

# Sri Lanka Capacity Building for Advocacy for Migrant Workers and Safe Migration



July 2014 – November  
2015 (5 Modules)

Migrant Forum Asia  
Swiss Development Corporation  
HELVETAS Inter-cooperation  
Diplomacy Training Program

## Final Program Report



## **1. Executive Summary**

This is the final report of a special capacity building program for Sri Lankan CSOs and their representatives working to protect the rights of Sri Lanka's Migrant Workers. The program took place over five, four-day, modules between July 2014 and November 2015.

The need for capacity building was identified by SDC and HELVETAS Sri Lanka, recognizing the importance of strengthening and supporting local organizations advocating for migrants rights at the local, national and international level. The program recognised the commitment and efforts of civil society as a key driver of change in government policy and practice. Implicit in the development of the program was an analysis that the civil society advocacy would be improved through more collaboration between concerned NGOs/CSOs.

The key underlying assumption for this capacity building program for advocates is that considerable improvements can be made in the lives of Sri Lanka's migrant workers if civil society and government can work together more effectively to promote the implementation of agreed international human rights and labour standards. Effective advocacy requires knowledge, skills and planning. It requires people committed to making change working together to effectively influence law and practice. The program was developed to meet these needs.

The program emphasised the development of knowledge and skills and facilitated the development of collaborative working relationships based around shared objectives. A draft outline of content for the five modules was agreed initially between the partners, but was adjusted through the program based on feedback from participants and the changing context in Sri Lanka.

In the first modules participants identified the key problems affecting Sri Lanka's migrant workers – in Sri Lanka and in countries of destination. Based on this shared understanding of the problems the participants also began to identify clear priorities for their advocacy and to develop strategies for achieving change. These priorities centre on the need for the government to properly implement its national legal and policy framework on labour migration, to more effectively regulate the migrant labour recruitment industry and for more effective advocacy by the Sri Lankan government in relation to countries of destination – through the Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue, through its MoUs and bilateral labour agreements and through the work of its diplomatic missions.

Program content developed knowledge and understanding of the existing legal, policy and institutional frameworks governing labour migration from Sri Lanka. These sessions included engagement with senior government officials in Sri Lanka – and practical policy engagement exercises involving the Minister for Foreign Employment and the Sri Lankan Bureau for Foreign Employment (SLBFE).

There were sessions focused on relevant international labour and human rights standards and mechanisms and how advocates could use them. A highlight of these sessions on international human rights was the involvement of Bradford Smith, the Secretary of the UN Committee on the Human Rights of Migrant Workers (the Committee), and of Committee member and first Chairperson of the Committee, Ambassador Prasad Kariyasam.

Sessions on the situation facing migrant workers in countries of destination involved trainers and presenters from civil society in Lebanon, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and included the development of action on a number of individual cases.

There was also a focus on some of the most relevant and important regional intergovernmental processes that have relevance for policy and practice on labour migration – particularly, the Colombo Process and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

Having identified recruitment, and the regulation and accountability of recruitment agencies as a key concern, the program included dialogue with a key representative of the Association of Licenced Foreign Employment Agencies (ALFEA) and sessions on ethical recruitment and the regulation and reform of the recruitment industry.

The program covered a lot of ground over the 18 months of implementation. This final report describes the program and reflects on its outcomes and lessons learned. It supplements the detailed reports of each of the program modules, which are available on request. It provides some reflections on program methodology. The report draws on, and includes reflections from the program participants, particularly those gathered at an anonymous end of training written evaluation.

Overall, and based on the feedback from participants, the program met the expectations of participants themselves. More objective indicators of success in meeting the program objectives are harder to establish. Capacity building is a long-term investment. The individuals in the program are committed to long-term engagement in the challenge of promoting and protecting the rights of Sri Lanka's migrant workers.

The biggest change to have taken place over the course of this 18-month long program is the change of government in Sri Lanka. This change resulted in a greater openness to dialogue with civil society on human rights – including the rights of migrant workers.

Participants in this program were in some cases active in the election campaign that brought a new government to power, and the participants were ready and able to engage the newly elected government in dialogue and to put forward their recommendations for change to the new Minister and senior officials. The participants were able to meet with the Minister and senior officials during the program and between sessions. It also proved possible during the program to arrange some shared training sessions with government officials – something that had not been envisaged when the program began.

DTP would like to acknowledge the many trainers<sup>1</sup> who donated their time, knowledge and expertise in the delivery of this program, and most donated their time and their expertise, sharing freely with participants out of a shared commitment to the rights of migrant workers. DTP, MFA and HELVETAS Sri Lanka extend their thanks to them.

DTP would like to thank MFA and in particular William Gois, MFA's Regional Coordinator, who was a co-facilitator of the program. Katrin Rosenberg coordinated the program in Sri Lanka on behalf of HELVETAS Sri Lanka.

This program was a significant investment in individuals and commitment to building the capacity of the migrant workers movement in Sri Lanka. It should be acknowledged that the commitment to supporting civil society was made by SDC and HELVETAS Sri Lanka at a time when the space for civil society was highly restricted – and being further restricted by the previous government. The decision to support this approach therefore took some courage.

Finally, DTP and MFA would like to acknowledge and thank the program participants for their generosity to each other and to all of us as trainers and facilitators. They created a very positive and collaborative environment for the sharing of knowledge and expertise and made for a rich learning experience. Their work is vital to Sri Lanka's migrant workers and it is in their successes that the impact of this program will hopefully be felt in future.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix listing the trainers and providing the bios of most

## 2. Program Objectives

The objectives for the program established in the design of the program were to work with participants to:

- Develop effective strategies to advocate for better protection of migrants, including in destination countries.
- Learn about, and from migrant protection systems in other Asian labour sending countries to support the government in implementing changes/improvements of the existing systems and mechanisms in Sri Lanka;
- Explore how Sri Lankan advocates can more effectively influence respect for the rights of migrants in destination countries
- Develop knowledge and skills on how to engage with and influence the private sector involved in labour migration
- Develop alliances and networks and skills in building and sustaining networks

*“We are working with migrant workers, but not correct way. After this five modules, (the) road is very clear”*

*“It helped me and my organization to take the knowledge from national level to grassroots level. “*

Participant evaluations

## 3. Context and Rationale

### Labour Migration, Migrant Workers and Human Rights

Migration is a constant of human history, not a new phenomenon. However more people are on the move today than ever before – many of them in search of decent work. Processes of economic globalisation have widened the gaps between rich and poor within and between countries. Failures of economic development in some countries and rapid economic development in others have increased the relative supply and demand for migrant labour. Hopelessness and hope are therefore the twin drivers of this movement of people – two sides of a coin tossed in the hope of gaining a better life for themselves and their families.

In today’s world both countries of origin and countries of destination have become dependent on the work of migrants and their wages. In Qatar for example over 90% of the population are temporary migrant workers, in the UAE it is 80%. In Doha, Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur the streets, skyscrapers, hospitals and private homes are built, cleaned and maintained by a workforce of migrant workers. Many of these workers will have paid for their jobs, often going deep into debt to do so. This debt increases vulnerability.

In some cases and countries the situation of migrant workers has been likened to modern day slavery, with workers in debt-bondage, denied pay, effectively detained in the workplace and forced to work without rest days, unable to change employers or to leave the country. Domestic workers, sometimes trapped alone in the houses of their employers, are particularly vulnerable. The operation of the Kafala (sponsorship) system in the Middle-East creates a particular vulnerability.

The process of labour migration is today largely in the hands of the private sector – whether as employers, recruitment agencies or conduits for the transfer of remittances. In an era of small government and deregulation, governments, particularly in developing countries desperate for investment, are challenged by the governance demands of labour migration.

With governments in countries of origin and destination both dependent on migrant workers and the flows of remittance income they generate, the policy imperatives for governance of migration have been driven by economics, rather than concern for the human rights of migrants.

In the face of mounting evidence of abuses an increasing number of organisations, some formed by returned migrant workers themselves, have been established in countries of origin and destination to assist migrant workers. Many are involved in case work and service delivery, while there is an increasing acknowledgement of the need for civil society advocacy to influence the policy and practice of governments and the private sector.

### *A Snapshot of Labour Migration from Sri Lanka*

There are an estimated 1.7 million Sri Lankan migrant workers – with approximately 200,000 Sri Lankan women and men leaving Sri Lanka each year in search of work.

Remittances from Sri Lanka's overseas migrant workers comprise approximately 8% of GDP. This was US\$5.2 billion in 2011 and estimated to be over US\$6 billion in 2013 (33% of Foreign Exchange).

Most of the migrant workers are classified as low-skilled and unskilled, mostly coming from rural areas. Approximately 50% of them are women going to work as maids/domestic workers – and the largest age group is 25-29 years old. Most of the women emigrating are women with children, although Sri Lanka has put in place measures to restrict the movement of mothers with young children. Most migrant workers are recruited and placed through licensed recruitment agencies, which in turn rely on a more informal and unregulated network of brokers who operate across Sri Lanka.

The countries of the Middle-East – and of the GCC in particular – are the most significant destination countries for Sri-Lanka's migrant workers – although significant numbers also go to East Asia (Korea, Malaysia and Singapore). The highest proportion of complaints from migrant workers concern Malaysia, Jordan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Sri Lankan government is committed to promoting labour migration – and to increasing the economic benefits flowing to Sri Lanka from these migrant workers. Sri Lanka has a clear legal and policy framework for labour migration, and well-established institutions for managing labour migration.

Sri Lanka has ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other important human rights treaties and has a National Human Rights Commission. Sri Lanka established the Colombo Process that regularly brings together government representatives of major countries of origin.

### *Rationale for Program*

The execution in Saudi Arabia in early 2013 of Sri Lankan housemaid Rizana served as one of the main triggers to the formal formation of a new network, the Migrant Forum Lanka (MFL), which consists of almost 20 organizations, including trade unions, civil society and research institutions working on the protection of migrants' rights. There was concern and anger that the Sri Lankan government had not acted early or strongly enough to save Rizana's life, and that this was indicative of a wider lack of concern and action to ensure Sri Lanka's migrant workers were safe and their rights upheld. There was acknowledgement of the need to improve coordinated and strategic advocacy to defend and promote the rights of Sri Lanka's migrant workers – with the intent that the Sri Lankan government also become more active and committed to promoting and defending the rights of its migrant workers – in countries of destination and through participation in intergovernmental forums.

*“In the DTP series of workshops, we have learned issues pertaining to the total process of migration. We learned about existing policies with regards to migrant workers as well as to review and engage in dialogues with governmental, international level organizations.”*

#### **4. Target Groups for Program – The Participants:**

It was intended that a maximum of 20 participants, drawn from NGOs and Trade Unions would attend the whole course – with additional participants drawn in for different modules from other NGOs, trade-unions, the national human rights commission and from government. This was the approach that had been used in the first of these special national capacity building programs in Sri Lanka and it had proved effective.

Participants were sought through DTP’s Sri Lankan alumni, through MFA networks and through outreach by HELVETAS Sri Lanka. A program brochure and application was prepared and distributed.

Participation between Module 1 and Module 2 was affected by a gap of nearly six months, affecting continuity and momentum. The gap was primarily a result of the difficult political environment that seemed to affect the granting of visas for DTP/MFA. In preparation for Module 3, DTP, Helvetas Inter-Cooperation and MFA did a further round of outreach, including through personal visits that succeeded in broadening the participation in the program.

This program was probably less successful than hoped for in terms of bringing in additional participants for different modules. The exception to this was the module that included a celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families. The sessions with Prasad Kariyasam, first Chair of the Committee on Migrant Workers, and Bradford Smith brought together officials from SLBFE with the program participants – something that probably would not have been possible when the program began.

*“This part was particularly useful as the DTP group as a whole came from a variety of backgrounds and were able to share a multiplicity of issues faced by migrants across the country.”*

##### **4.1 Reflections and Lessons Learned:**

A number of participants commented that there is often not a strong self-identification of migrant workers as migrant workers –it is transient state of identity that does not continue on return home to Sri Lanka. It is perhaps paradoxical that while labour migration is long established and significant both numerically and in terms of social and economic impact, migrant workers are not yet a political constituency and not significantly self-organised.

Whereas in Nepal, the program had been initiated by calls from DTP alumni, and DTP/MFA had existing and strong connections with organisations, in Sri Lanka this was not the case to the same extent. In Nepal, there are a number of organisations established and led by migrant workers themselves, and this is less the case in Sri Lanka.

On reflection, there would have been value in DTP/MFA making a pre-program visit to Sri Lanka to meet with NGOs and trade unions to discuss the program and to broaden the pool of participants that began the program. It would also have been good to begin with a bigger group understanding that there is inevitably some loss of participants over the course of the year due to changing personal and professional circumstances and competing commitments.

The DTP/MFA training methodology emphasizes participation and collaboration among the participants. The training modules succeeded in providing a safe and neutral space for individuals who

came together from different organisations. Group work, and continuously mixing up groups during modules and between the modules for assignments proved important for enabling participants to get to know each other, to learn more about each other's work and to make new connections and collaborations.

Following on from this experience, DTP/MFA decided to begin the subsequent program in Bangladesh with a larger initial group of participants.

## **5. Participant Expectations**

In the first module of the program, participants expressed the following expectations for their participation in the program:

- Develop effective strategies to advocate for better protection of migrants, including in destination countries.
- Understanding the Sri Lankan labour migration policy and identifying the gaps and loopholes in law and policy that need to be addressed to ensure rights of migrants are protected/upheld
- Identifying the services available to migrant workers and ensuring that these are available in rural areas as well
- Build knowledge about international experiences / initiatives in dealing with migrant rights
- Developing new advocacy and lobbying strategies/plans to address migrant workers' issues
- To develop a strategic plan to lobby governments
- Knowledge on how to gain access to resources to design and implement sustainable initiatives
- Establish a safe migration network

In the final participant evaluations, completed anonymously at the end of Module 5, 67 % of the participants said the program had fully met their expectations, while the remaining 33% of the participants said the program had partially met their expectations.

*"It could've been more structured using different ways of communication, such as using other sorts of media.*

*I was able to learn concept of Safe Migration Process and how to safeguard the labour migrants.*

*It increased my knowledge, my confidence and my skills on migration.*

*Yes, from 1-5 modules helped a lot, as a new comer I was able to learn all aspects of labour migration within a short period.*

*The DTP modules very helpful for up to understand regional and global migration situation.*

*It is introduced to all the relevant convention, consultative processes with regard to migration in the context of SL and in Asia Region. All it created opportunities to practice and develop our skills to become a better advocate."*

### **5.1 Reflections and Lessons Learned:**

The outcomes from this program were inevitably different from those in Nepal. The diversity of participants and of their experience and work meant that it was not possible to meet the expectations of all to the fullest extent. While prioritisation and agreement on the establishment of key advocacy objectives is essential for effective advocacy, these objectives priorities remained different for a number of the participants and their organisations – and they changed over the 18 month length of

the program. Some individuals and organisations see their most effective role in service delivery, and/or in advocacy at the local and national level.

One of the highlights of the program was the way that participants came together to jointly strategise and prepare for their engagement with the new Minister responsible for migration following the change of government. Participants followed a clear process, decided advocacy priorities and allocated roles to their lobbying delegation – and managed and steered an effective initial dialogue that exceeded their objectives. Another highlight was the involvement of trainers from countries of destination in Lebanon, Jordan and Qatar. Beyond the development of knowledge and understanding, these sessions established very practical relationships and facilitated action on actual cases. Helvetas Intercooperation subsequently built on these networks with some field/experiential learning visits.

Whether the outcome of the collaboration between participants results in the establishment of a new formal network in Sri Lanka, and the form such a network will take, needs to be driven by the participants and their organisations. During the program some of the participants were actively involved in the established of a new Sri Lankan chapter of MFA's *Lawyers Beyond Borders* network.

The extent to which collaboration and networking on advocacy has continued should be the focus of a follow-up process.

*Collective work is more effective rather than act as individual. Collective work will lead to success and positive changes.*

## **6. Methodology**

DTP was challenged to continue developing its participatory teaching methodology in this program. The program needed to respond to specific context of Sri Lanka and the specific needs of the participants in this program.

The program was conducted in English, Tamil and Sinhala – with simultaneous interpretation provided. DTP develop specific materials for the program – and some of these materials were translated, although most materials provided were in English only.

While the program proposal had outlined a schedule of content areas to be covered, these were adjusted as the program proceeded – because of the demands of the participants and because of the changed political context with the change of government. DTP needed to adapt its methodology to be able to move together effectively with participants – adapting the module content and focus and teaching methods.

Between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> modules it was necessary to review planning for the program – and it became possible to take up a practical lobbying and advocacy opportunity to meet with the new Minister responsible for labour migration – and subsequently with the Secretary of SLBFE. This was followed by further engagements facilitated by Helvetas. The change of government also enabled a very practical engagement with the government and representatives of the UN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers – including a formal dinner for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and a shared training session on treaty reporting.

DTP took responsibility for developing the curriculum selecting trainers, and for briefing them. MFA and Helvetas were both closely involved in this process, providing guidance and assistance with nominating and inviting selected trainers and with the curriculum and focus areas.

Written schedule and training notes were prepared for each session and shared among co-facilitators and individual trainers. Wherever time and circumstances allowed there were also face to face preparatory briefings of trainers.



DTP begins each program by establishing groups of participants to help manage and facilitate the program, with a different group taking charge each day. This reflects the commitment to participation and to participant's ownership of training outcomes. It also helps to develop collaborative working relationships among participants. At the end of each day this group was asked to sit with organisers and facilitators to provide feedback. This feedback was used to adjust the program content and style on a daily basis – to the extent that was possible. This process was extremely valuable to the organisers and facilitators and has proved an effective way of sharing knowledge and skills and building the confidence of participants, including as trainers.

DTP used role-plays, scenarios and real-life exercises as an integral part of the learning process. In this course, participants were asked to agree on shared activities between the modules – and to nominate a coordinator who would take on the responsibility for ensuring the work was done. The participants themselves selected the focus and nature of the activity and DTP/MFAHelvetas provided background support. These activities included arranging visits and dialogues with government officials. Such activities are valuable for building knowledge, skills and confidence and collaborative working relationships.

Helvetas played a key role in coordinating activities between modules, providing support as necessary to both participants and course facilitators.

*Participants were able to share their own issues and clarifications. The environment created opportunities to learn new issues.*

*I'm satisfied with the facilitators but some of the resource persons did not deliver their messages clearly.*

*Very much friendly environment was created where we could all learn and share.*

### **6.1 Reflections and Lessons Learned:**

The DTP/MFA methodology again proved to be very flexible and adaptive. A very good core of trainers is being developed. In each module it was possible to balance the development of knowledge and skills – and to foster the development of collaborative working relationships.

In order to maintain the momentum and continuity of the program it is important that the gaps in time between the modules are not too long. This program was adversely affected by the gap between Module 1 and Module 2 (almost six months) – although the change of government in this time proved to be more significant and it was possible to reset the program. However long the gap there is a need for a good and substantial recap session between modules that links the learning of one to the other and gives a session of the progression over time.

The assignments given to participants need to be directly relevant both to the learning objectives of the participants and program – and to the work of participants themselves. As the participants came from different parts of the country and were involved in different areas of work for migrant workers, getting participants to come together to work on assignments was often a labour intensive process, particularly for the Helvetas team on the ground.

## **7. Organisational Set-Up, Facilitating Team and Logistics**

There was a core organising and facilitating team<sup>2</sup> consisting of Patrick Earle from DTP, William Gois from MFA and Katrin Rosenberg from Helvetas. DTP took the lead in developing program schedules, inviting and briefing trainers and preparing materials and documentation. Katrin and Miyuru Gunasinhge took the lead in online and between-module support for most of the program, with this role taken on by Ranjan Kurian.

Learning from the program in Nepal, it was decided to make the Sri Lankan program a residential program – and all of the costs associated with participation were met by Helvetas.

Initially it was hoped that it would be possible to move the module locations around Sri Lanka – which would have benefits for the participants and some of their organisations. It would have enhanced the learning process also. The difficulties in terms of the additional time for MFA and DTP staff and for international trainers meant that in the end all of the modules were organised in, or close to, Colombo.

The Helvetas team managed all of the local logistical arrangements. These were considerable – given the need for accommodation, local transport for participants from across Sri Lanka, the three way interpretation and the added impost of obtaining visas for all of the trainers and DTP/MFA staff.

### ***7.1 Reflections and Lessons Learned:***

Having a residential program was clearly beneficial in the process of building the dynamics and relationships between participants. It was also necessary to facilitate participation from outside of Colombo.

DTP/MFA need to consider how to maximise the opportunities of a residential program for more informal learning opportunities – such as movie evenings, field trips and excursions.

## **8. Trainers**

In addition to the core facilitating team, the program involved specialised trainers from, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Philippines, USA, Jordan, India/Qatar and Lebanon. Some of these trainers were alumni of earlier DTP courses. All share the commitment to the rights of migrant workers.

A list of trainers and their biographies are included as an appendix to this report. DTP expresses its profound thanks to them for their contribution and their engagement with this process – and for their flexibility in responding to the different demands that were placed on them.

*“Yes, to a great extent all the facilitators did a great job in communicating and presenting their views.*

*Facilitators were able to create open learning environments, Good help to us.*

*Both participants as well as resource persons wanted to achieve targets and I personally think that both parties were able to achieve them”*

## **9. Materials**

DTP prepared materials to support each module of the course. Some of these were important reference documents, some were practical tools to assist in strategic analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> Bios of the facilitating team are included as an appendix

Individual trainers also prepared PowerPoint presentations and these were copied and provided to participants in hard and soft copy. Please see appendix for a list of the materials produced. Copies of materials are available on request from DTP.

Extensive and detailed reports of each module were also prepared and distributed to participants – providing a rich resource in themselves.

## **10. Monitoring and Evaluation**

DTP used a number of methods to monitor and evaluate this program.

Each day of each module the facilitating team would meet with a representative group of participants and seek their feedback. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and to be analytical and critical – and they were. Positive feedback was usually balanced with critical feedback that led to adjustments the following day.

At the end of each module, participants would be involved in identifying priorities and content for the next modules. There would be a feedback session and participants were again invited to be critical. This would be supplemented by a written evaluation that would be completed anonymously by participants. These would be fed into the written report of each module. In addition Helvetas staff took more informal soundings of the participants in the days and weeks after each module.

Most participants completed an end of training written evaluation and there was a final end of training oral evaluation session which was very positive and affirmed the benefit of the program to the different participants. As would be expected different participants emphasised different outcomes and benefits from their participation.

At the end of the program there was a strong sense from the participants that the program had been useful and beneficial. DTP/MFA will aim to discuss a follow-up evaluation/reflection process.

## **11. Outcomes and Impacts**

This program was a substantial investment in CSOs/NGOs and individual advocates in Sri Lanka. The program succeeded in building the knowledge, skills, confidence and networks of the program participants. Consequently participants were more able to develop clearer advocacy priorities and new advocacy strategies. This includes a clearer understanding of how advocacy targets need to be identified, and the need to develop positive recommendations for change, not just to point out gaps and problems. Confidence and skills in engaging in dialogue with, and lobbying of, government officials and elected representatives grew. Participants can more readily refer to the rights of migrant workers, in international and Sri Lankan law.

It is difficult to objectively measure the impact and outcomes of the program overall. If the individual participants continue to use the knowledge they gained, apply the skills they develop and continue to find ways to work together on specific cases and priority areas of concern then change will be noticed over time.

It may prove possible to see the influence of participant's advocacy in the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers when Sri Lanka's report to the committee is reviewed. It is to be hoped that there will be support to enable a delegation of civil society to attend and participate in these hearings – and to put their training into practice in Geneva. Advocates in Sri Lanka to further their advocacy agenda can then perhaps use the Committee's Concluding Observations.

The establishment of the Sri Lankan chapter of MFA's Lawyers Beyond Borders network by some of the participants and others was at least partly facilitated by the process of this program. Links between advocates in Sri Lanka – and in destination countries in the Middle East were established and this has enabled the development of case-work and shared advocacy across borders.

The success or otherwise of this program may also be visible in the extent to which concern about the rights of migrant workers is moved up the political agenda in Sri Lanka to become a priority of the government. This includes consideration of whether the advocacy priorities and recommendations being promoted by the participants are being taken up. This requires judgement from those on the ground there.

It is perhaps worth noting that the motivation for this program, this investment in civil society advocacy capacity came out of the execution of Rizana, a young Sri Lankan domestic worker in Saudi Arabia in 2013. She, like many had left her family and the security of her home to work far away in another country. Her country, her government was seen to fail her when she needed its support – her life was not seen as important enough to mobilise concern.

In November 2015, another young Sri Lankan woman who had gone to work as a maid was sentenced to death in Saudi Arabia – by stoning. Civil society organisations in Sri Lanka reached out to create protest around the world. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister was petitioned to take up the case. The Sri Lankan government advocated on her behalf and lodged protests, other governments lodged protests, and international NGOs took up her case and her sentence was commuted. Perhaps this case marks a change, a new willingness by the Sri Lankan government to act in defence of its citizens.

Participants in this program have now become part of the wider MFA and DTP networks. As members of the MFA network they will continue to receive updates and information in relation to the different regional processes that are relevant to them – the GFMD, SAARC Agenda 21, Colombo Process, Abu Dhabi Dialogue and the Migrants in Countries in Crisis initiative. MFA will provide further opportunities for some to be engaged in lobbying and advocacy in these processes. As alumni of DTP, the participants will be linked into DTP's wider alumni network and will receive a monthly E-Newsletter and may apply to participate in other programs. DTP is open to exploring how further training/capacity building needs may be met – and whether a local DTP alumni association may provide a good forum for continuing collaboration.

DTP and MFA will seek to do follow-up work to continue to engage the participants and to reflect on the outcomes and impacts of the program.

The following list provides an indicative list of some of the other outcomes and impacts of the program.

#### 11.1 Strengthening networks for future collaboration:

- National/international networks (e.g. LBB)
- Contacts with others in Sri Lanka (e.g. ILO, IOM, SLBFE, ALFEA) through resource persons and additional participants
- Contacts in the destination country for forwarding cases (e.g. Najla in Lebanon, Linda in Jordan, Nizar in Qatar/UAE)
- Contacts at the international level (e.g. Bradford Smith, Ellen Sana)
- Dialogue and continuing engagement with key government officials

#### 11.2 Skill development of participants, additional participants and their co-workers:

- Advocacy skills (ex. lobbying, informal meetings)
  - o Group work: analysis of national policy framework, lobbying of Minister, SLBFE
- Communication and organizing skills
  - o Dialogue with ALFEA, mission visits, presentations, rotating group coordinator
- Design of future projects and identify needs of migrant workers and their families
  - o Using situational analysis, SWOT analysis, power mapping, SMART goals, influence trees
- Practical exercises to better understand various international standards, UN treaty bodies and special procedures, and other mechanisms that can be used in the organizations' advocacy strategies in destination countries and Nepal:
  - o International human rights mechanisms relevant to migration
  - o International normative framework on migrants' human rights
  - o A human rights-based approach to migration
  - o The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
  - o Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
  - o Universal Periodic Review
  - o Shadow/Parallel Reporting
  - o International Conventions ratified by Sri Lanka and key destination countries
  - o Understanding the role of the private sector and recruitment industry
  - o Ex. ALFEA, ILO, Ruhanage

## 12. Reflections and Conclusions

DTP express its appreciation for the opportunity to develop and implement this project and acknowledges the leadership and guidance offered by its regional partner, MFA and its local partner, Helvetas.

Reflecting on the experience on the special capacity building programs in Nepal and Sri Lanka, is a sense that while these programs are labour and resource intensive, results are most likely to be sustained if there is a lower level of continuing engagement, at least with some of the participants and the networks they establish.

The gap between the promise of international standards and the daily experience of many migrant workers is vast. In Nepal and Sri Lanka the national legal and policy frameworks incorporate and reflect many of the human rights obligations and guarantees contained in the international standards. As with international standards, the frustration comes in the lack of implementation.

Advocates, and those working on delivering services to migrant workers and responding to abuses, are keenly aware of the gaps and problems. There is considerable anger and frustration with government – sometimes directed at officials – a sense that there is a lack of care and concern for the individuals who migrate for work, and the families they leave behind.

Early in this program, participants were able to identify the rights they felt migrants were entitled to – and to find these rights in international standards. Seeing these rights expressed in international standards, and in domestic laws, helps underpin advocacy efforts. Understanding that the nationals of other countries face similar abuses helps to put the situation in Sri Lanka in context, learning more about the situation in countries of destination and the work of advocates there offers new avenues for practical action and solidarity.

DTP sincerely hopes that this program made a practical contribution to the ongoing and inspirational work of the participants. It is their work that makes a difference, and offers hope for so many. DTP will learn the lessons of this program and take them into the next program in Bangladesh.

