) co-organised a two-day workshop on “Cross-Border Labour Mobility” in Singapore recently. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together invited paper writers and WB staff to present and discuss the proposed areas and background papers to be written on the issue. A conference to discuss the draft papers is planned for the end of 2009.

The workshop was a result of an independent initiative of the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Chief Economist’s office to develop a Regional Research Partnership Program (RRPP). The intended outcome is to publish both a conference volume of background papers and a synthesis volume in 2010. The RRPP intends to provide the WB with opportunities to work with leading think tanks on a common research agenda. Its aim was to tap on country expertise and develop common understanding on key regional development issues that would interest policy-makers. The first issue of interest for the RRPP is on cross-border labour mobility. Specifically, the research programme will focus on three broad sets of issues:

- a) Understanding the growth and development impact of cross-border labour migration and remittances on sending and receiving countries.
- b) Helping countries improve policies and institutions to manage cross-border labour migration.
- c) Facilitating remittance flows and their productive use across countries.

Within the East Asia and Pacific region, the sending countries in the region receive USD \$70 billion from an estimated 19 million persons annually. The proposed study will focus initially on several ASEAN countries but it will also draw on lessons from North Asia, including South Korea, as well as the Australia/New Zealand experiences involving the Pacific Islands. Receiving countries have benefitted from the availability of manpower, both skilled and unskilled, to meet their labour shortages and allow the companies located therein to remain competitive and receiving country workers to become more educated and work in more productive jobs. The migrant profile ranges from unskilled to increasingly skilled and professional migrants that can be found not only in the region but globally as well. In the sending countries, households have been able to use remittance incomes on consumption needs and investment in housing and education. Nationally, remittances have helped sending countries to import more goods, build reserves and improve external balances.

Issues have been raised in both sending and receiving countries as a result of migrant labour movement across national borders. These include the competition between sections of local workers and migrant workers in areas of wages, opportunities and burden on public finance and services in host countries; brain drain, dependence on remittances, and other social and cultural issues in sending countries; and the growing discontentment with the presence of foreign workers in receiving countries from the effects of the recent global economic crisis and the resulting push to send migrant workers back to their own countries.

The workshop brought together invited paper writers and World Bank staff to present and discuss the proposed areas and background papers to be written. This was carried out in separate panel sessions that spanned the duration of the workshop. The sessions were grouped broadly into two main categories, receiving and sending countries. The receiving countries identified included Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore and the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia represented the major sending countries. For each country, presentations were guided by two themes: (1) the economic and development impact of labour migration; and (2) the institutional and governance regime for managing labour migration. On the economic impact, the focus for sending countries was on the characteristics of migrants, impact of remittances for households and localities and implications for domestic labour markets and the macro-economy. For receiving countries, economic concerns involved issues relating to the impact of use of foreign labour on domestic labour markets and firm level performance, including growth, wage rates, productivity, profitability and technological change. For both sending and receiving countries, the sample includes countries at differing levels of development designed to yield insights on whether the effects of labour migration (and remittances) may vary depending on the country's stage of development. The institution and governance structure for labour migration reflected the specific policy objectives of sending and receiving countries and the extent that public and private agencies were involved in the process. The purpose of the institutional studies is to develop a deeper understanding of the economic and political factors that influence policies and shape the performance of the major agencies involved.

Other areas discussed included a guiding framework anchoring the proposed project and prior research on labour mobility that was carried out in the Pacific Islands and Latin America. The workshop also provided an opportunity for contributors to clarify their work plan and to reach a general consensus regarding the responsibilities of each researcher involved with the project.

The workshop participants comprised contributors from universities and policy research institutes as well as representatives from the WB's country offices in the Southeast Asian region, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam as well as from Washington. Advisors to the project from the Scalabrini Migration Institute in the Philippines, the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA), and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Regional Office Bangkok were also in attendance.

Attachment A – List of Participants

Attachment B – Workshop Programme

Report by Dr Kang Soon Hock, IPS Research Fellow.

List of Participants

Advisors

Fabio BAGGIO
Scalabrini Migration Center

CHIA Siow Yue
Singapore Institute of International Affairs

Thetis MANGAHAS
International Labour Organization

Indonesia
ARI Kuncoro
University of Indonesia

Malaysia
AZIZAH Kassim
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Vijayakumari KANAPATHY

Terence TOO Yang-Yau
Institute of Strategic and International Studies,
Malaysia

Philippines
Emily CABEGIN
University of the Philippines

Tereso S TULLAO Jr
De La Salle University

Singapore
SHANDRE M Thangavelu
National University of Singapore

YAP Mui Teng
Institute of Policy Studies

Thailand
Yongyuth CHALAMWONG
Thailand Development Research Institute

Sureeporn PUNPUING
Institute for Population and Social Research,
Mahidol University

World Bank

Pablo ACOSTA

AHMAD Ahsan

Sung-Soo EUN

Yukon HUANG

Gaelle LE BORGNE PIERRE

Xubei LUO

Manjula LUTHRIA

Andy MASON

Daniel MONT

Ririn Salwa PURNAMASARI

Vatcharin SIRIMANEETHAM



World Bank and IPS Workshop on “Cross-Border Labour Mobility”

PROGRAMME

(As at 27 May 2009)

28 – 29 May 2009
Orchard Hotel, Singapore
Lavender Room, Level 3

8.45 am	Registration
9.00 am – 9.15 am	WELCOME REMARKS Ong Keng Yong Institute of Policy Studies and Ahmad Ahsan World Bank
9.15 am – 9.30 am	Introduction of Advisors Fabio Baggio Scalabrini Migration Center, Chia Siow Yue Singapore Institute of International Affairs and Thetis Mangahas International Labour Organization <i>followed by introduction of all participants.</i>
9.30 am – 10.45 am	SESSION I
9.30 am – 9.45 am	Overall Scope of the Study and The Development Impact Framework Ahmad Ahsan World Bank
9.45 am – 10.00 am	Observations on Institutional & Governance Framework Yukon Huang World Bank
10.00 am – 10.15 am	Findings: World Bank’s Work on the Pacific Islands Manjula Luthria World Bank
10.15 am – 10.30 am	Findings: World Bank’s Work for Latin America Pablo Ariel Acosta World Bank
10.30 am – 10.45 am	Discussions (Clarifications)
10.45 am – 11.00 am	Coffee Break
11.00 am – 12.30 pm	SESSION II (THAILAND) Institutions and Governance Regime Sureeporn Punpuing Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University



Development Impact

Yongyuth Chalamwong
Thailand Development Research Institute

First Discussant

(TBC)

General Discussion

12.30 pm – 2.00 pm

Lunch
Rosewood Room, Level 2

2.00 pm – 3.45 pm

SESSION III (MALAYSIA)

Institutions and Governance Regime

Azizah Kassim
Institute of Malaysian and International Studies
University Kebangsaan Malaysia (IKMAS)
and
Terence Too Yang-Yau
Institute of Strategic and International Studies

Development Impact

Vijayakumari Kanapathy
Malaysia

First Discussant

Xubei Luo
World Bank

General Discussion

3.45 pm – 4.00 pm

Coffee Break

4.00 pm – 5.30 pm

SESSION IV (SINGAPORE)

Development Impact

Shandre M Thangavelu
National University of Singapore

Institutions and Governance Regime

Yap Mui Teng
Institute of Policy Studies

First Discussant

Yukon Huang
World Bank

General Discussion

7.00 pm

Welcome Dinner at the Hotel
Nutmeg Room, Level 2



Day 2

9.00 am – 10.30 am	<p>SESSION V (PHILIPPINES)</p> <p>Overall Development Impact Tereso S Tullao, Jr De La Salle University</p> <p>Development Impact Emily Cabegin University of the Philippines</p> <p>First Discussant Gaelle Le Borgne Pierre World Bank</p> <p>General Discussion</p>
10.30 am – 10.45 am	Coffee Break
10.45 am – 11.45 am	<p>SESSION VI (VIETNAM)</p> <p>Daniel Mont World Bank</p> <p>General Discussion</p>
12.00 pm – 1.30 pm	Lunch <i>Rosewood Room, Level 2</i>
1.30 pm – 3.00 pm	<p>Session VII (INDONESIA)</p> <p>Migration and Development Ririn Salwa Puranmsari World Bank</p> <p>Institutions and Governance Regime Ari Kuncoro University of Indonesia</p> <p>First Discussant Andy Mason World Bank</p> <p>General Discussion</p>
3.00 pm – 3.15 pm	Coffee Break
3.15 pm – 4.30 pm	General Discussions and Next Steps
4.30 pm	End of Workshop