Pre-departure Orientation Programs for Migrants

An Initial Review of Existing Experiences and Evaluations

Luca Barbone

MIRPAL Meeting, April 18, 2011
Pre-Departure Programs: An Established Tradition

- Pre-departure programs for migrants in operation for several decades
- Wide variety of approaches and goals
- Generally Public Sector programs, but a robust private sector emerging business – differing target groups
- Evaluation of programs lagging way behind accepted standards, with few exceptions
In Operation on a Variety of Fronts

- Review of active (with web presence) organizations/entities involved in pre-departure programs (at all stages) shows broad scope, both geographical and thematic
- IOM the major actor in the provision of services
- Government-sponsored or -run training programs in Bangladesh (BMET), Philippines (OWWA), Sri Lanka (SLBFE), together with
- Services not limited to economic migrants—several programs for humanitarian, family reunion, other reasons
- Asia the most active in the field of labor migration
- Most major receiving corridors involved—exception is Russia
IOM Activities, 2009

- January to December 2009, a total of 56,637 migrants (refugees, humanitarian entrants, labour migrants, immigrants, family reunification cases and others) attended IOM’s migrant training sessions;
- 78 per cent of participants were resettlement cases, while the remaining 22 per cent included temporary foreign workers bound for Canada, immigrant-visa holders bound for the United States, and dependents of T-visa applicants.
- Women made up 45 per cent of the participants in 2009
- IOM carried out migrant training activities in 43 countries on four continents, with participants representing 47 nationalities. Significant training numbers out of Middle East, Guatemala, Nepal, Thailand and the Philippines. Nepal the most training participants, with over 11,000 resettlement cases in attendance in 2009.
Example: Australian Cultural Orientation

- Prepares refugees and other humanitarian entrants for initial settlement in Australia
- A five-day programme of orientation focusing on travel, on-arrival assistance, and managing cultural, social and economic expectations
- During latest contract period 1,092 courses delivered to 19,985 participants
Program evaluated by Australian Government:
The evaluation team considered the range of feedback received from stakeholders and IOM trainers and management, and concluded that the majority believe that AUSCO is meeting its intended goals and objectives and that the program has evolved so that it now appears to achieve settlement outcomes beyond those originally envisaged.

The evaluation team further concluded that while AUSCO seems to be widely supported and well regarded, the program is not well understood by the onshore stakeholders and there is scope to increase their level of awareness of what the program does and achieves.
Another Dimension: Pre-Departure Health Screening

- (Alvarez): Several countries utilize TB screening programs. The programs attempt to identify and treat those with active and/or infectious stages of the disease. Screening is used to identify and manage those with latent or inactive disease after arrival.
- Between nations, considerable variation exists in the methods used in migration-associated TB screening.
- Great diversity in the processes and practices.
- Need for better cooperation and improvement of methods.
Philippines: Compulsory PDOS for Economic Migrants

- POEA Memorandum Circular No. 3, Series of 1983 established the legal and policy basis for the pre-departure orientation programme. It provided guidelines for the conduct of a compulsory PDOS for “all first-time or re-contracted workers, and every agency is responsible in providing each worker a thorough PDOS”.

- Guidelines also permitted industry associations and other business entities not in the overseas employment business to offer PDOS on condition that they conform to POEA requirements.

- Pre-departure orientation is mandatory for all new hires and implementation is part of the documentation system for OFWs.

- The programme is institutionalized, giving government easy access to target workers and facilitating supervision of the programme’s implementation.
Philippines: findings

- There is a lack of effective communication and comprehension
- Encounters with agencies personnel had a strong influence on their opinions and perceptions. For example, overseas domestic workers felt that embassy personnel discriminated against them. They reported that, while arbitrating employer-employee disputes, Filipino embassy personnel listened more to the employers than to the domestic workers and that runaway workers were encouraged to return to their employers.
- This lack of support pushed many overseas Filipino domestic workers to seek help from churches, NGOs and friends.
Europe: Adversary Pre-Departure Services?

- Analysis of five countries (Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, France, UK)
- Pre-departure tests as a way of selecting “desirable migrants” in cases of family reunification (see Groenendijk)
- None of the five countries examined completed a serious cost-benefit analysis of these measures before introducing the legislation, though cost-benefit considerations influenced Denmark’s decision not to institute pre-departure tests as provided in the legislation adopted in 2007.
- With reducing migration as a primary (if not always publicly stated) aim, the need for such analysis is forgotten once the numbers of new immigrants go down. If the costs of acquiring the required level of language are put primarily on the immigrants, the need for a serious cost-benefit analysis appears to be less urgent.
- The Dutch government invested large amounts in the computer program that delivers the language and civic integration tests and the necessary infrastructure at its embassies. This money could have been spent on providing language training.
- A serious cost-benefit analysis should take into account the possible counterproductive effects: prolonged separation of families, long delays for actual integration begins, and the perception of being treated as second-class residents.
Example of Collaboration: The Colombo Process

- Multi-country consultative process (at ministerial level) on migration issues
- Coordination of approaches, provision of information
- Sending-receiving country coordination
Welcome to the Colombo Process

The Colombo Process is a Regional Consultative Process on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour for countries of origin in Asia. According to best estimates, over 2.5 million Asian workers leave their countries every year under contract to work abroad. A large proportion of workers from South and Southeast Asia head for the Gulf States to perform various types of service, trade and construction jobs, while others move to North America, Europe and Asian countries...More

Dhaka Consultation 2011

Bangladesh, as a member of the Colombo Process, took over the rotational chairmanship of this regional consultative process on 14 December 2009. After three successful Ministerial Consultations, the “Fourth Ministerial Consultations for Asian Labour Sending Countries” will be hosted by Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka in 2011...Read More
Colombo Process Indicators of Good Practice

- Existence of innovative curricula for pre-departure programs
- Rich content of pre-departure orientation seminars
- Standardization and certification of PDOS
- Special need focused orientation for specific group of migrants
Indicators of Good Practice

- Information campaigns for awareness and accountability
- Peer and community involvement in PDOS
- Enabling migrants to access networks for support and redress
Indicators of Good Practice

- Gender sensitive and empowering process
- Country specific cultural, economic and social orientation/sustainability
- Recent introduction of pre-employment orientation seminars before PDOS
Private Sector Involvement

- Noticeable number of firms/organizations present
- Usually based in receiving countries (Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand)
- Targeting better-off groups: Students, Executives, higher-salaried employees
- Typically offering services (visa handling, re-settlement assistance for housing and dealing with bureaucracy)
- No formal evaluations available, presumably market test in place
**Immigration Services:**

This is the first step to settle in a new country. A process that requires professional handling of all Immigration matters and other complications.

- Free Counselling
- Free Assessment
- Face to Face Consultation
- Telephonic Consultation
- Case Filing and Representation
- Case Follow up and Regular Updates
- Online Migration and Specialist
- Pre Departure Briefing
Conclusions for Further Research

- Would be useful to increase documentation of experiences, and understanding of requirements of different kinds of programs
- Collaborative approaches between sending and receiving countries seem to be most productive
- Most programs have not been set up with a Monitoring and Evaluation function, hence difficult to say what works—this should be a priority of any new initiative
- Role of private sector is crucial at many levels, and should be carefully thought-through