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CONFERENCE & WORKSHOP

Migration in Small States and Island Countries

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Introduction

- ❑ Small island developing state with a population of 520,000
- ❑ Approximately 133,000 international migrants in the Maldives
- ❑ Fast-growing economic growth with major contribution from migration
- ❑ The Maldives is predominantly a receiving/destination/host country



Challenges

- ❖ Data discrepancies
- ❖ Inconsistent data management mechanism adopted over the years
- ❖ Inadequate mechanism to cover the legal framework
- ❖ Gaps in implementation and enforcement
- ❖ Fragmented approaches preventing focus on root causes
- ❖ Large percentage of workers migrate through regular channels but become undocumented post-migration

Challenges (contd.)

- ❖ Large number of undocumented workers (approx. 63,000) especially in informal sector: Undocumented status caused by many factors, including non-payment of visa and work permit fees, absconding, and workplace and environment related conflicts
- ❖ Burden to regularize their status lies on migrant workers.
- ❖ Recruitment issues – recruitment supply chain involves coercion, and exploitation of vulnerability with recruitment fees and deposit burden on migrant workers mainly at source countries

Best Practices in Addressing the Challenges



- ❖ Legislative framework enshrine and protect the rights of workers without any distinction based on nationality nor legal status, ensuring uniform application to all where applicable.
 - Employment Act (2/2008) is in line with the fundamental principles provided in the relevant international labour related conventions
 - The Constitution of the Maldives grants vital rights and protections for all, not just the citizens, including equality before the law (Article 20) and non-discrimination (Article 17).



Best Practices in Addressing the Challenges



- ❖ Migrant Resource Centre is established under the support of the IOM, which ensures a one-stop centre to obtain services and information for migrant workers
- ❖ Regularisation programme focusing on proactive preventative measures
- ❖ Migrant Health Policy implemented to ensure that migrant workers have access to essential health services
- ❖ Biometric registration effort to ensure proper documentation and improve possibility of re-registration of migrant workers falls into an undocumented state



Best Practices in Addressing the Challenges



- ❖ Remove burden on migrant workers to report exploitation and re-regularize by:
 - Imposition of penalties on recruitment and employment related violations, non-compliance with regulations
 - Improvement of the monitoring mechanism, starting with the amendment of the Employment Act
 - Prohibition of exploitative recruitment practices with amendment of the Recruitment Agency regulation



Lessons Learned and Way Forward



- ❖ Proactive and evidence-based policy making: Encouraging and implementing labour statistics and research will contribute towards a wider range of empirical data and evidence, essential for vital insights and facilitate better policies and implementation.
- ❖ The importance of formulating a Labour Market Information System which is in the pipeline
- ❖ Better strengthen inter-agency coordination





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Thank you!